BULGAKOV'S NOVEL *THE MASTER AND MARGARITA* AND THE SUBVERSION OF SOCIALIST REALISM

by

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Socialist Realism was proclaimed the main method in Soviet literature in 1932. It went through a long process of formation before its main principles were solidified. The main aim of Socialist Realist literature was to portray reality through the lens of the undoubted victory of communism. Thus only writers who followed the requirements of the state were welcome in Soviet literature at that time. Mikhail Bulgakov considered writers' freedom to be more important than the goals of Socialist Realism.

This thesis explores how Bulgakov's novel *The Master and Margarita* subverts the main ideas of Socialist Realism. The second chapter examines the genesis and the main principles of Socialist Realism. The third chapter explores Bulgakov's biography, literary works and views on literature of that time. The fourth chapter analyzes to what extent *The Master and Margarita* overturns the conventions of Socialist Realism.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The period from the 1920s through the 1930s was a time of considerable political change in the Soviet Union. The period of the first five year plans, the processes of collectivization and industrialization, crop setback and dearth concurred with the beginning of the formation of the conception of "a new" person. Soviet policy was aimed at "a grand historical endeavor called building socialism" (Kotkin 355), which reorganized the political, economic and management systems. Changes were also applied to every single sphere of life in the Soviet Union: social, scientific, art, cultural and literary.

The main method of Soviet literature became the method of Socialist Realism, which was based on literary and ideological notions. Soviet writers and their works had to serve the purpose of building socialist society. They had to undoubtedly follow the principles and patterns of Socialist Realism proclaimed by the state and represent life from the point of view of socialist ideals. Such works as *How the Steel Was Tempered* (1934) by Nikolay Ostrovsky, *Virgin Soil Upturned* (1931-60), *Quiet Flows the Don* (1928-40) by Mikhail Sholokhov and *Peter the First* (1933) by Aleksey Tolstoy became popular. Works such as Maksim Gorky's *Mother* (1907), Fyodor Gladkov's *Cement* (1925) and Dmitry Furmanov's *Chapaev* (1923) can be considered prototypical exemplars of Socialist Realist novels.

Among the writers of that time the name of Mikhail Bulgakov is noted not for loyal adherence to the conventions of Socialist Realism but, on the contrary, for the rejection of the principles of the officially accepted literary method. Bulgakov considered the writer's freedom to be more important than the goals of the Soviet government and was true to himself and his ideals in creating his literary works. *The Master and Margarita* became Bulgakov's "sunset" novel that represents true life in Moscow in the 1920-30s under the Soviet regime and in the heyday of Socialist Realism.

The period of Socialist Realism ended more than twenty years ago, but it has continued to attract the attention of scholars of Russian literature up to present day. It should be noted that most of the critical works dedicated to Socialist Realism and the dictatorship in literature were initially written and published outside of the Soviet Union because of censorship. The works of such scholars as Herman Ermolaev (1963), Deming Brown (1978), Abram Terts (Andrey Siniavsky) (1988), Katerina Clark (1981) and Rosalind Marsh (1989) appeared in the foreign press. Later in 2000 a revised edition of *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual* by Katerina Clark dedicated to mainstream Soviet literature was published. At the end of the 20th and beginning of the 21st centuries more works focused on the period of Socialist Realism by Russian scholars appeared. Among them are works by Sergey Petrov (1984), Tatiana Korzhikhina (1997), Natalia Kurennaya (2004) and Evgeny Dobrenko (1997-2007).

Bulgakov is one of the most popular Russian writers of the 20th century. His works and biography have been the subject of many analytical studies by Russian and foreign scholars. One of the most important contributions to the study of Bulgakov was

made by Marietta Chudakova who wrote a detailed and thoroughly-documented chronicle of Bulgakov's life, *Zhizneopianie Mikhaila Bulgakova.* Among other scholars of Bulgakov are Viktor Petelin, Boris Sokolov, Viktor Losev, Lidiia Ianovskaia, Vsevolod Sakharov, Mikhail Kreps, Ellendea Proffer and J.A.E. Curtis. Their studies based on autobiographical stories, memoirs, diaries, letters and archival documents are dedicated to Bulgakov's life, relations with Stalin and the censors, the author's literary works and their interpretations, most of which are concentrated on *The Master and Margarita.*

Bulgakov's novel has been examined from different perspectives: political, cultural, religious, historical, identification of heroes' prototypes and ulterior meaning of the novel, but little attention has been paid to Bulgakov's work in relation to Socialist Realism. This thesis focuses on the relation of Bulgakov's novel *The Master and Margarita* to the features of Socialist Realism. Based on the analysis of the conventions of Social Realism and exploration of Bulgakov's views and beliefs as a writer, the work analyzes the divergence of *The Master and Margarita* from the main principles of Socialist Realism.

CHAPTER II

SOCIALIST REALISM: ITS GENESIS AND PRINCIPLES

I take a piece of life, which is rough and poor, and
create a delightful legend, for I am a poet
Fyodor Sologub.[1]

The term Socialist Realism evokes many associations. Optimism, patriotism, positivism, party spirit, depersonalization and the depiction of reality in its revolutionary development are integral features of Soviet Socialist Realism. The precise meaning of the term Socialist Realism is hard to define. The term may be considered vague and inaccurate, as in the phenomenon itself there is more idealism than realism. Therefore to understand the meaning of Socialist Realism better, one should refer to the genesis of Socialist Realism and its principles and features.

The phenomenon of Socialist Realism comprises features of preceding literary tendencies; therefore the genesis of Socialist Realism should be analyzed through the development of world and national literature and history.

The ideas of freedom, good and evil, love for one's country and labor as a basis of life are presented in the tales, legends, poems and epics of every world nation. The first

[1]Sologub 16 (This and all subsequent translations from Russian are mine, unless otherwise is indicated).

examples of literary works presenting the ideas of a perfect and fair society go far back in time. In 1516 Thomas More wrote *Utopia* where he described a perfect state structure; almost a hundred years later, *Sun City* by Tomasso Campanella appeared. These were the first works that presented the ideals of socialism in world literature (Petrov 8).

The genesis of Socialist Realism and its ideals also take roots in the period of Enlightenment in Europe. The idea of changing people's life through humanism, equity and freedom appeared in Europe even before the 19th century and developed during the time of the French Revolution (1789). The concern with people's lives and their happiness was tightly connected with the problem of changing the society and the government system. These concepts influenced the development of the ideas of Socialist Realism in Russia (Petrov 10).

Socialist Realism follows the literary tradition of 19th century Russian realism, but it differs from the realism of such figures as Nikolay Gogol, Ivan Turgenev, Fedor Dostevsky, Lev Tolstoy and Anton Chekhov. The realism of the 19th century is also known as Critical Realism as it portrays a critical picture of Russian society and life. Literature of Socialist Realism in its turn puts a special emphasis on a radiant future and portrays life only "partly as it is but mainly as it should be" (Brown 17). The party member, Nikolay Bukharin, saw a difference between the new realism and the old realism. He stated that Socialist Realism was different from previous forms of realism in that "it focuses attention on the process of building socialism and the struggle of the proletariat" (Kurennaia 44).

By the end of the 19th century, proletarian literature spread all over Europe and later in Russia (around the Revolution of 1905). Nevertheless that was not yet Socialist Realism. Russian proletarian literature was developing within the traditions of revolutionary romanticism (Petrov 18). As Natalia Kurennaia puts it, revolutionary romanticism is considered a tendency that Socialist Realism was actually built upon (42). Indeed, no matter what kind of world romanticists created in their works - future or past, positive or negative - they always tried to move away from the world of reality. Some writers appealed for a struggle for a better future; others described the past, but all of them put the person at the forefront. This person was presented as a hero, as a rebel disagreeing with the society and able to inspire vigor in people.

Isaac Dunaevsky, a famous Soviet composer, described life in the Soviet Union of 1940s in the following fashion:

> It is surprising how much of romanticism in general is in the industrious life of the people. But to tell the truth, people are not fully aware of this romanticism. It is mostly formed in literature [and] cinematography … Everything that literary men write, that artists and directors create, looks romantic, because … it covers the black, dirty and uninteresting side of life [and] presents a romantic or heroic final result. (Dobrenko, *Politėkonomiia* 27)

Evgeny Dobrenko made an assumption about the way Soviet life would have been without features of Socialist Realism:

> If from the idea of 'socialism' we theoretically removed ... novels about enthusiasm for labor, poems about joyful labor, movies about happy life, songs and pictures about the wealth of the Soviet country, etc., we would not have anything left. In other words, we would be left with grey days, workday routine [and] badly organized hard life. (*Politėkonomiia* 27)

Thus a question arises, which in fact was addressed by an English writer to Alexander Fadeev, the general secretary of the Union of Soviet Writers: "Would it be more accurate to use the term 'socialist idealism' instead of 'socialist realism'?" (Dobrenko, *Politėkonomiia* 118). The answer that Fadeev gave was "No," explaining that "Socialist Realism is notable for the fact that it portrays life the way it is and at the same time the way it should be. That only strengthens realism" (*Politėkonomiia* 118).

Socialist Realism went through a long process of formation before its main principles were theoretically formulated and it was declared to be the main method of Soviet literature in 1934. Many literary works following the main principles of Socialist realism (Gorky's *Mother*, Furmanov's *Chapaev*, Gladkov's *Cement*, Fadeev's *The Rout*) were written even before the term itself "was invented" (Clark 27).

It is possible to say that on the one hand, the Socialist Realism tradition developed naturally as a result of historical and cultural changes; on the other hand, this process was socially required and politically directed. The literary method of Socialist Realism was meant for the "new" reader in the person of working class. Its goal was to make literature

and art comprehensible for the masses. "Good" writers-intellectuals were not understandable to the mass reader, as they wrote in a complicated manner. Middling writers were easier to understand as they presented the solution to numerous problems of building socialism in a simple way (Kurennaia 17).

To successfully fulfill the goal of Socialist Realism, it was necessary to know who this "new" reader was. Aleksey Tolstoy painted the portrait of the "new" reader as:

> … the one who destroyed the old foundations and is looking for new ones, in which his soul can achieve harmony. This is the one whom the old culture deceived … who still doesn't know any culture. This is the "new" reader, heterogeneous but united by the same period of the decade and by the optimism of resurrection out of the ashes, by confidence in the future. (Dobrenko, *Making of the State Reader* 84)

The new reader played an important role in the process of formation of Socialist Realism. If the term of Socialist realism was attributed sometimes to Stalin, sometimes to Maksim Gorky and sometimes to Ivan Gronsky, the ideas and principles of this method were spread by the readers themselves. This can be confirmed by quoting the opinions of the mass reader of the 1920's – early 1930's concerning the questions "What pleases a reader in literature?" and "What does he expect of it?":

> A book should contain practically useful ("for life") recommendations ... A book should educate ... Literature should create a picture of the future good life ... Literature should be optimistic ... The hero of a book should be a model for imitation ... The guiding role of the collective and the Party should be shown in a work ... The book should be written "in understandable language" ... "Fantasy" and "cock-and-bull stories" are unnecessary. (Dobrenko, *Making of the State Reader* 126-128, 131, 135)

These opinions of mass readers precisely coincide with the ideas of Socialist Realism. Thus, "Soviet criticism provided a loudspeaker for the demands of the mass reader, and these demands coincided almost completely with the demands of authorities" (Dobrenko, *Making of the State Reader* 138).

By the beginning of the 1930s, the Soviet government under the leadership of Stalin came to the conclusion that it was the time to foster a new cultural and ideological doctrine, a new method, which would create and maintain the atmosphere of general enthusiasm for labor and propagate the ideas of building the radiant future of socialist society. The method of Socialist Realism, as well as the formulation and official confirmation of its main principles, emerged between the dissolution of RAPP (1932) and the creation of the Union of Soviet Writers in 1934 (Ermolaev 139). Literature and writers became a resource of the party and served as an intermediary between the ideas of the party and the masses of people. By 1934 the censorial apparatus had finally been built up and Social Realism was proclaimed.

Like any kind of officially established method or doctrine, Socialist Realism had its formally determined principles that had to be followed. All the principles and features of Socialist Realism were framed within a master plot, which was the basis of any literary work written by "the engineers of human soul." "The Stalinist writer was no longer the creator of original texts; he became the teller of tales already prefigured by the Party lore" (Clark 159). No matter what type of a novel a Soviet novelist wrote (a production novel, a novel of revolution or war, a spy novel, a historical novel, a novel based on the biography of the leader, etc.), it had to "be based on something analogous to the 'divine plan of salvation' ..." (Clark 159) and typical stages that lead to this "salvation." Generally, these stages included a hero's arriving to a new or previously established microcosm, discovering the problem that exists, setting up a task to solve the problem, facing challenges on the way to the goal, coping with these challenges and celebration of the successful accomplishment of the task.

It is possible to consider Gladkov's *Cement* a good example of a novel that represents the master plot, although it was written before the official establishment of Socialist Realism. Gleb, the hero of the novel, returns to his town, where he finds the factory idle and nobody taking any steps to improve the situation. Gleb supported by other true workers (Brynza, Savchuk, etc.) decides to bring the factory back to life. Coping with his personal feelings and overcoming the obstacles caused by a counter-revolutionary attack, Gleb manages to accomplish his task of rebuilding the factory.

An integral part of the subtext of the master plot is progress - the motive of the road leading from "spontaneity" to "consciousness" (Clark 15). A hero on the way to the

radiant communist future is also involved in a struggle between the forces of spontaneity (uncontrolled, sporadic and uncoordinated actions) and the forces of consciousness (controlled and disciplined activities). Thus, only through mastering his own self and his feelings, through the process of enlightenment brought by "more conscious" people does the hero "[achieve] greater harmony both within himself and in relation to his society" (Clark 17). In *Cement*, in addition to the master plot, there exists a subplot of personal relations between the main character and his wife. Gleb feels estranged from his wife, Dasha, and has problems mastering his hatred of Badin. Dasha, once being "just a simple woman … a stupid woman, so that even thinking of it makes her ashamed … became a free Soviet citizen … learnt to struggle and found her way to happiness" (Gladkov, *Tsement* 32-34, 147). Gleb learns to cope with his private life after his wife leaves him and finds his source of self-fulfillment in the "collective cause."

Gorky's parable *Mother* also treats the theme of "the road to consciousness" that would become a feature of Socialist Realism. First Pavel, the hero of the novel, changed from a drunkard into a conscious man after meeting with a group of underground socialists. Then his mother (under Pavel and his comrades' influence) went through the transformation from a "politically unaware" woman to a more party conscious and progressive person.

Unlike literature of other periods of literary history that reflects the attitude of a certain writer to reality, literature of the period of Socialist Realism showed some aspects of reality but did not reflect it entirely. Novels mostly emphasized a prospected reality

and provided the reader with the ways of reaching it – therein lies the educational aspect of Socialist Realism for the "new" reader.

The problems of the 1930s that people in the Soviet Union were constantly facing lead them to despair and destroyed their hopes for the future happy socialist life. That was the time of the second five year plan, the processes of collectivization and industrialization, crop setback and famine. One of the primary tasks of literature was to show a way out of the tough present, social and industrial problems and personal dilemmas. "From the thirties on, most novels of the Stalin period were set not in the complex modern cities of Moscow or Leningrad but in a model provincial microcosm – a town, a factory, *kolkhoz*, construction site, or army unit far removed from the advanced urban centers" (Clark 109). Despite the fact that the novels showed more negativity toward present-day Soviet reality, they still remained optimistic, maximizing "future prospects" and showing "how Marxism-Leninism leads out of present day problems and on into Communism" (Clark 106).

Literature of any epoch in history has its typical ideal person – a positive hero, who represents the cultural wealth of a certain period and its culture. The positive hero of the period of Socialist Realism has features similar to a typical hero of fairy-tales: he is daring in any situation and sharp-witted, proud and optimistic, stern but forgiving, and usually strong and good-looking. The difference between the hero of folklore and Socialist Realism is that the former pursues his own goals and the latter serves the revolution and socialism. Besides, if the folk hero seeks encouragement and moral

support from God and external forces, the Socialist Realist hero finds encouragement in the words of a socialist leader (Lenin, Stalin or a comrade):

> - I haven't seen him [Lenin] ... and it seems to me that I haven't experienced the most important thing. If I saw and heard him I would open myself anew. I can't express myself, I can't find words...
> - You should do more and say less... Fight sparing no effort... organize work... solve urgent problems, do as the Party commands us to... (Gladkov, *Tsement* 100).

Thus, the positive hero of Socialist Realism is a fearless, self-sacrificing, socially dedicated and ideal communist who can serve as an example for the socialist society.

A defining feature of the Socialist Realist positive hero was his "depersonalization." Hundreds of positive heroes, usually engineers, inventors, scientists or workers, were strikingly alike in their behavior, feelings, thoughts, their "attachment to the symbolic family of the state" (Clark) and drive for work for the welfare of the state. The things mostly valued by the positive hero were Party membership and his working place. Party comrades and coworkers quite often became the family for Soviet people, and a working place became their home. "The root metaphor for society was a machine ... In the machine no part is self-valuable; it is worthy only insofar as it contributes, together with the other parts, to the overall running of the machine. So, likewise, in Soviet society, all citizens ... who worked together ... were valuable only insofar as they

contributed to the harmonious running of the whole of the society" (Clark 117). Thus the state's interests took priority over people's personal relations and private interests. "If there was any conflict between the state's interests and the nuclear family, citizens were urged to jettison their sense of family, based on blood ties, and replace it with a higher one based on political kinship. If need be, they should even reject members of their own family" (Clark 115).

The new Soviet person was anxious neither to become rich, nor to have his own house, but to become an important part of the "great family." That was exactly the situation, in which Gleb, the hero of F.Gladkov's novel *Cement*, found himself. After three years of separation, Gleb's wife, Dasha, changed and became almost a stranger to him. Dasha became a party member, and the "great family" became more important for her than her husband, her daughter and her home.

According to Alexandra Kollontai, a traditional family becomes unnecessary in Soviet society. Firstly, it is of no use for the state, as housekeeping is not valuable any more and it distracts people from more useful productive work. Secondly, it is not good for family members themselves, as one of their main tasks, the raising of children, is carried out by the society. Moreover, social upbringing develops collectivism in children as a main feature of the "new person" (Kurennaia 109). By the end of the 1930s, though, the nuclear family had become the state's helpmate rather than being in opposition to it (Clark 115).

If the "great family" took the place of the traditional family, what happened to love in the Soviet society? "Men and women first of all had to become comrades"

(Kurennaia 110) and be dedicated to their main roles in the society – the building of socialism. "In the Stalinist novel … love is an auxiliary ingredient in the plot. The hero's love life is not valuable in itself; it serves only to aid him in fulfilling his task and attaining 'consciousness'" (Clark 182-183). The hero's personal feelings and love per se were put on a level much lower than the state's interests.

The image of a woman in literature changed as well. If during the period of sentimentalism of the 18th century, the idea that "peasant women are able to love as well" was advocated, then in the period of Socialist Realism the idea was that the woman did not need love anymore. A woman was considered by the state the hero's "spiritual companion and a means of adding to the new generation of the 'family'" (Clark 183). The ideal image of the new woman was a self-confident, strong person, alien to female weakness and equal to a man in her potential and needs. The words of the heroine of Gladkov's *Cement*, Dasha, addressed to her husband and then to her friend Polia, present a good example of the woman of the period of Socialist Realism:

> …Now I am not just a woman … I found a valuable person in myself after you [Gleb] left… nobody can subdue my pride, even you Gleb.... I am not weak... We learn to speak for ourselves and to act together no worse than the men … You're [Polia] not a young lady, but a Communist. Our hearts must be of stone… Let our heart burst if it must, but we don't want a heart of tears – not a heart of cotton-

> wool. One's heart must be like flint… You may rely on me; I have strength for a long time to come yet. (Tsement 32, 141, 242; *Cement* 266)[2]

Another task of Socialist Realist novels was to make the reader realize that everything that was done by the "little men" was for the common weal of the state. Therefore, an important characteristic of the novels of Socialist Realism was the "mentor"/"disciple" pattern (Clark 49). Thus, the people who become politically "conscious" had to propagate the socialist ideas among less "conscious" members of the "great family" and fight for even minor progress that in the long run would lead to the common victory of socialism.

In Gorky's *Mother*, Pavel (the mentor) passes his revolutionary ideas and beliefs on to his mother (a disciple), who becomes a convinced and audacious revolutionary and then passes those ideas to other "less-informed" people. Similarly, Gleb, the hero of Gladkov's novel *Cement* forgave old engineer Kleist for his betrayal and convinced him of the truth and necessity of serving the state that became his life:

> – I intend to devote all my knowledge and experience, all my life to our country. I have no other life except that life with all of you; and I have no other task except our struggle to build up our future.… For the first time, Gleb saw Kleist's eyes fill with tears.… (*Tsement* 262)

[2] Excerpts from both Gladkov's novel *Tsement* (in Russian) and *Cement* (translated into English) are used in this thesis due to the absence of some parts of the novel in the English version.

Despite the fact that the Soviet government denied religion and demanded avoidance of any connections with it in literature, Soviet writers unconsciously followed the religious canons in some way. While for a religious person the life on earth is preparation for the life after death, for Soviet people the present life was preparation for a happy radiant future similar to paradisiacal life, for the sake of which one can even sacrifice a life (Kurennaia 129). Thus, some kind of "martyrdom" was another characteristic of a typical novel of Socialist Realism.

The positive hero often had features similar to a martyr. Like a martyr who lives a life of self-deprivation, follows religious rituals and dedicates himself to the propagation of faith, the revolutionary hero was expected to follow the principles of socialism, be completely dedicated to work, spare no effort and be able to sacrifice his personal interests and even his life for the welfare of the state. Thus, for example, in Kollontai's *Vasilisa Malygina* Vasya could not take any time off from work even when her husband turned up wounded:

> She'd put so much energy into the past two months' work, and foresaw at least another month of hard work ahead. She had so much to do, so many commitments. There was a congress coming up soon, then there was the reorganization of the housing department and all her activities for the communal house – simply no end to her tasks. She was expected to be everywhere at once.... (58)

In Arkadiy Gaidar's parable *Malchish-Kibalchish* a youngster perishes, but keeps a military secret from the enemy bourgeois thus helping the Red Army to defeat the villain: "Malchish-Kibalchish perished … [but] the defeated Head Bourgeouin fled in fear, loudly cursing the country with its amazing people, its invisible Red Army and with its undiscovered Military Secret" (Gaidar 129).

Novels, in which the death of the hero takes place, commonly follow the "death-and-transfiguration" pattern: the hero's "resurrection" is symbolized by the fact that the ideas and beliefs of the hero are spread by the comrades after his death or by the unexpected appearance of the hero when everybody thinks that he is dead. Nilovna in Gorky's *Mother* threw propaganda leaflets into the crowd, thus spreading Soviet ideas before her death: "The mother saw them [people] snatch up the leaflets and stuff them inside their coats and into their pockets … As she spoke, she snatched leaflets out of her bag and threw them to right and left into the hands that eagerly caught them" (381). In Gladkov's novel *Cement* Gleb, a soldier hero, who was considered dead, comes home from the revolution and succeeds in the reorganization of the local cement factory for the welfare of the state.

Besides the dedication to building socialism, propagation of the ideas of the Party, readiness to leave his family and sacrifice his life, the positive hero of Socialist Realism had to show vigilance and watch out for "bad guys" or villains who stood in the way of the new regime of communism and threatened its success. By having the courage to eliminate this threat the hero could prove his heroism and serve as an example for the reader. The purpose of showing the hero's vigilance in the novels was "to provide object

lessons … in the need to take nothing on trust but examine everything very closely" (Clark 188).

The enemies who were divided into "external enemies (invaders, spy infiltrators, etc.) and internal enemies (Soviet citizens)" were usually portrayed as someone repulsive having features opposite to those of the positive hero (Clark 186). The villain in the novels of Socialist Realism often lacks courage, tenacity, kindness or conviction. He is also depicted as unattractive, rude and inhumane even towards women. A scene of inflicting torture upon a woman by white guards is shown in Gladkov's *Cement*: "They pushed her [Fimka] on, swearing at her; she shrieked, stumbled, and then fell on a stand. They seized her arms and dragged her to her feet. She walked a few steps in silence, then stopped…" (*Cement* 168). Another scene of the brutal treatment of a woman is portrayed in Gorky's *Mother*: "Someone struck her [Mother] in the breast and she fell down on the bench. … They pushed her in the back, in the neck, beat her on shoulders and head … her knees gave way, she winced under lancet thrusts of pain, her body grew heavy, swayed helplessly" (384).

Despite the fact that literature of Socialist Realism was the only type of "officially sponsored literature" it would be wrong to say that other literature did not exist. It was impossible to destroy all previous literary traditions and replace them with a new method and make absolutely everyone follow it. Along with "certified" (officially accepted) Soviet literature an oppositional literature of "dissidents" in the Soviet Union was steadily developing. It was intolerable for the Soviet writers to create and express themselves in a situation when every word written in a "wrong" context was considered a

crime. Many writers did not accept the new tendency in literature dictated by the government and continued creating their own texts, using their own ideas and thoughts based on their own beliefs. Those literary works were different from those of Socialist Realism, but bore the imprint of the period of time in which they were created. The writers of those books (Boris Pilniak, Osip Mandelstam, Mikhail Zoschenko, Boris Pasternak, Mikhail Bulgakov, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, etc.) were not concerned with creating the atmosphere of a "happy" life expectation or with praising the communist ideology in their texts. Quite often such texts served a function opposite to that of Socialist Realism and showed the negativity and drawbacks of communism. For that reason such works were criticized and never published at that time.

Some writers employed critical realism to call attention to the faults of Soviet reality. Besides critical realism, a common approach was the use of satire, the grotesque, hyperbole and humor, as, for example, in the works of Mikhail Bulgakov. "Satire is able to convey evil by pointing to the distinction between the ideal and the real, while at the same time diminishing the weight of negative phenomena by teaching the reader to laugh at them" (Marsh 7).

Returning to the epigraph of this chapter, it is certainly possible to say that the words of Fyodor Sologub describe well a writer of the period of Socialist Realism. It was writers who delivered the message of the Party to the people; it was they who presented the government's ideas to the reader in a more understandable way. Writers were judged by their will and ability to meet the requirements of the state order, which is clear in Gronsky's speech: "Well, Comrade Writers, take the trouble to write imaginative works,

and we shall judge to what extent the writer helps the revolutionary cause by the works he has written and the quality of his works" (Ermolaev 159). The writers following the principles of Socialist Realism were important for the Soviet government and were rewarded in every possible way. The writers who "deviated" from the officially stated way were ignored, silenced or destroyed. One of those writers was Mikhail Bulgakov.

CHAPTER III

MIKHAIL BULGAKOV AS A WRITER: HIS VIEWS AND BELIEFS

Mikhail Bulgakov happened to live and write in the heyday of Socialist Realism and this determined his hard fate and influenced his literary works. Bulgakov was different from many other writers of that time who either supported the ideas of communism or were against them. Bulgakov did not have any specific political views and he did not advocate or propagate any anti-Soviet ideas per se. He stood for the right of a writer to be free from the imposed political ideology, to be true to oneself and one's own beliefs.

Unlike most of the writers of Socialist Realism who were peasants by origin, Bulgakov grew up in a priestly family and received a good education. Even Bulgakov's appearance, as journalist M. Cherny mentioned later, was notable for its uniqueness:

> Bulgakov created an impression of an outside observer - intelligent and a little skeptical. Even his appearance was different. Kataev, for example, was wearing a long artillery overcoat reaching his toes, which he brought from the battle-front; I had military riding-breeches on, and Bulgakov was wearing a histrionic bow-tie that was rare in those rough times. (Sakharov 43)

The Bulgakovs were proud of their Russian heritage, but Bulgakov's father's work "gave him a broad perspective on many things. The family was firmly monarchist, but this did not mean that they were not liberal in many other ways" (Proffer 3). Despite the fact that the Bulgakovs did not have a great deal of money, they did not live in poverty. Bulgakov always looked back on the years of his childhood with nostalgia. He recalled the happy atmosphere of gatherings at their spacious dacha, where harmony and the unity of the family and friends prevailed.

Bulgakov's family belonged to what is known in Russia as the intelligentsia. The main features of this type of society, according to Vladimir Nabokov, are "the spirit of self-sacrifice, intense participation in political causes or political thought, intense sympathy for the underdog of any nationality, fanatical integrity, tragic inability to sink to compromise, true spirit of international responsibility" (Proffer 4). It is possible to say that Bulgakov had all those features, except, perhaps, those dealing with politics.

The only thing that connected Bulgakov with politics was his disagreement with the leaders concerning literature and writers' freedom. Bulgakov "was not a politician, but a writer" (Chudakova 338), as he stated himself, and believed that writers have to be free in their choice. The Party, on the contrary, created a system of command and constraint, in which a person became an obedient part of it. "I do not like the religion of slavery" wrote Bulgakov in his *Message to Evangelist Demyan (Bedny)* (Petelin 161), expressing his attitude to the writers' serving the Party. Bulgakov absolutely agreed with Andrei Sobol who said: "Instruction and literary art are two incompatible things. Children need instructors, and the situation, in which instructors are attached to a writer,

is more than just sad" (Petelin 374). He believed that "[a] writer is a person who writes what he wants to write – and if he doesn't, he is not a writer" (Proffer 583).

Bulgakov did not hide his opinion about Soviet censorship, stating that "struggle against censorship of any nature and under any authority [was his] responsibility as a writer as well as calls for freedom of the press" (Sokolov, Tainy 9). He was a "passionate supporter" of this freedom and believed that "if any writer were to imagine that he could prove he did not need that freedom, then he would be like a fish affirming in public that it did not need water" (Curtis 106). The possibility to write freely for Bulgakov was a necessity; "an inability to write was for him equal to being buried alive" (Chudakova 338). Bulgakov was always true to himself and never tried to adjust himself to the Soviet regime, although he realized that making his way through censorship and criticism would be difficult:

> I deeply regret that I gave up medicine and doomed myself to such an uncertain existence. But God knows that the only reason for that was my love of literature. Literature nowadays is a difficult pursuit. With my views, which happen to be reflected in my literary works, it is hard for me to have my works published and it is hard to live. (Sakharov 45)

For the most part, Bulgakov was indifferent to the new tendencies in modern literature (especially poetry), but he watched all the changes closely. He did not accept the principles of Socialist Realism and its idea of a literary purpose and stood for

"ruthless intolerance of any kind of falsity in one's own literary work" (Sakharov 50). The censors considered literature to be the means to educate the masses in the right ideological way, and stated that the classicists could not answer this inquiry (Blyum 158). Bulgakov, on the contrary, believed that modern literature had to follow the traditions of classical literature and that the modern writer had to learn from such writers as Alexander Pushkin, Nikolai Gogol, Fedor Dostoevsky, Mikhail Saltykov-Schedrin, Lev Tolstoy and Anton Chekhov (Sakharov 50). Bulgakov argued with Soviet critics saying:

> After Tolstoy it is impossible to live and work in literature as if Tolstoy had never existed... The fact that the phenomenon of Tolstoy existed makes every Russian writer be strict with oneself and others... [Bulgakov believed that] every sentence of Lev Tolstoy was wonderful. After fifty years, a hundred years, even five hundred years people will consider Tolstoy to be a writer of genius. (Sakharov 50)

At the time when Socialist Realism was proclaimed and all the attention was focused on the working class and its progress, Bulgakov followed the Russian literary tradition of realism and wrote about the intelligentsia instead. According to the author himself, "*The Days of the Turbins*, *Flight* and *The White Guard* are representations of the Russian intelligentsia as the best stratum of the country" (Petelin 622). Bulgakov did not want to follow the principles of Socialist Realism, he did not want to write about "heroes in leather jackets, about machine-guns or some kind of communist hero" (Sakharov 50).

He wanted to write about individuals and the life of the intelligentsia that was close and dear to him:

> I am very interested in the Russian intelligentsia's way of life. I love it; I consider it a very important, although a weak stratum of the country. Its fate is close to me, the experience is dear to me. That means I am able to write only about the intelligentsia's life in the Soviet Union. But the turn of my mind is satirical, so the things that come from my pen apparently touch social-communist circles. (Sokolov, *Entsiklopediia* 537)

Thus Bulgakov's work appears to be a vivid examination of the partial destruction and partial adaptation of the Russian intelligentsia to the post-Revolutionary order, as well as the tension between the artist and the state (Proffer 583).

From his very first steps in literature, Bulgakov became noted for his original style and humor. Since 1923 he worked in the newspaper *Gudok* as a topical satirist. Nevertheless the ideological surveillance of the Party authorities and the monotonous work for the newspaper oppressed Bulgakov. Finally in 1925 he realized that he could not continue writing feuilletons for *Gudok* anymore as, in his words, it was "an outrage upon [him] and [his] physiology" (Sakharov 44).

Besides working for *Gudok,* Bulgakov wrote for the comparatively liberal newspaper *Nakanune* that was printed in Berlin. Bulgakov's feuilletons were widely read and brought him success and fame. In *Nakanune* such literary works of Bulgakov as *The*

Adventures of Chichikov, *Notes on the Cuffs* and *Crimson Island* were published. Bulgakov's work was highly valued and his plays were staged at theatres.

It is possible to say that everything was going relatively well up until 1929 when writers' "freedom" became more suppressed and their texts censored by the party critics. Bulgakov's plays began to be removed from the repertoires of the theatres. For Bulgakov it was equivalent to death: there was no possibility to create and no means of living. Bulgakov even thought about leaving the country. Outside the Soviet Union he could have been free to write and express his ideas. In his letter to the Soviet government, Bulgakov wrote: "...I request that the Soviet Government give orders for me to leave the territory of the USSR as soon as possible, together with my wife Lyubov Yevgenyevna Bulgakova" (Curtis 109). On the other hand, Bulgakov loved his country; he could not imagine his life outside of Russia and without the theatre: "I have been thinking a lot lately about whether a Russian writer can live outside his native country. It seems to me that he cannot" (Bulgakov, Dnevnik 230). Bulgakov's life within his own country became a struggle for existence and for being true to himself.

In his works Bulgakov often returns to the universal problem of "an individual and a society." At the center of attention in Bulgakov's dramas and comedies is the conflict between an individual and society. The author openly raised the question about the dependence of an individual on the epoch, its rules and demands. Bulgakov's characters - professors Preobrazhensky and Persikov, Pushkin, Moliere, inventor Timofeev, academician Efrosimov – are all different in their personality, habits and aptitude, but similar in their attitude to their environment and the society. No matter

whether it was the 17th, 19th or the 20th century, Bulgakov's heroes feel uncomfortable in the society they live in (Petelin 309). Bulgakov's characters try to understand themselves and the purpose of their life. They try to advance, but have to adapt to society. Thus in his works Bulgakov showed a stifling atmosphere that oppressed talented people. He also criticized those who stayed in the way of individuals and dictated their will, principles and ideas.

Another problem shown by Bulgakov in his works is a mistake made by the wrong person in the wrong place. Such a mistake that leads to a catastrophe is made by Rokk (Feyt) in *The Fatal Eggs*. Before the Revolution Rokk used to be a musician and played the flute in a well-known ensemble. The Revolution radically changed his life and Rokk "dove into the open sea of war and revolution, exchanging his flute for a deadly Mauser" (Bulgakov, *Diaboliad* 104-105). Later he worked as an editor of a newspaper and finally, he ended up conducting scientific experiments without understanding anything about science. Feyt is presented as an ignorant man of action. In his description one may see the basis of an allegorical interpretation of the opportunists who came to power utterly unprepared to the positions they would occupy (Proffer 114).

Although Bulgakov managed to have *The Fatal Eggs* published, his satirical novella *A Heart of a Dog* (written only a year after *The Fatal Eggs*) appeared in print in the Soviet Union only in 1987. And there was a reason for that. Soviet censors would never let such a novella as *A Heart of a Dog* be published, as "...the whole story is written in a hostile tone and shows contempt for the Soviet regime... Bulgakov definitely hates and disdains the Soviet system and he denies its progress as well... The Soviet

authorities have a reliable, strict and vigilant guard, GLAVLIT[3]... [Therefore] this book will never see the light of the day" (Sakharov 67).

Bulgakov himself realized that his novella turned out to be more topical than he expected when he was writing it (Sakharov 64). The life under socialism that was so praised by the Soviet leaders and the idea of the "new" man are presented just oppositely in Bulgakov's novella. Poverty and misery are the signs of the new life under socialism. The attempt to create a "new man" turned out to be a failure. M.Shneider, one of the first listeners of *A Heart of a Dog* stated that it was "the first literary work that dared to be true" (Chudakova 245). Iu. Potekhin considered *A Heart of a Dog* to be a very impressive work, saying: "Bulgakov's fantasy is very powerful and convincing. The presence of Sharikov in real life is noticeable" (Chudakova 246).

Bulgakov was one of the first Soviet writers who portrayed drawbacks and weaknesses of the "new" life through satire. It is possible to say that Bulgakov follows the advice given by Dostoevsky: "Fantasy in art has its limits and principles. Fantasy should be so close to reality that it would be almost possible to believe in it" (Sakharov 54). Bulgakov makes the reader laugh at serious ethical issues, blending fantastic, realistic elements and the grotesque situations. Bulgakov's literary works are a combination of fantasy and reality and full of genuine humor and wit along with satire and bitter irony.

Bulgakov's works were not just a harsh denial and derision of everything new in Soviet society, though they were labeled as such by the critics. With the help of satire,

[3] GLAVLIT was a central censorship office in the USSR that was set up1922 and was empowered final authority over printed materials as well as the performing arts.

irony and the grotesque, the author not only describes numerous defects of everyday life, the ignorance of state officials and people's vices, but he also shows previous positive values such as culture, honesty and dignity. Bulgakov believed that satire can not be purposely created and that a writer does not need to painstakingly search for satirical situations in everyday life as these situations are presented by reality itself: "I am sure that any attempts to create satire are doomed to failure. It can not be created. It appears naturally by itself. It will appear at the time when there is an indignant writer who considers the present life imperfect. It will appear when such a writer begins to criticize this life. I suppose that the life of such a writer will be extremely difficult" (Chudakova 384).

The writer described by Bulgakov was Bulgakov himself whose life was made difficult by Soviet critics and censors. For all his life Bulgakov followed the credo: "a writer is a person who writes what he wants to write – and if he doesn't, he is not a writer" (Proffer 583). Regardless of the fact that Bulgakov "was nervous and exhausted for most of his life… and had been hounded in the press and blacklisted" (Proffer 582), he never became a sycophant of the Soviet literary critics. Bulgakov's thoughts were down on paper with sufficient clarity, should anyone have cared to read carefully" (Proffer 583).

Bulgakov's themes as well as the questions that he raised in his works did not stay within the scope of the state interests and the purpose of literature of that time. Unlike most of the writers of Socialist Realism, Bulgakov described Soviet life not the way it should be, but the way it was with all its negativity and problems. In order to publish his

works, Bulgakov was asked to change them and get rid of "unnecessary" and provocative parts. Bulgakov never agreed to the Soviet critics' suggestions, as he believed that a writer should be free to choose, create (not just to write) and express himself the way he wanted, but not according to some pattern prefigured by the Party.

One of Bulgakov's suppressed plays was *Flight*. Stalin would not have had anything against staging of the play if Bulgakov had added one or two dreams to the eight already existing in the play. In the additional dreams Bulgakov was asked to justify the reasons for the Civil War and the persecution of the intelligentsia by the Bolsheviks (Chudakova 311). The play did not appear in press and was not staged until 1962 because Bulgakov refused to make any alterations.

Moliere was another of Bulgakov's play that was published posthumously only in 1962. The reason for the banning of this play, in the critic Tikhonov's opinion, was that it had references to Soviet reality, although, according to Bulgakov himself, he "[did not touch] upon the modern world in it at all" (Curtis 100). Gorky added that "it was necessary not only to add some historical facts to the play and attach some social significance, but also to change its playful style. The play in its original form is not serious... and it will be condemned" (Chudakova 373-374). Bulgakov was upset and even surprised by such comments. In his letter to the editor, Bulgakov refused to accept Tikhonov's offer to change the "impudent" narrator in his play into a serious Soviet historian explaining that he is just a playwright, not a historian (Chudakova 373). He also refused to make any changes to his play at all: "You understand that after I have finished

my play I can't turn it inside out... If the book is not right for publishing then it should not be published. So, let's forget about it" (Chudakova 373).

Bulgakov did not always give up without trying to defend his plays. Sometimes Bulgakov was audacious, categorical and even rigid in his letters to the officials:

> Tell me, please, you're a director, how can a four-act play be turned into a three-act one? ... To put it briefly, *Zoyka* is a four-act play ... I am not going to write a new three-act play ... I imagined it would be like this: I write plays, the Studio puts them on. But it doesn't put them on! It's busy with a mass of other matters: it's drawing up plans for rewrites.... (Curtis 81)

Some of the critical comments addressed to Bulgakov were simply ridiculous such as the one about Bulgakov's play *Ivan the Terrible*: "Is it possible to make *Ivan the Terrible* say that now life is better than before?" (Chudakova 421). Another comment was made by the critic Orlinsky about Bulgakov's *The Days of the Turbins*. Orlinsky criticized Bulgakov for the fact that Aleksey Turbin did not have a servant who was treated badly, which would show the intelligentsia from a negative side. Bulgakov explained that in those conditions nobody had servants. He also noted that even if he did include a servant in his play, it would not please the critic:

> I can briefly present two scenes with a servant: the first one written by myself and the second one written by Orlinsky. Mine would be the following: "Vasiliy, start

> the samovar," Aleksey says. The servant replies: "Yes, sir." And the servant would not be mentioned anymore throughout the whole novel. So, my idea is that a good person, Aleksey Turbin, would not beat his servant or thrash him; it is something that Orlinsky would be interested in. (Chudakova 277)

Many critics of Bulgakov saw his satirical works as an attempt to discredit the Soviet system and slander the people building the new society. The critics misunderstood certain aesthetic values presented in Bulgakov's works. Different people in literary circles understood the problems of humanism, satire and human nature brought up in Bulgakov's works in their own way. Through exposing people's vices and noticing the negative sides of the organization of new life after the Revolution, Bulgakov tried to draw people's attention to their faults and help them redeem themselves from their weaknesses. He also appealed for justice and truth in people's actions.

Nevertheless, the state critics saw an evil satirical representation of the Soviet life in Bulgakov's works and continued writing scathing reviews. One of the main critics of Bulgakov, Lev Averbakh, distorted the author's conception calling Bulgakov's works "evil satire of the Soviet Union, outspoken mockery and blunt hostility" (Petelin 169). He also appealed to the critics to be vigilant, as Bulgakov was a writer who did not "attempt to disguise himself even in the colors of a fellow-traveller" (Curtis 109). Stalin called Bulgakov's play *Flight* an "anti-Soviet phenomenon" and *Crimson Island* "literary trash." Aleksander Bezymensky even went so far as to call Bulgakov "one of the nouveau bourgeois breed, spraying vitriolic but impotent spittle over the working class and its

Communist ideals" (Curtis 104).[4] By 1929, after long and oppressive persecutions of Bulgakov and malicious reviews in the Soviet mass media, such articles as "Theaters Are Being Liberated from Bulgakov's Plays" and "The End to Bulgakovschina" appeared (Petelin 243).

According to Liubov' Belozerskaia and Elena Bulgakova, Bulgakov closely watched the critics' comments addressed to him, cut them out of the newspapers and magazines and pasted them into his album. He posted the most ridiculous and villainous of the comments, so everybody could see them. He made fun of the spiteful critics and performed intermezzos on the topics he readily came up with (Petelin 266).

Some of the Soviet writers and satirists (Arkadiy Bukhov, for example) advised Bulgakov to write in a way to please censors: "Why are you being a fop? Why don't you write sketches like we do? … Why can others write sketches and try to make them better, so they can have them staged?" (Chudakova 314). Although Bulgakov was almost talked into such work, he changed his mind at the last moment, saying that he simply could not do it (Chudakova 314).

Bulgakov's desperate situation was getting worse. *The Days of the Turbins* was taken off the repertoire and Bulgakov's new plays, including "the most powerful one," were not staged. In January 1930 Bulgakov wrote to his brother Nikolay:

> All my literary works have perished, as have my literary plans. I am condemned to silence and, quite possibly, to complete starvation. In unbelievably difficult circumstances in the second half of 1929, I wrote a play about Moliere. It has

[4] Also look: Chudakova 274

> been recognized as the most powerful of my five plays by the best specialists in Moscow. But all the indications are that it will not be allowed on stage. (Curtis 99)

With time Bulgakov's situation did not get better. The fact that his work had been halted and the realization that he was not needed in the USSR drove him to despair. He again started thinking about seeking help from the government: "All night I painfully rack my brains to think up some means of salvation. But I can't see anything. Who else, I begin to think, can I write an official letter to?" (Curtis 101).

In March 1930 Bulgakov summoned up his courage and wrote his second letter to the Soviet Government. In his letter Bulgakov recounts his distress and the persecution to which he has been subjected by Soviet critics. He infers that there is no place for him and his works in Soviet literature and openly asks for freedom to write. The author admits that his views on literature are different from those of the Soviet critics. Bulgakov asks for permission to leave the country with his wife or alternatively requests to be given a job. Unlike the first letter, which was left unanswered, Bulgakov's second letter resulted in a phone call from Stalin himself.

The phone conversation with Stalin might have had a favorable effect on Bulgakov's life. He was offered a job in MKhAT and was enthusiastic about his position. Nevertheless, inspiration did not last for a long time: his new plays kept being suppressed. Bulgakov became totally disappointed with proletarian culture and its workers, who he considered strangers to Great Russian literature and to incipient Soviet

literature. Bulgakov craved freedom in literature, which was impossible in the Soviet Union, and he did not expect any changes in this sphere. After a year of working in MKhAT, Bulgakov left his position in the theatre. In May 1931 Bulgakov wrote his third letter to Stalin again requesting the Government of the USSR to "let him out until the autumn and to permit his wife to accompany him" (Curtis 128).

Stalin never replied to Bulgakov's third letter or let him go abroad, probably being afraid that Bulgakov would have not returned. Instead of a written reply, there was another response from Stalin: in 1932 the ban on the production of *Dead Souls* and *Moliere* was removed and the staging of *The Days of the Turbins* was revived. That gave Bulgakov more hope for possible changes, which in fact never came true.

All in all, the period of Bulgakov's life spanning from 1929 to his death was enormously difficult for him. The unjustified hopes of traveling abroad, Bulgakov's realization of being trapped inside the Soviet Union at the mercy of his critics and the suppression of most of his works (including *Moliere*) brought him to the state of nervous breakdown. The result of all Bulgakov's vain endeavors since 1929 was his work that later became *The Master and Margarita* (Curtis). Bulgakov even burnt his first version of the novel, when he realized that it was hopeless to have a literary career in the Soviet Union.

Bulgakov resumed his work on the novel and assiduously wrote it elaborating each scene. The first listeners of Bulgakov's novel quietly exchanged their remarks with each other: "Of course, it is unbelievably talented, and most likely, enormous work. But think about it, why is he writing it? After all, it can draw suspicion!" (Chudakova 461).

Reading parts of the novel, Bulgakov intentionally made sarcastic statements such as "Soon I will have it published!" and looked at the listeners' reaction (Chudakova 461). Nevertheless, he realized that it would not be published during his lifetime and even thought about giving up: "A demon has taken hold of me. I have begun to scribble down all over again page after page of that novel I destroyed three years ago. Why? I don't know. I'm just amusing myself. Let it fall into the river Lethe! Anyway, I will probably put it down again soon" (Curtis 160). However, Bulgakov did not give up working on *The Master and Margarita* even in very difficult moments of his life. He kept returning to his work with renewed excitement and worked on it till the end of his life.

The critic Viachaslav Zavalishin wrote that he did not know any other satirist besides Bulgakov who would have created such an audacious, truthful and expressive caricature of a Soviet person and the atmosphere of the 1930s, which flattened and twisted people's spirituality and morals (Sakharov 192). At that time, Bulgakov himself went through hardships and miseries that influenced his life. The author's situation and his somber thoughts about the irreversibility of the past, his creative life and the sense of some kind of trap, involuntary caused by the writer himself, served as the psychological background for Bulgakov's novel *The Master and Margarita.*

In his "sunset" novel Bulgakov continued referring to the scenes and problems presented in his earlier works. He combined the fantastic world full of contradictions and conflicts caused by the wrong person in the wrong place and the real world with its social and spiritual crisis, which in 1930s only became more intense.

It is possible to say that *The Master and Margarita* is a historical novel to a certain extent because it is rich in accurate details of Soviet everyday life. As always Bulgakov was true to himself and wrote about what many of the writers of that time would not dare to write or even think. Bulgakov did not try to please the censors who were advocating the method of Socialist Realism as the only possible and legitimate method in Soviet literature. On the contrary, in his novel Bulgakov wrote about the things that can not be found in the works approved by Soviet critics and would not be published during the period of Socialist Realism. He wrote about those things which ideologists of Socialist Realism were diligently trying to keep from the reader. Bulgakov portrayed life the way it actually was and used satire to show how deluded people were by the Soviet system.

CHAPTER IV

THE MASTER AND MARGARITA AS A NOVEL SUBVERTING THE PHENOMENON OF SOCIALIST REALISM

Despite the officially stated principles of Socialist Realism and all the persecution and horrors of everyday existence that Bulgakov went through, he remained a creator of his own texts and a "passionate supporter" of freedom of the press till his last days. He became a satirist and "he did so precisely at the very moment when no true satire (of the kind that penetrates into forbidden zones) was even thinkable any more in the USSR" (Curtis 107).

Such satire is evident in the novel *The Master and Margarita.* In the novel that Bulgakov worked on and off for more than 10 years, the author felt free to present all his beliefs. The attempts of the authorities to make Bulgakov retreat from his views and to make him tell tales prefigured by the Party lore were unsuccessful. Therefore in Bulgakov's novel not a Socialist Realist representation of life but rather true life of 1930s is shown. In *The Master and Margarita* one can recognize the spirit and the details of the Soviet time described by a writer who was not an obedient follower of Socialist Realism.

Bulgakov's novel combines two parts: one set in contemporary Moscow, the other in ancient Jerusalem, each brimming with historical and imaginary characters. "Two second-rate writers meet the devil one May evening in Moscow, and the devil, in the

guise of a traveling magician known as Woland, tells them a story about Pontius Pilate. One writer dies, the other chases the devil through Moscow and ends up in a clinic where he meets another patient, a writer known as the Master. The Master wrote a novel about Pontius Pilate [that resulted in his] nervous breakdown. The contents of the Master's novel … and the devil's story are identical and retell the story of the Gospels from an entirely different point of view" (Proffer 531). The plot of the novel develops around different characters and scenes at the same time: contemporary events influenced by the arrival of the Devil and his band who turn Moscow "upside down with theatre shows of black magic and tricks on the population;" the life of Master writing a story about Pontius Pilate; Margarita's (the Master's beloved) trying to save the Master by striking a bargain with the Devil – "she will reign at his ball if he returns the Master to her;" and the events in Judaea and Christ's crucifixion. "At the end of the novel the Master is finally returned to his mistress and Pilate is released from his long torment. Woland and his band leave the city; the Master and Margarita go to their final refuge, a special kind of afterlife," named "peace" (Proffer 531).

Already from the summary of *The Master and Margarita*, it is obvious that the novel does not fit into a typical master plot of the novels of Socialist Realism. Its elaborate structure, interdependence of events, mystical characters and historical figures having philosophical conversations would not have pleased the "new" reader looking for simplicity and practical recommendations in literature. Through the blend of satire, realism and fantasy Bulgakov shows the negative sides of life, drawbacks of the Soviet system and dreadful traits of people. Thus the novel serves a purpose absolutely opposite

to that of Socialist Realism. However, the novel still has features somewhat analogous to those of Socialist Realist novels. Such features as the portrayal of reality, the motif of the path leading from "spontaneity" to "consciousness," the "mentor"/"disciple" pattern, attempts to "sort out" villains and a feature of martyrdom are all found in *The Master and Margarita*. Nevertheless these features play an opposite role to those found in Socialist Realism.

Unlike in Socialist Realist novels, in Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita* one would hardly find any positive features of the reality of the 1930s or a radiant Socialist future. On the contrary, Bulgakov portrays reality exactly as it is and even shows details that were omitted in Socialist Realist novels.

One of the features that is present in Soviet reality of the 1930s but removed from Socialist Realist novels is the atmosphere of fear in which people live. This fear is caused by the secret police or, in other words, the OGPU. In the novel, people's feeling of horror leads many of them to a disease or persecution mania, since anyone can be arrested (Kreps). The feeling of anxiety made the Master burn his novel right before "there came a knock at [his] window" (Bulgakov, *Master* 148), which most likely saved his life. No evidence against the Master was found and he was set free. Only according to Ivan's face and his reaction, caused by the Master's story, can one become aware of the sense of fear of the secret police: "What the patient whispered into Ivan's ear evidently agitated him very much. Spasms repeatedly passed over his face. Fear and rage swam and flitted in his eyes" (148). In another scene when a man came to the basement looking for Aloisy, Margarita scared him away only by saying the word "arrested:"

> 'Aloisy?' asked Margarita, going closer to the window. 'He was arrested yesterday. Who's asking for him? What's your name?'
>
> That instant the knees and backside vanished; there came the bang of the gate.... (366)

Wary of arrests and indictment for dissent or criminal thoughts people are afraid to talk with each other or say too much. Even far away from Moscow flying with housemaid Natasha on his back, Nikolai Ivanovich implored her to be more quiet for somebody could hear them. A parallel can be drawn between people's fear of saying too much in contemporary Moscow and the meeting of Pontius Pilate with Aphranius in ancient Jerusalem. The entire conversation between Pontius Pilate and the head of the secret service is based on delicate hints which turn Pilate's order to kill Judas into an attempt to save his life (Kreps 107).

The words *OGPU* or *secret police* per se are not present in *The Master and Margarita* for people avoided using them in real life. Nevertheless the indefinite pronoun *they* and the adverb *there* are used instead in the novel. In the very first chapter Berlioz wants to report the foreigner "to them." He keeps saying: "[the foreigner] has to be sorted out … what a strange specimen … call, call! Call at once ... they'll come and sort it all out immediately" (45). The financial director of the Variety Theatre, Rimsky, sends the administrator Varenukha with the telegrams from Likhodeev to some office without

mentioning its name: "Go right now, Ivan Savelyevich, take it there personally. Let them sort it out" (110).

Thoughts about arrests do not leave Bulgakov's characters. In the scene where Varenukha is sent on business and does not return, Rimsky decides that he was arrested but can not understand the reason for the arrest (Kreps 108): "Rimsky knew where he [Varenukha] had gone, but he had gone and...not come back! Rimsky shrugged his shoulders and whispered to himself: 'But what for?'" (Bulgakov, *Master* 120).

When Styopa Likhodeev saw that the door to Berlioz's room was sealed up, he did not think that an accident could have happened to Berlioz. The first idea was that he did something wrong and was arrested. Moreover Styopa immediately started recollecting his talk with Berlioz and tried to remember whether he himself could have said something that could lead to his own arrest:

> And here some most disagreeable little thoughts began stirring in Styopa's brain, about the article which, as luck would have it, he had recently inflicted on Mikhail Alexandrovich for publication in his journal ... the article, just between us, was idiotic! And worthless. And the money was so little... Immediately after the recollection of the article there came flying a recollection of some dubious conversation that had taken place ... Of course, this conversation could not have been called dubious in the full sense of the word but it was on some unnecessary subject ... Before the appearance of this seal the conversation would undoubtedly have been considered a perfect trifle, but now, after the seal . . . . (81-82)

Even Margarita meeting Azazello for the first time suspects him to be a police official: "You want to arrest me?" (225).

Bulgakov's intentions in *The Master and Margarita* are far from the intentions of writers of Socialist Realism. Bulgakov did not aim to portray life in a small town, *kolkhoz* or construction site, nor did he intend to show a way out of a tough industrial problem. Bulgakov set the scenes of the novel in Moscow and Jerusalem and brought people, their relationship, deeds and inner feelings to the forefront.

The Variety Theatre is a model for the way of life in Moscow: gossip, adultery, bribes, jobbery, love affairs, lies, envy and other sins permeate everyday life. Bulgakov shows that all these negative features are not the remains of the past, old regime or NEP period, but rather represent the present in the Soviet Union. The "new" Soviet man does not differ from any other person in any other country of the past or present. Woland comes to Moscow to see the Muscovites "en masse" and to find out whether they have changed inwardly after the Socialist reorganization. He comes to the conclusion that people have not changed for any better: "They are people like any other people … They love money, but that has always been so … Well, they're light-minded … mercy sometimes knocks at their hearts … ordinary people … In general, reminiscent of the former ones… only the housing problem has corrupted them…" (126).

The housing problem is a typical feature of life in Moscow of 1930s. Unlike in Socialist Realist novels in which one's own place of living has no importance, in *The Master and Margarita* the problem of housing is constantly mentioned throughout the

novel. Members of the literary association MASSOLIT talk about dachas and apartments, the tenants of house 302-bis have pretensions for apartment 50, Koroviev tells a story about an "apartment-exchange opportunist," and the Master suffers from an acquaintance who wants to take possession of his apartment. Bulgakov satirically describes the considerable public excitement generated by the possibility of getting hold of apartment 50:

> [Nikanor Ivanovich Bosoy (chairman of the tenants' association)] began to receive telephone calls and then personal visits with declarations containing claims to the deceased's living space … They contained pleas, threats, libels, denunciations, promises to do renovations at their own expense, references to unbearable overcrowding and the impossibility of living in the same apartment with bandits … Nikanor Ivanovich was called out to the front hall of his apartment, plucked by the sleeve, whispered to, winked at, promised that he would not be left a loser. (95-96)

The real reason for Polplavsky's trip to Moscow was not the funeral of "his wife's nephew" but the possibility of inheriting an apartment in Moscow: "An apartment in Moscow is a serious thing! For some unknown reason, Maximilian Andreevich did not like Kiev, and the thought of moving to Moscow had been gnawing at him so much lately that he had even begun to sleep badly" (195-196).

Bringing up the housing problem, Bulgakov also shows the negative sides of sharing living space. Some people live in the same apartment with criminals, others quarrel all the time finding fault with each other:

> [In the kitchen] two primuses were roaring on the range, and next to them stood two women with spoons in their hands, squabbling.
>
> 'You should turn the toilet light off after you, that's what I'm telling you, Pelageya Petrovna … or else we'll apply to have you evicted.'
>
> 'You're a good one yourself,' the other woman answered. (236)

The Black Magic performance and the Muscovites' strong desire to get clothes from the stage boutique by all possible means show the problem of the shortage of goods in the Soviet Union. This problem is also noticeable in the scene where a post woman on duty wears slippers when she brings telegrams to the Variety Theatre: "… a woman in a uniform jacket, visored cap, black skirt and [slippers] came into the office. From a small pouch at her belt the woman took a small white square and a notebook and asked: 'Who here is Variety? A super-lightning telegram. Sign here" (105-106).

In Socialist Realist novels the theme of food is not emphasized let alone sumptuous feasts. In *The Master and Margarita*, on the contrary, Bulgakov focuses attention on food and provisions drawing a distinction between the availability of food for ordinary people and the privileged class of the population. A usual meal for someone like a chairman of a tenants' association consists of pickled herring with green onions,

dram of vodka and a plate of beet soup, which for a worker from a novel of Socialist Realism would seem to be a "royal" meal or would even be unheard of. The privileged class of people such as writers who have "just an ordinary wish to be like human [beings]" can enjoy delicious delicacies at the Griboedov restaurant much cheaper than anywhere else (57): "... that perch can be met with at Coliseum as well. But at the Coliseum a portion of perch costs thirteen rubles fifteen kopecks, and here five-fifty!" (57).

The difference in privileges is also shown in the scene at a foreign currency store. Those who have foreign currency, although it is illegal, are able to buy all the things that ordinary people can not obtain in typical Soviet stores such as chocolate, fruit, 'Choice Kerch Herring,' cotton in the richest assortment of colors, calicoes, chiffon and shoes.

Bulgakov describes food service in public places, showing both the shortage of and the bad quality of food. It is impossible to buy anything but warm apricot soda from the stand 'Beer and Soft drinks' even on a hot spring evening. At the Coliseum they serve three-day-old perch. At the buffet at the Variety Theatre, employees and the manager try to economize on food by deceiving the customers. Koroviev, after visiting this buffet commented: "Feta cheese is never green in color ... it ought to be white. Yes, and the tea? It's simply swill! I saw with my own eyes some slovenly girl add tap water from a bucket to your huge samovar, while the tea went on being served..." (205).

Besides portraying details of everyday life, Bulgakov ironically depicts the life of Soviet writers and the literary association MASSOLIT. MASSOLIT is a parody of RAPP, the regulations of which Bulgakov did not accept. The author does not give the

meaning of the abbreviation in his novel, but by the analogy of existent MASTKOMDRAM (Manufactory of communist dramatic art) "MASSOLIT can be deciphered as a manufactory of Soviet literature" (Sokolov, *Entsiklopediia* 347). We can see the ignorance of the members of this organization; literary questions are not discussed in this society, the sphere of literature does not concern these people. They are mostly busy with satisfying their own interests: receiving benefits, eating and drinking and having fun.

It is not writers of great literary talent who become members of MASSOLIT. This literary association is made up of writers who fulfill the "social order" (*sotsialnyi zakaz*) and are rewarded for their work. The most "talented" of them receive five- and six-room dachas in Perelygino, the country colony for writers. According to Bulgakov, literary work by the "social order" did only harm as it destroyed real talented writers and created a field of activity for dull scribblers such as the members of MASSOLIT. Talking with poet Homeless, the Master says that he does not like Ivan's poems without even having read them. Then he adds: "As if I haven't read others..." (134). That is a direct reference to the fact that a Soviet writer works according to the "social order" made from above. In a conversation with Koroviev Behemoth ridicules the members of the literary association comparing them to pineapples, which are cultivated similarly:

> 'Hah! This is the writers' house! You know, Behemoth, I've heard many good and flattering things about this house. Pay attention to this house, my friend. It's

> pleasant to think how under this roof no end of talents are being sheltered and nurtured.'
>
> 'Like pineapples in a greenhouse,' said Behemoth.... (352)

Another place where Bulgakov expresses his hostility to the "social order" is during the master's conversation with an editor:

> Saying nothing about the essence of the novel, he asked me who I was, where I came from, and how long I had been writing, and why no one had heard of me before and even asked what in my opinion was a totally idiotic question: who had given me the idea of writing a novel on such a strange theme? (143)

The Master's story in the novel is Bulgakov's experience in the world of Soviet literature. The Master's novel about Pontius Pilate was not accepted by Berlioz just as Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita* would not have been accepted by the Soviet critics. Neither the Master's novel nor Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita* met the requirements of Socialist Realism: instead of antireligious propaganda and the glorification of the "new" man building socialism, the novels narrate events in Jerusalem which are far from Soviet reality. The topic of the novels itself was not in accordance with Soviet literary ideology of that time. According to Elena Bulgakova, Ilya Ilf and Evgeny Petrov, after listening to some parts of Bulgakov's novel, stated that they would

have agreed to publish it on the condition that Bulgakov had taken the "ancient chapters" out of his novel (Chudakova 462).

The campaign against the Master's novel about Pontius Pilate, *Udarit' po pilatchine*, is reminiscent of the campaign, *Udarim po bulgakovschine*, against Bulgakov's plays *Flight, The Days of the Turbins*, *Fateful Eggs* and *Zoika's Apartment:*

> Some rare falsity and insecurity could be sensed literally in every line of these articles, despite their threatening and confident tone. I had the feeling, and I couldn't get rid of it, that the authors of these articles were not saying what they wanted to say and their rage sprang precisely from that. (145)

In the scene where Koroviev and Behemoth are not allowed into the writers' restaurant because they do not have identity cards, Bulgakov derides the role of a writer in the USSR: "Good gracious, this is getting to be ridiculous! … a writer is defined not by any identity card, but by what he writes" (354). The identity cards are obviously given to dodgers, mediocre performers of the "social order," faithful party critics and literary demagogues.

Bulgakov never calls his hero a writer, the word itself (and the meaning, which it was associated with at that time) even made the hero angry: "Are you a writer?" asked the poet with interest. The visitor frowned, threatened Ivan with his fist and said: "I am a master" (138).

Although the "Jerusalem chapters" of the novel go far back into the past and their events seem to be far removed from Soviet reality, the issues discussed in ancient Jerusalem are quite topical for life in Moscow. Yeshua's freedom to express his ideas as well as the Master's freedom to write was oppressed by the authorities. According to Bulgakov, any kind of authority destroys spiritual freedom and creative work. Yeshua talks about the reorganization of the government system, the main idea of which is that "all authority is violence over people and that a time will come when there will be no authority of the Caesars, nor any other authority. Man will pass into the kingdom of truth and justice where there will be no need for any authority" (30). Besides doubting the governmental system, Bulgakov expresses his attitude to the state power over writers and its method of Socialist Realism in literature.

Yeshua considers cowardice one of the main human vices. Like Pontius Pilate who did not have enough courage to save Yeshua, Soviet writers of Socialist Realism wrote to the "social order" being afraid to act against the Soviet regime.

Bulgakov's heroes in *The Master and Margarita* differ markedly from the typical hero of Socialist Realism. Bulgakov's heroes are not guided by class-consciousness and revolutionary ideas. They act according to their feelings, human morals and spiritual values. They do not try to join society or be like everyone else. Bulgakov's heroes seek privacy and prefer to live away from the city bustle. They are highly individualized and act on their own. The Master "lived solitarily, had no family anywhere and almost no acquaintances in Moscow" (30). Woland and his band preferred a private apartment to a hotel room. Ivan Homeless no longer shares the ideas of the members of the literary

association. Margarita "knew nothing of the horrors of life in a communal apartment" (217) and attached no significance to her position in society compared to many other women.

The characters in *The Master and Margarita* can not be clearly divided into positive and negative figures as the novel does not have absolutely positive heroes. They are rather sympathetic characters who are thoughtful and considerate of other people and negative characters who fraudulently try to satisfy their own needs. Bulgakov unmasks those characters who seemingly serve the state and shows their real selves. The members of the literary association do nothing but receive benefits. Likhodeev uses his position and is singled out for the negligent performance of his duty. Bosoy, the chairman of the tenants' association, takes bribes. Aloisy denounces the Master to get hold of his apartment just as Judas betrays Yeshua to get money.

Unlike the Socialist Realist hero, Bulgakov's hero is weak and diffident. Both the Master and Pontius Pilate are men of little hope. The Master despairs of his life and Pilate is unable to stand his ground. The Master does not believe in changes and gives up even when he is offered what he wants: "I'm nobody now ... I'm mentally ill ... I want nothing more in my life, except to see you [Margarita]. But again I advise you to leave me, or you'll perish with me" (285-288). Pontius Pilate is tormented by deep remorse as he sent the innocent vagrant philosopher to death contrary to his belief:

> ... of course he would [ruin his career]. In the morning he still would not, but now at night, after weighing everything, he would agree to ruin it. He would do

> everything to save the decidedly innocent, mad dreamer and healer from execution! … he wants to talk with the prisoner Ha-Nozri, because, as he insists, he never finished what he was saying that time…. (320, 381)

Bulgakov's image of a woman and his words about "true, faithful, eternal love" are contrary to the role of women and love in Socialist Realist novels (*Master* 217). Love, according to Bulgakov, is the essential feeling of a woman who is not a stranger to emotional feelings. Margarita in Bulgakov's novel does not share any resemblance to Socialist Realist female heroines. Margarita is womanly and elegant. She does not work or sacrifice herself for the welfare of the state. Margarita leaves her husband, "a very prominent specialist, who, moreover, had made a very important discovery of state significance" (217), and becomes the lover and spiritual companion of the Master whose ideals have nothing in common with the ideals of socialism. After the Master's disappearance, the "great family" can not replace Margarita's beloved one. She does not seek support from society, but strikes a bargain with the Devil instead.

Both novels of Socialist Realism and Bulgakov's novel show the characters' progress from "spontaneity" to "consciousness," although this progress in *The Master and Margarita* has an opposite result. The most significant indication of progress in the novel (which might be called Socialist Realist regress) is evident in the literary careers and thoughts of two poets – Aleksander Riukhin and Ivan Homeless. Both of them are working according to the "social order:" Homeless works on an antireligious poem and Riukhin writes poems glorifying Socialist holidays and everyday work. In Stravinsky's

clinic the poets were "cured" of the delusions. Homeless denounces Riukhin who does not serve art, but MASSOLIT for privileges. The verses *Soaring Up! Soaring Down!* dedicated to the First of May do not match with the personality of Riukhin, "a little kulak who just disguises himself as a proletarian" (68). Riukhin can not come to his senses when he realizes that everything that was said by Homeless is the bitter truth. Riukhin's path to consciousness is shown in his inner dialogue:

> Yes, poetry… He was thirty years old! And, indeed, what then? So then he would go on writing his several poems a year. Into old age? Yes, into old age. What would these poems bring him? Glory? 'What nonsense! Don't deceive yourself, at least. Glory will never come to someone who writes bad poems. What makes them bad? The truth, he was telling the truth!' Riukhin addressed himself mercilessly. 'I don't believe in anything I write! (73)

Ivan Homeless went further than Riukhin on his way to consciousness. The poet Homeless, who once wrote according to the "social order," turned into Professor Ivan Nikolaevich Ponyrev who works at the Institute of History and Philosophy. After meeting the "hypnotists" at the Patriarch's Ponds, being diagnosed with schizophrenia and talking with the Master, Ivan becomes "aware of everything." He stopped writing his "monstrous" poems as he once promised: "I'll keep my word, I won't write any more poems. I'm interested in something else now … I want to write something else. You know, while I lay here, a lot came clear to me" (373). Thus having become "more

consciouss," Ivan realizes the uselessness of the "social order" and wants to write "something else."

Other characters become "conscious" in different ways. Margarita and her maid Natasha become witches and are very happy about that because they were bored living in Soviet society. Pontius Pilate realizes his mistake and deeply repents that he was afraid to act against state interests. Some of the Variety Theatre workers leave their positions after they had realized that they did not perform their work well. The master of ceremonies Bengalsky understands that he could not continue in his former position, so he retired and started living on his savings. Likhodeev is appointed to a new position as manager of a grocery store, and Sempleiarov, the former chairman of the Acoustics Commission, becomes a manager of a mushroom cannery. Varenukha stays on at his position at the theatre but becomes very responsive and polite.

The mentor/disciple pattern that is very characteristic of Socialist realist novels is also visible in *The Master and Margarita*. Nevertheless Bulgakov's mentors impart ideas contrary to those propagated by Socialist Realism. It is possible to identify the main mentor/disciple pairs of characters in the novel as the Master and Ivan Homeless, Yeshua and Matthew Levi, and Yeshua and Pontius Pilate.

The Master calls Ivanushka his disciple and entrusts finishing his novel to him. Ivan does not follow the directions given by Berlioz or any other performers of "social order" any more. Instead he chooses to write a sequel to the novel which was not accepted by Soviet critics.

Matthew Levi considers himself the only disciple of Yeshua. Matthew Levi used to be a tax collector but after listening to Yeshua he changed and "money [became] hateful to him" (23). Nevertheless Yeshua himself states that Levi misinterprets his ideas:

> … there's one with a goatskin parchment who follows me and keeps writing all the time. But once I peeked into his parchment and was horrified. I said decidedly nothing of what's written there. I implored him: "Burn your parchment, I beg you!" But he tore it out of my hands and ran away. (23)

Pontius Pilate can be considered to be Yeshua's disciple as well. Despite the fact that he sends Yeshua to death, the conversation with the philosopher changes Pilate and makes him look at himself and understand the world differently. Pontius Pilate, the arm of the law, renounces his former beliefs about authority over people and deeply repents his misdeed. Pilate becomes even a better disciple than Levi, for he better understands his ideas: "I know you consider yourself a disciple of Yeshua, but I can tell you that you learnt nothing of what he taught you. … You are cruel, and he was not cruel…" (329). Yeshua himself acknowledges his link to Pontius Pilate: "Where there's one of us, straight away there will be the other! Whenever I am remembered, you will at once be remembered, too! I, the foundling, the son of unknown parents, and you, the son of an astrologer-king and a miller's daughter, the beautiful Pila" (320).

It should be noted that Woland and his gang can be regarded as "mentors" as well. They point out people's vices, expose their ulterior motives and teach them lessons. Ivan

becomes one of the first city-dwellers to encounter Woland in Moscow. This unexpected meeting marks the beginning of the path to consciousness for Ivan.

Woland has characteristics similar to those of the villain of Socialist Realist novels. He looks suspicious and unattractive with his irregular features, crooked teeth and twisted mouth. He is a "foreign spy" who doubts the Soviet regime and threatens its functioning. However, Bulgakov ridicules the vain attempts of the Muscovites to "sort out" the "villain" who laughs only at dishonest citizens and does no harm to decent people. Unlike the Socialist Realist villain, Woland is a sympathetic character who also has features of the positive hero. He is fair, benevolent, judicious, well-mannered and courteous with women. Thus Woland is not regarded as a "true villain" in Bulgakov's novel. Most likely the society itself that consists of bribers, liars and worthless workers is considered to be the main source of villainy. Bulgakov shows that people being dishonest deceive mainly themselves. Such dishonest people fill high positions in the theatre and literary association, thus serving at the head of cultural development of the society.

Bulgakov's hero, the Master, does not belong to the state literary associations or the theatre direction. He does not follow the stated principles or official beliefs, and he is not willing to adjust himself to the demands of the authorities. He follows the principles of truth instead and chooses to write a novel which is not accepted by the critics. The Master as a true literary artist remains true to himself and suffers for that. In a state where the literary artist is devoid of the freedom to write, the Master loses his heart and perishes as an artist. Like the martyr Yeshua who suffers and dies for propagating the truth, The Master suffers for his beliefs. The Master is rewarded for his suffering with peace where

he can enjoy the freedom to create, the freedom that he did not have in his lifetime. The Master ceases to exist but he lives on in the thoughts of his follower Ivan as well as in his novel that remains after him, for "manuscripts do not burn" (287).

The Master and Margarita was published only 26 years after Bulgakov's death and became a trustworthy literary source that shows life in the Soviet Union of the 20s-30s. Bulgakov's realism in *The Master and Margarita* is not only "fantastic" and satirical, but also classical as he follows the literary trends of Gogol, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky and Saltykov-Shchedrin. Bulgakov's realism is critical as he not only portrays life as it is, but also points out its weaknesses and expresses his critical opinion about Soviet society. Bulgakov did not create his characters according to the pattern imposed by Soviet critics, nor did he follow the principles of the main method in Soviet literature. The way Bulgakov portrayed reality in *The Master and Margarita* conflicted with the method of Socialist Realism and often was opposite to its main principles. Bulgakov's novel was written without any attempts to conceal the drawbacks of the Soviet regime or to prove the goals of socialism. Thus *The Master and Margarita* opposes the idea of Socialist Realism in literature and subverts its main principles.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

After a long process of development, Socialist Realism became the main method of Soviet literature and determined its content. The main goal of Socialist Realist literature was to portray reality through the lens of the undoubted victory of communism, raise people's spirit, create the atmosphere of a "happy" life expectation and effectively lead the reader to understand communist ideology. To reach this goal, the general principles of Socialist Realism were formulated and officially confirmed. Soviet writers' "freedom" to create was confined within the limits of the party's demand to follow the conventions of Socialist Realism. Thus a fictional world significantly different from reality was created under the supervision of the Soviet authorities and with the help of the joint efforts of Soviet writers. This world was populated with happy, free and hard-working toilers who were involved in the process of building a radiant future by exposing the enemy, sacrificing their personal interests for the welfare of the state, fulfilling and over-fulfilling the five-year plans and making their way to "consciousness."

Besides the Socialist Realist "world," there existed the true reality represented by writers "digressing" from the goal of Socialist realist literature. Such a reality is portrayed by Bulgakov in his novel *The Master and Margarita,* which subverts Socialist Realist conventions. Never trying to adjust to the requirements of Soviet critics, Bulgakov

portrayed reality not as it should be but as it was. He used a satirical approach and a blend of realism and fantasy to emphasize the weaknesses and drawbacks of life under the Soviet regime. Bulgakov followed the literary traditions of Classicism, Romanticism and Critical Realism and considered his teachers to be the classical writers of the 19th century, not Soviet literary censors who dictated their will to writers.

Bulgakov's novel *The Master and Margarita* expresses the author's literary beliefs and views on Soviet society and life in the Soviet Union. Unlike Socialist Realist novels that follow the principles imposed by the party, *The Master and Margarita* follows the ideas of humanism and ethics. Instead of propagating a radiant future under socialism, Bulgakov's novel focuses on the present and draws attention to the negative sides of the new life organization after the Revolution. In his novel Bulgakov does not anticipate the future shape of a new man, "heroize" or exaggerate him the way the Soviet Party demanded. The main characters of the novel either belong to the dark power, express thoughts against the authorities, loose their hope in Soviet society or make bargains with the Devil being disappointed with their life. All the other characters who represent Soviet people are bribers, liars or worthless workers. Moreover, Bulgakov shows that not much has changed in society since the Soviet government came to power.

Bulgakov never wrote his works to meet the requirements of the "social order," nor did he try to conceal the negative sides of Soviet reality. *The Master and Margarita* is the result of Bulgakov's long and painstaking attempts to represent Soviet reality of 1920-30s contrary to life presented by Socialist Realist novels.

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