

## **FEATURES OF THE AUTHOR'S WORLDVIEW IN THE NOVEL BY MIKHAIL BULGAKOV 'THE MASTER AND MARGARITA'**

**Prof. Dr. Olga A. Karlova<sup>1</sup>**

**Prof. Dr. Natalia P. Koptseva<sup>1</sup>**

**<sup>1</sup> Siberian Federal University**

### **ABSTRACT**

The article analyzes the mythological systems, that had a significant impact on the outlook of Mikhail Bulgakov as the author of the great novel 'The Master and Margarita', the iconic literary work in Russia of XX-of XXI centuries. The article criticizes the tradition of literary studies, where the philosophical context of the novel 'The Master and Margarita' is interpreted exclusively in the context of Russian philosophical tradition. The article identifies three semantic constructs of the novel, reveals their basic content, their mutual influence. Based on the analysis of mythological storylines, the content of the philosophical worldview of Mikhail Bulgakov is constructed.

**Keywords:** literary innovations, literary tradition, Soviet myth, philosophical symbolism, literary 'neosymbolism'.

### **INTRODUCTION**

It is a well-known opinion, which is considered quite rightful, that stories of Russian literature and Russian philosophy coincide substantially. This phenomenon is rightly associated with the social situation in Russia of the 'Golden' and 'Silver' ages of the Russian Literature of XIX-XX centuries, as well as with the traditions of figurative art forms of domestic philosophizing. However, it is considered that the novel by Mikhail Bulgakov 'The Master and Margarita' essentially falls out of the Russian literary retrospectives [1]. So, in American literature, particularly the works of M. Kreps, it is called innovative for Russian literature, it is not easily amenable to the studies of literary criticism, which approaches it with the old standard system of measurements [2]. However, does this mean that the novel falls out of traditions of Russian philosophical thought?

### **MYTHOLOGICAL WORLDS OF THE NOVEL BY MIKHAIL BULGAKOV 'THE MASTER AND MARGARITA'**

The novel by Mikhail Bulgakov 'The Master and Margarita' is unusual for the time of its creation: science fiction in the novel is connected with realistic fates, a myth with historical accuracy, theosophy with demonic, romantics with clowning. Today it is clear for how many decades the book was really ahead of its time. The novel is mosaic and,

‘running’ forward, it alternates breaking into thematic parts with re-discovery of the unity of the plot. But it becomes obvious right away that this novel- polyconstruct has a single semantic frame, a value-philosophical ‘super centre’.

Three constructs of Bulgakov’s novel are the three layers of the narrative – literary-biblical, infernal and the one ‘describing customs, morals and manners’, representing Moscow of the 30-ies of XX century. This last construct cannot be interpreted only in the spirit of realistic satire on the Moscow of the Soviet era, it is not so simple. The space of represented in the novel Soviet reality, reflecting mainly the literary and theatrical milieu, is defined too rigidly. At the helm of the ‘literary proceedings’ of the country are such men as Berlioz, whose sin in relation to creative work is worse than just ignorant interpretation of literature as a ‘weapon in the fight for the financial plan’ [3]. This sin of crime against art is interpreted by Bulgakov, in accordance with the tradition of Dante: the more spirituality and humanity it possesses, the worse and more dangerous it is.

Not without association with the famous Blok’s image of ‘the music of revolution’, there appears a ‘musical-leader’ theme in ‘The Master and Margarita’, the theme associated with the figures of the powerful editor and the Chairman of Massolit (mass literature) Mikhail Berlioz and Professor of Medicine Stravinsky. Political allusions no less than literary ones, permeate the text of the novel. Berlioz with his bald head, childlessness, fear of the ‘attack’ and enormous erudition is typical. The professor Stravinsky, connected with Berlioz by his ‘composer’s surname’, with his soft and insinuating manner of speaking he is also correlated by several researchers with the central political figure in Russia at that time. This is indicated by mimicking the famous telephone conversation of Bulgakov with Stalin in conversation of Ivan Bezdomny (‘homeless’) with Professor Stravinsky.

And yet it is fundamentally important that the political and social allusions are presented in the novel indirectly, through the layer of artistic creativity as a medium and as a phenomenon. Before us, in essence, is the Soviet myth about creativity – ‘a new creativity myth’. Its meanings are, no doubt, alien to the writer, and therefore they cause in the reader a sense of the absurdity of what is happening. ‘A new creativity myth’ is constructed from the many arguments (reflections) about creativity and love, in which most philosophical-satirical characters of the Moscow of the 1930s are involved. And as the antithesis to this, the motive of love and the motive of creativity are heard, which are essentially associated with the main characters – the Master and Margarita, and philosophically - with the tradition of neosymbolists (mladosymbolists). The Master and Margarita practically single-handedly confront the organized ‘masses’ of their opponents and their leaders. The writer often gives them the role of his own voice, ‘living’ the philosophy of existence with their minds and souls. Both motives in the novel are presented in their inseparability and unity, which is the expression of the author’s philosophical conception. Margarita as an essential condition of life of the Master is virtually present in his confession to Ivan Bezdomny. As for the heroine herself, separated from her beloved, all her feelings and actions about the Master are guided by her thoughts and care about him.

The Master is the elect, not only is he endowed with the artistic vision of the world, but also with the ability of understanding its semantic revelations. But 'pure' contemplation is fraught with tragedy first and foremost for the creator himself: abandoning the fight for his work, he could not write any more. Margaret is not only the Master's lover, her image has deep symbolism. It is the feminine principle of Bulgakov's 'creative' world of myth, related to national Russian mentality in the spirit of Solovyov's teachings and the best traditions of female characters in Russian literature. In contrast to the contemplative position of the Master, the heroine takes an active role in trying to lead the fight with life's circumstances, abandoned by the Master. Passionate 'life forming' activity of the heroine echoes with life forming of Sophia as a philosophical incarnation of Creativity in the Russian philosophical symbolism, in which it is also possible to find the origins of the contemplative position of the Master.

Forces of darkness endow Margarita with supernatural abilities to fly and to be invisible, these forces make their judgments themselves and pass the verdict, restoring the justice, which is known only to them. The nature of this justice, 'face- eternity (humanity)'. Its main dimension is eternity: hence is the exclamation of Woland: 'O people, you haven't changed', addressed to centuries old deep-rooted vices of men. Its main character is the cold rationality of 'chelo (face)', the seat and the secret of the ruthless mind. One can cite a lot of evidence of the fact that intellectual-ethical principle, inherent in Russian philosophy of the beginning of the twentieth century, is important for Bulgakov as well.

The second construct of the novel - the demonic, infernal - is also associated with the problem of creativity. On the one hand, practically all its representatives have 'literary predecessors'. Woland is the character with one of the 'totemic' names of Goethe's Mephistopheles. Korovyev is a 'citizen with the strangest appearance. On his small head there was a jockey-cap, he was wearing a checked skimpy light jacket .. seven feet tall, but with narrow shoulders, incredibly thin and with a face made for derision' [1], in short, exactly the way that devil came to Ivan Karamazov in the novel by F. Dostoevsky 'Crime and punishment'.

The name Azazel came to the novel from the Old Testament, it is derived from 'Azazel'. It is the demon of the waterless desert. The killer-demon at times looks like a parody in Bulgakov's novel with his chicken bone in his pocket - 'small, but unusually broad in the shoulders, with the bowler hat on his head and a fang, protruding from his mouth, making this already unprecedentedly ugly face even more ugly. And besides, he had fiery-red hair' [1]. As for the cat, a funny Woland's jester, being huge, black, with 'reckless cavalry mustache' it comes from a magical 'element of fear' of the Russian and European folklore.

On the other hand, forces of the other world in the novel play the role of a bridge between the ancient world at the dawn of Christianity (the prototype of the literary-biblical world) and the era, contemporary to Bulgakov. This connection through eternity is the symbol of eternal existence and interconnection of good and evil in the world. These two sides of the space in Bulgakov's world of myth are also revealed in the novel in the guises of love and retribution. Bulgakov's Woland is also able to predict the future, and to remember the events of the past thousand years. He argues with his opponents from the standpoint of eternity, from this position, he exposes the absurdity of the world, the futility of the aspirations of Moscow 'new creators' and life, as well as

its model – art. In his reasoning, creativity appears as a philosophy of eternity, which is also immanently inherent in the Russian philosophical tradition.

The way the righteous at the Last Judgment, sinners at Satan's ball will be rewarded (punished) 'according to their faith'. It is not by chance that criminals against the Word, which, according to the researchers, is treated by Bulgakov after the Gospel of John, are central to the philosophy of eternity. They are punished by 'absolute nothingness (non-existence)', 'absence of memory', which, according to Bulgakov, is the heaviest punishment of a mysterious myth, 'co-creating' evil and good. Beside such retribution, the punishment of Frida and Pilate seems humane, which also contains the element of both internal connection and debate with philosophical and literary precursors of the writer. Yu. Lotman points to a cycle of 'human-infernal' in this world: 'Wrong acts cause a single evil, violation of the predefined symbolic links breaks the very foundation of human society and turns the Earth into the Kingdom of Satan – Hell' [4, 35]

The third construct, literary – biblical, is actually a novel in the novel, embodied by the subjective creative myth of the Master. Here Bulgakov anticipates the postmodern quest for self-sufficiency of the literary text against the text of the reality. Literary-biblical scenes, created primarily on the basis of literary sources, represent the highest ethical point of the novel. In literary-biblical scenes the writer focused the action around Pontius Pilate and Yeshua Ha-Notsri, the character, rising to the Gospel's Jesus Christ. The ordinary appearance and dissonant name seemed to specially emphasize the human element in Yeshua. In depicting this contrast of appearance with the beauty of his soul and the idea of the triumph of truth and good (kind) people, Bulgakov is apocryphally polemical outwardly, but inwardly faithful to the Christian ideal in its Orthodox incarnation, rising in the ancient tradition of Hesychasm.

But perhaps the most apocryphal from the standpoint of Orthodox biblical text is the image of Pontius Pilate, who occupies a nearly central place in the 'face-eternity (human)' aspect of the Master (as well as Bulgakov). Supernaturally foreseeing his impending immortality, at the moment of the tragic choice Pilate binds his own 'eternity' with the poor tramp, who had been brought before his trial. Such artistic and philosophical interpretation of the images was certainly innovative in the artistic incarnation of the Gospel theme. And at the same time surprisingly logical from the point of view of the Character of the Christian Faith. And at the same time surprisingly logical from the standpoint of the Christian Symbol of Faith. To such a degree that there appears the belief that if this thesis happens to be missing from the Gospel, it is by pure chance. Both Pilate (in the literary and the biblical world), and Woland (in the historical world 'of eternity') play the same role – they preserve the true history of Yeshua for mankind. In other words – the story of the true Joshua, who shows inclination to improvement of the tools of learning the truth, characteristic of Russian philosophical tradition. [5]. In this search for the truth, Pilate is a symbol of eternal doubt, while Woland is the symbol of knowledge, which is the essence of 'many sorrows'.

Like the characters of the 'literary- biblical' construct, the Master and Margarita acquire peace in the expanse of the river of moonlight, in which the tragic hero Ivan Bezdomny (Homeless) dipped once a year in the night of the spring full moon, joining, even for a moment, the light of the truth, raised up above the world. The tragedy of Ivan is the loss of his own private Shelter of meanings, organic in the national historical and artistic aspects, in exchanging it for the lunatic asylum [6].

The reader sees all the three semantic constructs of the novel in their interpenetration and interaction, their mutual 'lighting' each other and mutual reflection. In this way the multi-layered and multispheric philosophical space of Bulgakov's mysterious novel is born. And space and characters in these constructs seem to mirror and 'triple' each other [7], [8], [9], [10].

But in this 'rainbow glow', the design complexity, the novel is a remarkably coherent and deeply philosophical. This unity is even strange in the work with so many characters, themes and plots, and cannot but have some internal 'supercentre (supercore)'. This 'supercentre' is Bulgakov's subjective myth of Life as Existence in Creative Work.

## CONCLUSIONS

Bulgakov himself considered the novel 'The Master and Margarita' to be his lifework, which was to determine his fate as a writer, although the writer was not sure that the novel would be published in the future. Indeed, the novel was not published during his lifetime, it will be published much later, after 25 years. But in this regard it makes the inscription on one of the pages of the manuscript of 'The Master and Margarita' even more important: 'To finish before I die!' According to his contemporaries, in the 1930s Bulgakov had a premonition of his own death and therefore, he was quite aware of 'The Master and Margarita' being his last 'twilight of life' novel, his testament, his main message to humanity. All researchers agree that in Bulgakov's novel 'The Master and Margarita' autobiographical motives are extremely strong, they are projected into the plane of contemplation, of comprehension of himself as a writer and his place in the world, of the meaning of his work. The author of the novel himself and his last love, the wife of the writer- E. Shilovskaya – are the prototypes of the Master and Margarita. Bulgakov considered himself a man of the same contemplative type, not able to resist the real world. However, the contemplation of the Master (as well as the contemplation of Bulgakov- a writer) in a certain sense is active – it is revealed in the result of the creative work, in the manuscripts of the Master, that 'do not burn', the novel 'The Master and Margarita', which became popular many years later. This author's personal point is obviously adjacent to autobiographic traditions of Russian philosophy: the point of personal experience of Existence (in this case, Existence in Creative Work) is also characteristic for the mainstream (high road) of Russian philosophy.

## REFERENCES

- [1] Bulgakov M., The Master and Margarita, Russia, Pan Macmillan, 1997.

- [2] Kreps M. B., Bulgakov i Pasternak kak romanist: analiz romanov" Master i Margarita" i" Doktor Zivago", Russia, Leningrad, Ėrmitaz, 1984.
- [3] Карлова О. А., Miphos sapiens– mif razumnyiy, Russia, Moskva, Akademiya poezii, 2001.
- [4] Lotman Yu. M., Zametki o hudozhestvennom prostranstve, Russia, Moskva, 1986.
- [5] Semenova A.A., Kopzeva N.P., Truth as a Form of Modelling of Integrity at Social Being Level, Journal of Siberian Federal University. Humanities & Social Sciences, vol.2 / issue 1, pp 31–55, 2009.
- [6] Tarasenko T.V., Tarasenko V.E., Situation of Alcohol Drinking: Semantics, Linguistics and Translation Aspects (Based on the Novel by M.A. Bulgakov 'The Master and Margarita' and its Japanese Translation), Journal of Siberian Federal University. Humanities & Social Sciences, vol. 5 / issue 6, pp 880–888, 2012.
- [7] Stenbock-Fermor E., Bulgakov's The Master and Margarita and Goethe's Faust, USA, The Slavic and East European Journal, vol.13 / issue 3, pp 309–325, 1969.
- [8] Glenny, M., Existential Thoughtin Bulgakov's The Master arid Margarita, USA, Canadian-American Slavic Studies, vol.15 / issue 2-3, pp 238–249, 1981.
- [9] Zilberstein G., Maor U., Baskin E., D'Amato A., Righetti, P. G., Unearthing Bulgakov's trace proteome from the Master i Margarita manuscript, Netherlands, Journal of Proteomics, issue 152, pp 102–108, 2017.
- [10] Mortensen S. A., Whether Man or Beast: The Question of the Animal in Three of Bulgakov's Novellas., Denmark, Scando-Slavica, vol. 62 / issue 2, pp 218-234, 2016.