

Spiritual Crisis in the midst of Social Chaos and Disorder: A Character Interpretation of The Master and Marguerite

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Abstract:

Times evolve, and society is in a state of perpetual flux. The lives and spiritual landscapes of citizens amidst this vortex of change are of utmost interest. The narrative of *The Master and Margarita* is situated in an era of perpetual unrest and transformation within the Soviet Union, where citizens are embroiled in profound spiritual quandaries. Through two parallel strands of magical portrayal, the novel profoundly exposes the social crisis and unrest that Russia is grappling with. The rapid societal progress has also given rise to a sense of emptiness and bewilderment among citizens, who have forfeited their spiritual aspirations and are now enslaved by material possessions. This paper will delve into the portrayal of the key characters - the master, the poet Ivan, and the ordinary Moscow citizens. It will examine their life experiences, emotional shifts, and inner worlds, while unpacking the spiritual travail of cowardice, anxiety, internal distortion, and spiritual agony amidst the onslaught of pressure, value misalignment, and disorientation.

Keywords: *The Master and Margaret*, spiritual crisis, social change, self-salvation.

1. Introduction

The Master and Margarita is a lengthy novel penned by the Russian writer Bulgakov, esteemed as one of the pre-eminent literary works of the 20th century. Intertwining mythology with the realities of the real world, it masterfully depicts the era of swift development and transformation in Russia and the Soviet Union at the dawn of the 20th century. In this period, society's facade underwent rapid changes, ideals and affliction were inextricably linked, suspicion and calculation were omnipresent among people, and it became increasingly challenging to maintain one's spiritual integrity amidst a void of spiritual fulfillment.

The aim of this analysis is to delve into the thoughts, emotions, and actions of the characters within the narrative. By doing so, we aim to gain a profounder understanding of the socio-psychological landscape of this historical era. Furthermore, we seek to explore the spiritual crisis experienced by individuals amidst societal shifts and to elucidate the intricate relationship between rapid urbanization and modernization with the psychological complexities faced by individuals in such trying circumstances. The novel offers a vivid portrayal of hypocrisy, deceit, dirtiness, and meanness in social interactions, with various characters exhibiting diverse behaviors and attitudes. This underscores how individuals perceive and respond to the

rapid changes occurring in society.

2. Social Background

In this particular period, Bulgakov, like many other Soviet writers, suffered countless abuses and insults, and the literati who made a living by writing were have little food to eat, could hardly survive and even went to jail. The political turmoil brought about strict controls and restrictions on culture. Literature and art were the pure land for people to find spiritual support in the midst of the turmoil, and the banning of publications and performances of plays brought about a sense of panic. People's souls had no place to return to, and the spiritual emptiness in their hearts was unavoidable.

Whether it is the background of the story in the novel, or the author Bulgakov in the background of the times, are undoubtedly in the node of social transformation. Technological advances and urbanization are pulling the citizens into an abyss of anxiety, which leads to countless spiritual dilemmas.

3. The master's spiritual redemption

The master's situation overlaps with Bulgakov's own experience. The master, the main character of this paper, is not only the protagonist of the story, but also the author's spiritual support. For Bulgakov, the emergence of his

absurd consciousness cannot be separated from the background of this era of suspicion, doubt, anxiety and confusion. [1]

The Master is undoubtedly special compared to the protagonists of unusual novels, and the main character, the Master, makes his official appearance only in the thirteenth chapter of the novel. The poet Ivan, in the process of searching for the devil Wallander's insanity, meets his "neighbor" the master in the mental hospital, when the story is already halfway through. He doesn't have a name in the traditional sense of the word, except "Master", as he says himself, "I have no last name any more, I've given up my last name, and I've given up everything in my life as well. Forget him." [2] The Master's story often appears in memories, either told by himself or filled with Margaret's thoughts. The master's life story can be described as one of great ups and downs. Having studied history, he was educated and had a relatively stable job, and then suddenly one day he was delighted to win 100,000 rubles in the lottery, and he did not hesitate to quit his job at the museum in favor of a more comfortable place to live, and that's exactly how he met the love of his life. "Love came to us suddenly, like a murderer appearing out of nowhere in an alleyway, and instantly conquered us both at the same time. It was like lightning striking, like a sharp blade coming out of its sheath." [3]

In the midst of such a dark society, the Master's spiritual crisis is reflected in the fact that, before meeting Margaret, the Master was lonely, unwilling to communicate with others, and almost disconnected from the society, the rapid development of urbanization and the fast-paced life often led to people's emotional indifference, resulting in weak and detached social relationships. Secondly, the hard-earned works could not be recognized by the times and the public, were ridiculed and insulted by other writers in the publishing house, broke down several times, personally destroyed their hopes for life along with their manuscripts, hid in the mental hospital, and compromised with the world, in the face of the high-speed environment of the society, it is difficult for the already fragile heart to withstand the blow, and the great pressure of the society makes people unable to face the problems of life, and they are at a loss for what to do, and avoidance It becomes people's first choice to face problems.

Bulgakov did not portray the master as a heroic and fearless figure, who possessed talents that were beyond the reach of ordinary people and saw society for what it really was, but struck by the blow, he did not choose to rebel against the world, nor did he work tirelessly for the realization of his dreams. In the face of life's difficulties and mental collapse, the master chose to hide in a mental hospital, refusing to face everything, if not Marguerite,

then the master will spend his life in the escape. Margaret gave up the rich life, in search of the master into a "witch", willing to pay their own everything, it is this warm, reckless, unconditional love will be the master from the quagmire of redemption. Margaret is the Master's only hope to get out of the darkness, and Margaret's arrival makes the Master feel that he has been pardoned, just like he has pardoned his own protagonist.

4. The Poet's Struggle and Resistance

Ivan is an important supporting character in the story, and the plot unfolds through him. He witnesses the death of Berlioz, the chairman of the board of directors of the Society of Masters of Social Sciences, and when he realizes that Berlioz's sudden death coincides with a prophecy of the Devil, Ivan immediately begins his search for the Devil, Worland. In the process he encounters talking cats that can walk upright, which causes him to become psychotic. No longer able to care about his image, he navigates the busy streets of Moscow in just his shorts, even breaks into people's homes, and after returning to the Society of Masters of Arts, makes a scene in the dining room. In the end, the crowd worked together to have him committed to a mental institution. Unlike the Grandmaster, who hid in the asylum to escape from reality, Ivan was incarcerated in the asylum for forced treatment, and no one in the asylum believed what he saw or heard, believing that everything he said was imagined because of his illness. When he first arrives at the asylum, Ivan racks his brain trying to figure out how a normal person can prove that he is normal, and in the midst of the repetitive self-proofing and recollection of the tangle, he develops a schizophrenic disorder in which he is incoherent and begins to have conversations with himself as if he were a completely different person. While not understanding why he is so obsessed with this matter, he is unable to give up the exploration of the unknown and the search for the truth, and finally falls into infinite self-doubt.

Ivan knows better than anyone that such a magical experience is hard to believe, and the sudden appearance of the devil also makes him unable to calm down for a long time, it is in the cycle of the struggle between reality and self-doubt that leads to the eventual mental collapse, in the final analysis, the emergence of this spiritual dilemma is closely related to the social reality. Social change, industrial development, the deepening of human exploration of the world and the mastery of science and technology to a certain extent affects the human faith in the gods, so that human beings understand that relying on themselves to obtain a better life is of course a good thing, but the lack of faith will largely bring about inner emptiness and

the dissipation of the spirit of reverence, leading to the disaster is difficult to find a rapid spiritual support, into the spiritual predicament. The reason for this is that it is difficult to find spiritual support when disaster strikes, and you will fall into a spiritual dilemma.

Fortunately, Ivan's faith in the gods was still latent in his heart, and in his conversation with Berlioz, it was also hinted that Ivan was always unable to complete a long anti-religious poem well, and the editor-in-chief even gave him a special lecture on Christ Jesus, emphasizing that there was no such person as Jesus in the world. But the fact that Ivan, a gifted poet, was never able to write a good poem shows that deep down in his heart he had difficulty in agreeing with this point of view, and thus was unable to make a complete rejection of the beliefs. So, in the midst of the debate between the "new" Ivan and the "old" Ivan, and after communicating with the masters, he finally evoked the power of faith buried in his heart in the midst of his self-struggle, and gradually became courageous, returned to inner peace, and realized his own salvation. [4]

5. The Fall and Sinking of the Citizen

The many images of citizens that appear in the story epitomize society. "The people in this city have changed so much, I'm talking about the surface, it can never be compared to what it used to be. The change in clothing goes without saying, and there are these what's it called streetcars, automobiles" "The more important question is: what has changed inside the people of the city?" [5] The arrival of the devil Worland caused Moscow to stage one farce after another, and the ugly faces and greedy hearts of the people were plainly exposed to the public eye.

When Berlioz loses his life to a speeding tram, the is Boyedov's House in the midst of revelry. The poet Ivan's rash intrusion brought news of Berlioz's death to the people enjoying their dinner. Those who heard the news were overwhelmed with grief and immediately tried to write a telegram of condolence in his honor, but their pain came and went as quickly as it came. "He's dead, he doesn't need any telegrams any more. It's all over, let's not embarrass the telegraph office. Yes, dead, he's dead But we're still alive." [6] People are more worried about wasting tonight's delicious dinner than they are about Berlioz's death. With the outrageous indifference of people, and the death of a colleague seemingly of no consequence, this day seems no different from any other day.

The process of modernization and urbanization is constantly advancing, the problem of tight land use in the city is inevitable, and in the novel, there are repeated references to the fact that there is a serious housing problem

in Moscow. Citizens use all means to get a house of their own and do everything they can. Berlioz's unexpected death brings the apartment where he lived during his lifetime, Apartment 50, to life, and in just two hours the director of the housing office receives thirty-two applications for housing for a variety of reasons. Berlioz's aunt, who had received a telegram inviting him to the funeral, had traveled from Kiev to Moscow, knowing that there was no need for him to attend the funeral, and that he had traveled all the way to Moscow for one purpose - a house - and Berlioz's death was certainly a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. Not only the friends around him, at the same time, even the blood relatives are so cold, connecting people as if there were only interests, no emotions.

The devil, in the form of a magician, performs his dark magic in the theater, where he throws false money to the audience, and allows the people to exchange their old clothes for expensive perfumes and fine clothes for free, in order to get more, they are insatiable and secretly competing with each other. For the sake of profit and money citizens have abandoned all reason, only pursuing worldly and material enjoyment, but the spirit is a barren land. People have loved money since time immemorial, but the housing problem brought about by urbanization has completely overwhelmed the citizens' minds, and the distortion of their values has caused them to fall and sink in the midst of profit-seeking.

6. Conclusion

With social change comes changes in outlook on life, worldview and values. In the midst of political turmoil and radical social changes, ordinary people can hardly be alone, deep in the vortex, it is rare to be able to realize what the problem is, let alone solve it. What saves the master is the warm and sunny Margaret, what saves Ivan is the inner awakening and release, while the general citizens are in the shadow of the society, it is difficult to find the opportunity to release. In this chaotic and disorganized society, where pressure increases, profit-seeking is prevalent, and emotions are indifferent, the search for self-redemption requires a strong faith in order not to be swept up in the turbulent waves, and this faith does not necessarily have to be a belief in the gods, but can also be the insistence of one's own heart.

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