

"The Master and Margarita".

An Essay.

By Shwei.

"I am Part of that Power which still
Produceth good, whilst ever scheming ill."

-- "Faust", J. W. von Goethe.

...Thus says the epigraph of the legendary novel of Mikhail Bulgakov, which has been deemed as pure classic since while ago.

Part I: A Prehistory.

It is still disputed when did Bulgakov start writing the novel. It certainly took place in the end of 1920-ies. The first 160-pages redaction didn't have *The Master and Margarita* characters at all, whence prototype names are "Engineer's hoof", "The Tour", "Juggler with a hoof" et cetera.

The first redaction of the novel was burnt to ashes in spring 1930, when soviet censorship denied the publication of Bulgakov's "The Cabal of Hypocrites" (also know as *Molière*) play. In his letter to the government he mentioned that he "had thrown the draft of a novel about the Satan by means of his own hands". Fortunately, in 1932 he decided to continue his work on the story. For him, it was something a lot, **a lot** more than just a story, which is shown in one of his annotation on the manuscript:

"Help me the Almighty to finish the novel"

The final name was settled somewhere in 1937, according to Bulgakov's wife's journal.

In 1939 Bulgakov's health had drastically deteriorated. He and his wife Elena continued working. During winter he lost his ability to talk, but still tried to edit the manuscript. The last edit was made in February 1940, Bulgakov passed away on March the 10th. Of course, the novel couldn't be approved for publishing in those times, although Bulgakov's wife tried several times. It was finally published (even though only in shortened and censored edition) in 1967, during the Thaw.

Part II: The structure.

The story unites three different worlds around one character -- *The Master*. These worlds are *the Earthly*, *the Demonic* and *the Evangelic*. They are all

tightly linked in the novel. The Master is writing a novel about Pontius Pilate, but nobody takes it seriously, furthermore, he gets into the madhouse. Citizens of Moscow are drowning in hypocrisy and acquisitiveness, no wonder things worked out not in favour of him. Unable to deal with the pressure, Master burns his novel, but two pages of it were saved by Margarita. She was the Muse of the unhappy novelist, she is the embodiment of femininity that should provide inspiration and help in hard times, she strictly believes in the Master's talent and destiny.

And suddenly the Satan appears in Moscow. Woland, Valand, Mephistopheles, the Demon. In this world he doesn't just spread sin and sodomy, rather he brings justice. He is often described as "the cruel yet motivated Wrath of Heaven". He doesn't multiply the evil, he just looks after it and tries not to interfere in it. Sometimes people say that the demons will look like Angels when they step on Earth. To Woland we might apply the exact opposite saying. Satan opens a great festival in his occupied flat, to which he invites Margarita and her servant. And the sinners are granted one day to participate in this festival, including Goethe and Charles Gounod, the authors of Woland's prototypes, Marquise de Brinvilliers, Anastasia Minkina and Rudolf II.

Levi Matthew comes to the Satan and asks him to take Margarita and the Master with him and provide him peace. Woland brings back from ashes his burnt novel. Before quitting the Earthly world, Azazello and cat Behemoth, Satan's conveyers, decide to start a debauch by burning their flat and the literators' house. Nobody actually gets hurt in these fights, yet Woland condemns their behaviour. In the end, Woland takes Master and Margarita into the Heavenly world, leaving their dead bodies on Earth.

Bulgakov's Woland changed the classic interpretation of Satan as the embodiment of evil, which was settled in classic literature. This brings a more realistic perception of links between the evil and the good. But we haven't talked about the good yet, there was a character that firstly may seem like the antipode of Woland.

Part III: Yeshua Ga-Notsri.

The novel about Pontius Pilate, which was an opus of the Master, tells about the fifth governor of the Roman province of Judea and a philosopher Jesus of Nazareth (ישוע [Yeshua]). Bulgakov's Yeshua is different from the Evangelic

Jesus, which is shown in the very first chapter, when Woland just arrives to Moscow and meets two socialist writers who are having a discussion on writing an atheist propaganda text. Yeshua denies the usual perception of the God's son as the Messiah who brings lots of people around him, his only disciple is Levi Matthew, whom Yeshua accuses of misrepresentation of His words.

Very interesting is the dialogue between Yeshua and Pilate in his palace. There Jesus makes a claim that there are no bad people at all, even the Centurion Mark, to whom the principles of humaneness are unfamiliar. There is a certain sense in Yeshua, he does neither evil nor good, which is his main difference from Jesus Christ.

There is a feeling that the whole novel is a proofing of Yeshua's philosophy. There are no evil people, but neither there are good ones. Human is too small to operate with such complicated concepts. Small people with small problems, concerned about their miserable things, don't care about the Coming of Jesus, the coming of Satan, they got back to their misery very quickly. Evangelic ideas are not applicable to modern society of cruelty and hypocrisy, just like in the Bulgakov's Moscow. It is not the coincidence that all good things were done by literal Satan. Perhaps in our busy world even the Antichrist is able to provide justice and peace.

How ridiculous and wrong is such world?

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