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Understanding the Devil: A Comparative Examination of *Dead Souls*, *The Master and Margarita*, and *Revelation 12-13*

by

TJ Kennedy

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Introduction

Are you a devil?" "I am a man," answered Father Brown gravely; "and therefore have all devils in my heart. -G.K. Chesterton¹

Evil begins where creation ends. In Zoroastrianism, Angra Mainyu propels the cause of druj (darkness), and is the antagonist to Ahura Mazda, the god of light.² In Buddhism, the demon Mara often tries to tempt and trick the Buddha, including through kind words in the Padhaana Sutta of the Sutta-nipaata. Apep, the enemy of Ra in Ancient Egyptian mythology, attempted countless times to bring chaos into the world. Iblis, the fallen angel in Islam, refused to bow to Adam when commanded by God, as his pride outweighed the consequences (Qur'an 7:12). And finally in Judaism, later picked up in Christianity, a serpent tricked Adam and Eve into eating the forbidden fruit. The act of creation is followed by those who oppose it. In this study, I compare the devil characterizations of *Dead Souls* and *The Master and Margarita* with the Devil of the Book of Revelation, and show that the Russian literary devils are utilized as a critique of the collective, while the Christian devil exemplifies how the critique can be overcome. Before the exploration, however, a brief history of the devil in Western Judeo-Christian thought is offered, in order to understand how that religious history has influenced the growth of the devil in subsequent literature.

The Book of Genesis has no Devil in the proper noun sense of the word. The interpretation of the serpent in such manner was a projection back onto the book at a later time.³ The word satan, in its lowercase form, literally means adversary or opponent.⁴ While not in

¹G. K. Chesterton, *The Innocence of Father Brown* (Luton: Andrews UK, 2010), 67.

²Alan Segal, *Life After Death: A History of the Afterlife in Western Religion* (New York: Random House, 1989), 178.

³Henry Ansgar Kelly, *Satan: A Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 13.

⁴Elaine Pagels, *The Origin of Satan* (New York: Random House, 1995), xvii.

Genesis, there are many forms of satan in the Old Testament: the Angel of Yahweh in Numbers 22, the sons of God who oppose Job in Job 1, and the satan who accuses High Priest Joshua in Zechariah 3.⁵ These appearances, however, all adhere to the lowercase meaning. It is not until the Gospel of Mark in the New Testament that Satan is properly introduced: "So Jesus called them over to him and began to speak to them in parables: 'How can Satan drive out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. And if Satan opposes himself and is divided, he cannot stand; his end has come'" (Mark 3:23-26).⁶ This marks the first biblical moment where Satan took a proper noun. Satan was no longer *an* adversary, but according to Jesus, Satan was *the* adversary. There is a strong rhetorical strategy to the teaching of Jesus: the Kingdom of God was now rivalled by the Kingdom of Satan, and evil was personified into a single being.

This shift, however, from the lowercase satan, adversary-role character, into the more familiar Satan of Mark was not a quick change. Intertestamental writings bridge and nourish the devil concepts between Old and New Testament. Most important of these texts is the *Book of Watchers*, a fourth to third BCE apocryphal book highly influential on Christians.⁷ The story follows "watcher" angels who fell from heaven, and after their fall they proceed to spread demonic spirits and mate with human women. For the first time in a Jewish text, there was depicted a heavenly war, which mirrored the discord spreading through Jewish communities in the centuries near the turn of the millennium. This cosmic chaos and discord of the Book of Watchers influenced subsequent religious groups, an important one being the Essenes, who arose during the Maccabean War in the 160's BCE. Their mythology claims that the Prince of Light

⁵Kelly, *Satan: A Biography*, 31.

⁶Pagels, *The Origin of Satan*, xvii.

⁷Pagels, *The Origin of Satan*, 50,

was given to the Essenes, a group of four thousand men, while the Prince of Darkness ruled the rest of the world. These intertestamental texts furthered the divide between good and evil, as they created an almost dualistic cosmos that resembled Zoroastrianism. It is from this foundation that the Satan of Mark is born.

The remainder of the New Testament further develops the Satan and Devil idea. Satan falls from the sky in Luke 10:18. The wicked one comes to the world in Matthew 6:13 and 1 John 5:19. There is a Dragon and Ancient Serpent in Revelation 20:2. The arrival of Jesus signaled the coming of Satan. In a sense, without one, there would be no need for the other. Jesus, in taking the sins that had infested humanity, inherently necessitates a Satan character. There would be no Jesus if evil had not grown, and there would be no Satan if not for that evil. Once introduced to the world, however, the Christian devil would perpetuate throughout history. The Spanish Inquisition was fueled by anti-Semitism and worry about the devil. The *Malleus Maleficarum*, published by discredited Catholic Heinrich Kramer in 1486, established a treatise on witchcraft and the devils at play in the world.⁸ These teachings were brought to the New World, and one example of how it spread through the indigenous populations is seen in the rhetoric of the Franciscans.⁹ Eventually, the devil took hold in literature, as a popular character for a variety of reasons. Now, a turn is made toward this perpetuated literary devil, and how important it is to study the literary character in order to understand ourselves.

If literature demonstrates one thing, it is that the devil is a human problem, as shown in the Chesterson quote at the beginning of the introduction. Oscar Wilde too wrote in a play: "We

⁸Kramer Heinrich and James Sprenger, *Malleus Maleficarum*, trans. by Montague Summers (Mineola: Dover Publications, 1971).

⁹Fernando Cervantes, *The Devil in the New World: The Impact of Diabolism in New Spain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994).

are each our own devil, and we make this world our hell."¹⁰ Regardless of religion, culture, society, or any other form of diversity, one phenomenon remains true in the human experience: where people go, the devil follows. In order to understand society, recognizing our devils is just as important as glorifying our angels. That is the goal of this paper. Attention is given to three literary works, and how their devil depictions reflect upon and critique the culture that surrounds them. The devil has gained a fascinating life as a literary character, and has developed in the Christian culture well beyond their scriptural roots. Such depictions range from the beastly frozen Lucifer in *Dante's Inferno*, to the charming opening character Satan in *Paradise Lost*.¹¹ There is Gurdjieff's Beelzebub telling tales to his grandson on a flight through outer space, Rushdie's Saladin Chamcha, a voiceover artist turned devil, Twain's mysterious stranger, and Lewis's always memorable Screwtape.¹² As the devil continues to solidify a central place in the modes of critique for both the religious and secular worlds, the goal of this essay is to be a dialogue and understanding of importance between the two. Sometimes society needs Jesus, and literature needs the devil. Often times they are found in the same civilization.

The Choice of Texts

There are three texts in focus: Nikolai Gogol's *Dead Souls*, Mikhail Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita*, and *Revelation 12-13*. These choices are centered around Bulgakov, and

¹⁰Oscar Wilde, *The Complete Plays* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 507.

¹¹ Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy: Volume One: Inferno*. Trans. by Mark Musa (London: Penguins Classics, 2003).

John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, (London: Penguin Classics, 2000).

¹²George Gurdjieff, *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson*, (New York: Penguin Books, 1999); Salman Rushdie, *The Satanic Verses*, (New York: Random House, 1988); Mark Twain, *The Mysterious Stranger and Other Stories*, (New York: Amereon House, 1916); and Clive Staples Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*, (New York: Harper One, 1942).

the other two works stem from his text. Woland, the main character and devil in *The Master and Margarita*, is an utterly fascinating figure. Calm, intelligent, and truly sinister, his smile never leaves his face. It would not be a true devil study without examining Bulgakov's masterpiece. Gogol was a Russian writer about a hundred years before the time of Bulgakov, and was highly influential upon Bulgakov's career. *Dead Souls* was so important that Bulgakov adapted the novel into a play ninety years after its initial publication.¹³ Beyond this common interest in the devil, Gogol and Bulgakov grew up in divided Russias, which faced their own unique turmoils, and the authors chose to critique these social situations through devil satire.

Revelation as the Christian text was a more difficult decision. The Biblical choice needed to be able to form a meaningful dialogue with the Russian literature, because in the end, the purpose is to show how literature can further the understanding of the Christian devil, and vice versa. Revelation was chosen for two reasons, one of which is an important commonality and one that is an important difference. First, the devil of Revelation is tied to the Roman society of the time. The three texts examined all gain meaning and significance when put next to the culture from which they came. Second, and here is the difference between the literary and the religious texts, is how the devils express themselves.¹⁴ Gogol and Bulgakov create cunning devils, while Revelation produces a proud, blasphemous beast. Each is effective in provoking a sense of terror, but the different means by which they come to that effect is important. The general structure for breaking down the texts is the same: the sections start with an examination of the author's

¹³Mikhail Bulgakov, *Diaboliad & Other Stories*, trans. by Ellendea Proffer and Carl Proffer (New York: Abrams Books, 2012), 149-166.

¹⁴When the Devil is capitalized in the later sections, this is in direct reference to the Devil of Revelation, since it is being used a proper noun, just the same as Chichikov or Woland. Similarly, the gender of this Devil is male, copying again the use of the text. For the rest of the essay, I refer to the devil in the plural. There is no he or she to the devil, and using "it" seems to alienate the concept too much. The plural pronoun, since the devil is a human problem, is the most appropriate.

society, move to the devil character, and finally work through how the characterization and society intertwine. The major comparative analysis of the texts is reserved for the conclusion. It is not until we recognize our devils that we can work toward our goodness.

Chapter One - The Devil in the Countryside

The newcomer, as it seemed, avoided talking much about himself; if he did talk, it was in some sort of commonplaces, with marked modesty, and his conversation on these occasions assumed a somewhat bookish manner; that he was an insignificant worm of this world and not worthy of much concern, that he had gone through many trials in his life, had suffered for the truth in the civil service, had many enemies, who had even made attempts on his life, and that now, wishing to be at peace, he was seeking to finally choose a place to live, and that, having arrived in this town, he considered it his bounden duty to offer his respects to its foremost dignitaries.¹⁵

Above is the initial characterization of Pavel Ivanovich Chichikov, the ambiguous protagonist of Nikolai Gogol's *Dead Souls*. He is a self-proclaimed humble man with a well-worn past, who looks to escape the troubles of life by moving to the countryside. Unbeknownst to the rich dignitaries with whom he makes acquaintance, Chichikov is there to collect the souls of dead serfs. A simple plan becomes a trek through the countryside of Russia, a satire of the corrupt serfdom system, and a realistic portrayal of evil told through the most unrealistic of stories. The analysis starts with an examination of the struggles in mid-nineteenth century Russia, follows with an investigation into the character of Chichikov, and concludes by how the history and characterization work together in Gogol's satirization of Russia.

¹⁵Nikolai Gogol, *Dead Souls*, trans. by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (New York: Vintage Books, 1997), 9.

A Shattered State of Russian Identity

Nikolai Gogol lived from 1809 to 1852, his life under the reigns of two different emperors. He grew up in the Ukrainian gentry, moved to Russia after his schooling, and gained fame for his writings about the commonplace struggles of daily life. Where much of Russian literature from the period looked toward the grand and romantic, Gogol made a turn toward the grotesque and real.¹⁶ His writing reached its thematic height in *Dead Souls*, often considered Gogol's masterpiece because of its ability to capture the problems of his Russia. Originally, Gogol intended the novel to be a three-part piece that mirrored the structure of Dante's *Divine Comedy*, but neither subsequent work was completed. Before his death in 1852, Gogol burned the unfinished second part, and he never started the third. All that remains is his walk through the Russian Hell, and in order to understand that journey, it is first important to recognize the world that surrounded him.

Gogol was born during the reign of Alexander the First, who held the office of czar from 1801 to 1825. It was a rule marked by contradictions.¹⁷ Alexander wanted to establish a Christian brotherhood on earth, but he was a quick-to-war, former drill sergeant. He tried to follow the social reform established by the Enlightenment, while simultaneously expanding and preserving the Russian Empire. There were two Alexanders: the liberal Enlightenment student who began to take authority from the landlords, and the power hungry ruler who double-downed on the established systems of discipline and order. He would be remembered for the latter description, the persona which dominated the second half of his reign. Interestingly, there were

¹⁶Nicholas Riasanovsky and Mark Steinberg, *A History of Russia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 317.

¹⁷Dominic Lieven, *The Cambridge History of Russia: Volume 2 Imperial Russia*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 554.

still glimpses of his Enlightenment persona as he neared the end of his life. A year before his death, Alexander returned to the religion and faith that propelled the hope of his early years. That same year, a great flood ravaged St. Petersburg, and when it was suggested that God was punishing the Russian people for their sins, Alexander responded, "No, for mine."¹⁸ He died in 1825, which was the same year that the first Russian revolutionary group started a revolt against serfdom and fought for their civil rights.

Nicholas the First, Alexander's younger brother, ruled during the rest of Gogol's life, and was quite the opposite of his predecessor. Where Alexander worked between two personas, Nicholas was strong and steadfast in his beliefs.¹⁹ He was a soldier, a nationalist, and the protector of established order. His one stray from the social norm of educated Russians was in his religious beliefs. Instead of a grand quest for truth, faith was meant to be simple, and as he said, "In the manner of a peasant."²⁰ It was a bottom-to-top approach, which asserted faith and religion to be constructed by the normal person. Besides this one quality, Nicholas preserved order and stability, and this led to two important facets of Gogol's life: the serfdom system, and the boiling religious tensions of the soon-to-be Crimean War.

The serfdom system first changed under Alexander, who tried and ultimately failed to take power away from the landlords. Nicholas did little to disrupt the system in fear of the outcomes. He shared his thought on serfdom at the State Council of 1842: "There is no doubt that serfdom, as it exists at present in our land, is an evil, palpable and obvious to all. But to touch it now would be a still more disastrous evil... The Pugachev rebellion proved how far

¹⁸Nicholas Riasanovsky and Mark Steinberg, *A History of Russia*, 283.

¹⁹*Ibid*, 285-287.

²⁰*Ibid*, 286.

popular rage can go."²¹ If he tried to disrupt the system, he could expect a negative response from the aristocrats and wealthy landowners. If he did nothing, not only was an immoral system allowed to persist, but the chance of revolt from the serfs and lower classes rose. Nicholas chose to do nothing, and the pot of revolution boiled. It would continue to boil over the next century, and the effects can be felt in Stalin's reign and the time of Bulgakov.

Near the end of Nicholas's reign and shortly before Gogol's death, Russia faced rising religious tensions. This led to the Crimean War of 1854-1855, which was two years after Gogol died, but the lead-up to the war was important and impactful upon the author.²² Catholic and Orthodox in the Holy Land were in a battle for rights, and Nicholas instructed the Ottoman empire, who themselves were under Islamic rule, that the rights were to be given to the Orthodox. After tensions broke in 1854, Russia invaded Turkey, while western powers, like France and Great Britain, came to aid the Turkish side. It was ultimately a failed Russian war, but the event solidified Nicholas's self-proclaimed power of the cross and his Russian heroism. Peace settled in 1856, a year after Nicholas died, but the war and his rule had lasting effects. For thirty years, Russia refused to change, struggling to hold onto their societal systems, while the rest of the world began to reform.

This is the Russia that Gogol occupied. Under Alexander, there was hope for a future free of oppression, but that hope ran dry as his reign continued. Under Nicholas, Russia refused to change a broken and evil serfdom system. It is toward Nicholas that the writings and satire of Gogol are directed, as *Dead Souls* seeks to show the absurdity of serfdom, the landlords, and the aristocracy. Gogol was not alone in this endeavor. Satire of serfdom through playwrights arose in

²¹Ibid, 290.

²²Dominic Lieven, *The Cambridge History of Russia: Volume 2 Imperial Russia*, 535.

the late eighteenth century, and found its footing in the nineteenth century.²³ Near the end of Gogol's life, the criticism would be wielded by artists of all sorts, and the creative genius from all walks of life was attacking serfdom.²⁴ With the backdrop of society established, it is important to shift briefly to the life of Gogol, informed primarily by a biography written by Vladimir Nabokov and letters from Gogol himself, before diving into the devilish character of Chichikov.²⁵

Gogol was born in Ukraine in 1809, and moved to St. Petersburg after his schooling, which was a few years after the reign of Alexander ended and Nicholas's began.²⁶ Gogol took with him his literary genius, his growing fear of hell, and his desire to make it as a writer. While his first poem was published in 1829, it was seven years later that he would gain national acclaim, after the release of his play *The Government Inspector*. The plot was simple and familiar: a corrupt mayor in a small Russian town, along with his subordinates, prepare for the arrival of an inspector. The play was censored for six years after causing a stir in Russian society for its direct attacks on the corruption that was present. Unexpectedly in 1842, Nicholas I commanded that the play was to be put on stage. That same year Gogol released *Dead Souls*, as the author continued his fight against the evils that were present in Russia.

Following in the play's footsteps, the first edition of *Dead Souls* was censored by Nicholas's government. This was the explanation given for that censorship: "The Church tells us

²³Richard Stites, *Serfdom, Society, and the Arts in Imperial Russia: The Pleasure and the Power*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 29.

²⁴The artistic value of serfs themselves also became valued. A 'creative' serf could be sold for ten thousand rubles, while an 'ordinary' serf was sold for a couple hundred rubles. In the growing greed of landowners, they unknowingly gave artistic serfs the freedom to form their creative critiques of the system.

²⁵Nabokov is first and foremost a fiction author, and while the biography of Gogol is considered trustworthy, his background and agenda must be kept in mind.

²⁶Vladimir Nabokov, *Nikolai Gogol* (New York: New Directions Publishing, 1961), 8-35.

that souls are immortal, and so cannot be called 'dead.'"²⁷ While the novel directly attacks Russian corruption, the government's reason for censorship is religiously oriented. Gogol himself was a highly religious man, and this religiosity grew in the later years of his life. As stated earlier, *Dead Souls* was intended to be a three-part volume that replicated the structure of *Divine Comedy*. This struggle to complete the final two parts of the novel led Gogol on a religious journey.²⁸ He travelled to Jerusalem in hopes that the Holy Land would give him inspiration. In a letter to the German translator of *Dead Souls*, Gogol wrote, "God only grant the strength to finish and publish the second volume. Then [the Germans] will discover that we Russians have much that they never even guessed about, and that we ourselves do not want to recognize—if only it will please God to give me the strength amid infirmities and illnesses to fulfill the task honorably and devoutly."²⁹ Gogol thought of himself as a representative of God, and where the first part of *Dead Souls* chastised sinners, the final parts, in his mind, should present a path toward salvation. Salvation, however, was no easy answer, and in trying to change the character of Chichikov, Gogol lost the magic that made his novel successful. He died with no answers, as a man who beautifully painted the sins that settled in Russia, but was driven mad by the lack of answers.

Nabokov recreated the final moments in which Gogol burned his manuscript: "As he crouched and sobbed in front of the stove, an artist was destroying the labor of long years because he finally realized that the completed book was untrue to his genius; so Chichikov, instead of piously petering out in a wooden chapel among ascetic fir trees on the shore of a legendary lake, was restored to his native element; the little blue flames of a humble hell."³⁰ In

²⁷Ibid, 62.

²⁸Ibid, 122-134.

²⁹Nikolai Gogol, *Dead Souls: A Norton Critical Edition*, trans. by George Reaver, ed. by George Gibian, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1985), 437.

³⁰Nabokov, *Nikolai Gogol*, 38.

comparison, Gogol, in a published letter, said that the burning of the manuscript was a necessary, God inspired act. When the novel was thrown into the fire, "Immediately the flame had carried away the last pages of my book, its content suddenly was resurrected in a purified and lucid form, like the Phoenix from the pyre, and I suddenly saw in what disorder was what I had considered ordered and harmonious."³¹ A man that sought salvation was lost in hell, holding desperately onto a thread of hope, and it is now time we enter Gogol's hell, on a tour guided by Chichikov.

The Curious Case of Chichikov

Chichikov is a perplexing character due to his ambivalent, and often contradictory, actions. At times he seems driven by faith, and other times propelled by wicked deeds. There are moments where his goodness is clear against the backdrop of a corrupt Russia, while at other times his evil matches, and usually surpasses, the landlords he encounters. He may be the Devil, a demon sent by the Devil, or a soul still trying to figure it all out, who is trapped by its own personal struggle between right and wrong. This ambivalence is important and must be explored, but before that, analysis begins with the concrete characteristics. Chichikov is a smart, cunning man, who has come to the Russian countryside in order to collect the souls of dead serfs.

The literary focus is placed on the opening and closing sections of the novel. While the plot is important, the characterization of Chichikov and those that surround him is central to understanding his devil-like nature. The novel begins with Chichikov entering a provincial town, and making acquaintance with the Governor, head magistrate, police chief, tax farmer, and all

³¹Gogol, *Dead Souls: A Norton Critical Edition*, 422.

the other corrupt officials Gogol is critiquing. Chichikov, entering this Russian hell filled with people who have accepted evil, is first described as such: "Not handsome, but also not bad-looking, neither fat nor too thin; you could not have said he was old, yet neither was he all that young. His entrance caused no stir whatever in the town and was accompanied by nothing special."³² He was a normal person in a corrupt town. So what does that make him? These descriptions are important, because the only way to judge the confusing character of Chichikov is through comparison with those whom he encounters. From the second sentence of the novel, Gogol emphasizes how easily Chichikov fits into this land of corruption, how similar Chichikov is to the very people Gogol is critiquing. Whether part of Chichikov's charade, or true to his nature, he has, and actively acts upon, the capacity for evil.

In order to understand this capacity, below is the first conversation Chichikov has about purchasing dead souls. Manilov, the other person in the dialogue, is a landowner, and his home is the first that Chichikov enters. He is a handsome gentleman, with an almost too friendly persona. After dinner, Chichikov moves onto his purpose for the visit:

Manilov was utterly at a loss. He felt he had to say something, to offer a question, but what question- devil knew. He finished finally by letting out smoke again, only not through his mouth this time, but the nostrils of his nose.

'And so, if there are no obstacles, with God's help we can proceed to draw up the deed of purchase,' said Chichikov.

'What, a deed for dead souls?'

'Ah, no!' said Chichikov. 'We will write that they are living just as it actually stands in the census report. It is my habit never to depart from civil law in anything, though I did suffer for it in the service, but do excuse me: duty is a sacred thing for me, the law- I stand mute before the law.'³³

³²Gogol, *Dead Souls*, 3.

³³Ibid, 32.

This back and forth structure is common throughout the book, where a character, here Manilov, evokes feelings of the devil, then Chichikov immediately follows with a divine facade. In particular, the phrase "Devil knew" is repeated quite often, and a similar line is adopted by Bulgakov in *The Master and Margarita*. It is an interesting tactic on part of the narrator. The novel itself is a blend of a close third-person to the characters, and first person interjections from the narrator. This combination makes it feel as if the narrator is simultaneously in the room, in the minds of the characters, and reflecting upon the events. The scene above is a prime example, specifically in the characterization of Manilov. There are two ways to read the "devil knew" aside: as a thought of Manilov, or as a thought of the narrator. The latter makes more sense, and on top of that, the phrase is used in direct reference to Chichikov, the only other person in the conversation. Chichikov is the devil that knew, because after he talks, Manilov is able to offer a question.

Chichikov's proposition was absurd and confusing, which leads Manilov to his loss for words. It is the devil that has robbed him of speech, and as soon as the "devil knew" aside is inserted, the conversation shifts back to Chichikov. It is a conversation that Chichikov is winning. He is a con-man, who evokes God because he knows it will convince the doubting Manilov. Chichikov eases the man's worries by appealing to service and law, to the sacred things that Chichikov himself stands mute before. There is a certain resemblance to the crafty nature of the serpent in Genesis 3. When Adam and Eve doubted, the serpent spoke of God and what God was hiding. When Manilov doubted, Chichikov promised God's help, even though he has no intention or authority to give it. Just as Chichikov claims himself to stand mute before the law, the serpent is mute once God enters the Garden. They are tricksters that feed upon human faults, but ultimately are clever enough to act within the limits of their powers. Chichikov's

charlatanical character and skilled conversational ability is explained in full at the end of the first chapter, as the narrator details night after night where Chichikov meets with the elite of the town: "The newcomer was somehow never at a loss and showed himself to be an experienced man of the world. Whatever the conversation, he always knew how to keep up his end... In short, however you turned it, he was a very respectable man."³⁴ Chichikov outwits and outplays those who are evil. The reason why they see Chichikov as a respectable man is because he is the ultimate version of their greed and corruption. He is the devil that they strive to become.

In the last chapter of the first volume, the narrator reveals the extent of Chichikov's plan, and how his past con-work led to buying dead souls. Chichikov was on a mission to boost his own social power, and make it appear as though he had many serfs. None of this character exposition from the narrator takes away from the devil nature of Chichikov. In fact, it builds upon it. The reveal is not a surprise to the reader, but it is to the townspeople. They are treated like fools, and Chichikov is the one who plays them. This leads us into the true power of his character and the novel. Chichikov's interaction shows the flaws and downfalls of serfdom, and how institutionally evil it has become. In the end, he becomes the master of it, but unlike Dante's *Inferno*, there are no subsequent parts for the soul's redemption. *Inferno* ends by Virgil and Dante meeting the devil in the center of the Ninth Circle, and then climbing the devil's back and finding land on Easter Sunday. Maybe Gogol intended to redeem Chichikov's soul in the coming two volumes, but that vision was never actualized. Instead, the novel's end is not as complete as that of *Inferno*: a man's sin is revealed, but there is no departure from hell. It is simply a relocation to another part of Russia. Chichikov is never able to leave his sins, but instead he is stranded in

³⁴ Ibid, 14.

them. Nabokov comments on the unintended and subsequent brilliance of the ending caused by the circumstance of the author:

I hardly know what to admire most when considering the following remarkable spurt of eloquence which brings the First Part to its close: the magic of its poetry—or magic of quite a different kind; for Gogol was faced by the double task of somehow having Chichikov escape retribution by flight and of diverting the reader's attention from the still more uncomfortable fact that no retribution in terms of human law could overtake Satan's home-bound, hell-bound agent.³⁵

Nabokov viewed Chichikov as an agent of the devil, who departs one part of the Russian hell for another. As he notes, Chichikov ends his journey in the same place it began in the opening section with Manilov. The devil's agent stands mute before the law, and he escapes the consequences of his evils.

Satirizing Serfdom

While the literary character of Chichikov is complex and vague, his role as a critique of Russia is sharp and biting. Gogol crafted the character with a messianic light, and by highlighting his protagonist's individual sins throughout the novel, he commented on those of the collective.³⁶ Gogol chose a devil-like character to be the savior of Russia, a seemingly interesting but rational choice. It is through the absurdity of the devil that the faults of society were shown.

Gogol portrayed the state of Russia through multiple asides in the novel from the narrator, which includes the following brief description: "Especially nowadays, when in Russia,

³⁵Nabokov, *Nikolai Gogol*, 111.

³⁶Caryl Emerson, *The Cambridge Introduction to Russian Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 117.

too, mighty men are beginning to grow scarce."³⁷ The once mighty men of Russia have fallen as evil spreads through the land, and this evil draws a devil like Chichikov. He does not come to make evil, but to capitalize on the evil that is already present. The small town to which Chichikov visits must be seen as representative of the whole of Russia, and the character emblematic of the problems of society.³⁸ Where Chichikov sins, society has already done so. When Chichikov lies, it is because he is mirroring the past behavior of the landowners with which he interacts. Gogol, in letters published at the end of his life, wrote: "To describe some fine characters who are supposed to demonstrate the nobility of our race would lead to nothing. It would only arouse empty pride and vanity."³⁹ Humanity is shown through imperfections, and Gogol, through Chichikov and the townspeople, is trying to show the most imperfect people of Russia. The critique reaches its climax at the ironic end of the novel, as the town tries to implicate Chichikov for his crime, yet remain wholly unaware of their own sins. Gogol, through Chichikov, is putting the town on trial, but just as Chichikov manages to escape, the people of Russia have gotten away with evil. These are the links that build the foundation of Gogol's satire: Russia to the town, and the sins of serfdom to the trickery of Chichikov. By understanding these connections, Gogol then flips the dynamics of the central plot of the novel, turning the dead serfs into the living beings, and the nobility into the dead.

There are three characterizations and degrees of reality to *Dead Souls*, as explained by Winston Weathers, a former University of Tulsa English professor and author, that paint the reversal above that takes place in Russia: its portrayal of the two classes, the gradation of reality

³⁷Gogol, *Dead Souls*, 13.

³⁸James B. Woodward, *Gogol's "Dead Souls"* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 231.

³⁹Gogol, *Dead Souls: A Norton Critical Edition*, 422.

between those classes, and the Gogolian paradox.⁴⁰ First, there are two classes portrayed in the novel, with a stark divide between them: the nobility and the serfs. Between these classes comes a sharp gradation of reality. The outer world is Russia itself, and the inner world the dead serfs and nobility. As Gogol narrows in upon each circle, the reality begins to crumble, which leaves the reader with the Gogolian paradox. The dead serfs are the closest living beings in the novel, while the nobility have become lifeless. They have lost their humanity, and in that process, are the true dead souls in the novel. Chichikov, in a contradictory manner, spends the novel talking to the dead, in order to gain the rights of the living. This paradox exemplifies how Gogol viewed the serfdom system. The nobility was devoid of good, while the serfs still had the potential for it. The description is as bleak as it is true. Where is hope to be found in a world where the living are already lost? That hope comes through knowledge. Gogol recognized the problem of using an evil character as the hero of his novel, but through that use, he wanted the reader to not fall into the same entrapment of evil.⁴¹ Gogol wanted his audience to confront their devils. In the final paragraph of the first novel, he hints to the possibility of Chichikov being an instrument of God, a figure of salvation, as on his escape the carriage is described to be, "Inspired by God."⁴² Whether the line is intended to be paradoxical or true, its significance remains the same. The literary devil provided a means to salvation.

Edyta Bojanowska, Professor of Slavic Languages and Literatures at Harvard, presents a different view of Gogol's critique, calling it an attack on nationalism, as well as the social systems.⁴³ Gogol, a once patriotic man, grew to hate the reality of Russia. Bojanowska states,

⁴⁰Winston Weathers, "Gogol's Dead Souls: The Degrees of Reality." *College English* 17, no. 3 (1955): 160-161. doi:10.2307/495738.

⁴¹Ibid., 163.

⁴²Gogol, *Dead Souls*, 253.

⁴³Edyta Bojanowska, *Nikolai Gogol: Between Ukrainian and Russian Nationalism*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007).

"[Gogol's] analysis of the Russian psyche yields merely a catalog of faults or shortcomings, consistently couched in the rhetoric of national specificity."⁴⁴ While she recognizes his critique of the social, if the lens is removed by a degree, then there is a larger national critique at play. Gogol faced the dichotomy of being Ukrainian and Russian, and he was betrayed by a country that he once loved. The Russians in the novel share the same characteristics: obsession with rank, a stubbornness to change the immoral nature, and a lack of self-awareness. These traits are amplified when put next to Chichikov, and yet nothing changes by the end of the novel. The characters are representative of the entirety of Russia, a country that had moved beyond the disappointment of Gogol. While the social critique is first and foremost, it is important to recognize Gogol's relationship to nationalism, as his growing sense of betrayal fueled the satire.

This returns us to the historical situation examined at the beginning of the section. Nicholas himself recognized the evil of serfdom, but failed to find an answer. Gogol struggled just as much with the problem, and any possible answers failed to manifest due to the absence of the subsequent volumes. Chichikov shows us that the true power lies in awareness and accountability. Earlier, Chichikov was compared to the serpent, as he tricked humans but stood mute before God. In Genesis 3, there are consequences for eating the fruit and listening to the serpent. In Russia, the consequences had failed to manifest. Gogol wrote the novel in order to demonstrate to the Russian people how they had committed a collective sin, but this time they cannot wait for divine intervention. It took knowing the devil to understand good.

Chapter Two - The Devil on a Park Bench

⁴⁴Edyta Bojanowska, *Nikolai Gogol: Between Ukrainian and Russian Nationalism*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 218

Afterwards, when, frankly speaking, it was already too late, various institutions presented reports describing this man. A comparison of them cannot but cause amazement. Thus, the first of them said that the man was short, had gold teeth, and limped on his right leg. The second, that the man was enormously tall, had platinum crowns, and limped on his left leg. The third laconically averred that the man had no distinguishing marks. It must be acknowledged that none of these reports is of any value... He looked to be a little over forty. Mouth somehow twisted. Clean-shaven. Dark-haired. Right eye black, left—for some reason—green. Dark eyebrows, but one higher than the other. In short, a foreigner.⁴⁵

Woland walked into a Russian park as a mystery to his onlookers, and he sat on a bench between Mikhail Alexandrovich Berlioz, a literary journal editor, and Ivan Nikolaevich Ponyrev, a poet who wrote under the pseudonym Homeless. The presence of Woland stopped their conversation, in which Mikhail was explaining to Ivan the falsehood of Jesus, a fact proven because the virgin story was a copy of the same tales found in Eastern religions. It was during this conversation, through the disavowing of God, that the devil entered and sat with the men. The rest of the novel is a wild ride through Russia, as Woland and his adversaries make a playground of the growingly atheistic country. The examination begins by detailing the historical Soviet society that the work was directed toward, then moves onto a character diagnosis of the devil Woland, and finishes with connecting how Bulgakov used the devil as a critique of the literary class.

Setting the Scene of Bulgakov's Soviet Russia

Mikhail Bulgakov was born in Kiev, Ukraine in 1891, and died in Moscow, Russia in 1940. His masterpiece, *The Master and Margarita*, was written in the early 1930s, but would not

⁴⁵Mikhail Bulgakov, *The Master and Margarita*, trans. by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (New York: Penguin Random House, 1997), 6.

be published until the 1960s due to Soviet censorship's fear of the novel's satirical attacks. Just as was done with Gogol, the world that shaped Bulgakov is explained, followed by a brief biography of his life, told through journal entries and letters he wrote. The devils that plagued Russia did not leave in the generations that separated the two authors.

In 1914, two years before Bulgakov finished medical school, the first World War began. The early years of the war were a back and forth battle between Russia and Germany.⁴⁶ The Russians defeated the Germans at the battle of Gumbinnen. Subsequently, Russia lost the Battle of Tannenberg and Battle of the Masurian Lakes, with a combined causality count of one hundred and fifty thousand Russian soldiers. Amidst the backdrop and involvement in the world's problems, Russia faced its own internal challenges.⁴⁷ Eighty five percent of the total population was peasants, even as the serfdom system had come to an end in 1861. Grigori Rasputin, the self-proclaimed holy man sent by God to save Russia, was brutally assassinated in December 1916. Industrialization and the working class grew, but their rights and conditions were limited. Finally, the problems became too much and the pot boiled over. This led to two revolutions that dictated the majority of Bulgakov's life: the Russian Revolution lead by Lenin and the Bolsheviks, and the Stalin Revolution in 1928.

On March 2, 1917, after political tensions caused Nicholas the Second to abdicate his throne, a provincial government was established. The temporary government faced immediate opposition from the Soviet party, and three important problems arose and were perpetuated: peasants demanded more land, economic shortages persisted, and Russia was stuck in a war with Germany.⁴⁸ Throughout the year of 1917, the Lenin-led Bolsheviks continued to fight for power,

⁴⁶Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Cambridge History of Russia: Volume 3 The Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 96.

⁴⁷Riasanovsky and Steinberg, *A History of Russia*, 385.

⁴⁸*Ibid*, 427-428.

and after countless moments of near suppression, they finally took the government before the end of the year. Come January 1918, and the Republic of Soviet Russia was in place. The subsequent years saw a Civil War, multiple independence movements, a war against Poland, and growing unrest in society. Throughout it all, the Soviet party held onto their power, defying even the predictions of Lenin, but only ruin and despair remained in Russia.

After the end of the 1922 Civil War, the Bolsheviks instituted the New Economic Policy (NEP), which was not a wide-reaching, comprehensive plan, but a series of smaller of measures that attempted to stabilize the turmoil.⁴⁹ A lower fixed tax was instituted. Private economies had leeway to develop alongside the state-run industry. Trusts were created between like-industries, as supplies grew scarce from the wars. Labor laws were enacted, a balanced budget was achieved, and inflation was countered. The groundwork for socialism was laid, but it would never be capitalized upon. In 1924, Lenin died, which led to another power struggle between Joseph Stalin and Leon Trotsky. Stalin mirrored the same patriotism and heroism that gained Lenin control, and by 1928, he had taken the country for his own. The NEP was killed, a fight against socialism was started, and the Communist power led a charge into the new world.

This was the world in which Bulgakov wrote *The Master and Margarita*. Three Five-Year plans, first enacted in 1928 and ending with the German invasion in 1941, returned the USSR to its industrial roots.⁵⁰ Each plan followed in the footsteps of the other, and together they did much to unravel and destroy the work of the NEP. There were large investments into heavy industry, which were reminiscent of the war. Agriculture was collectivized, removing any rights that the peasants had gained in the last ten years. The problems of the people were put second, as

⁴⁹Suny, *The Cambridge History of Russia: Volume 3 The Twentieth Century*, 169.

⁵⁰Riasanovsky and Steinberg, *A History of Russia: Ninth Edition*, 468-476.

all that truly mattered was the collective strength of the government and the country. In total, there were no shortages of devils plaguing the Russian people, and in the despair, it was the literary devil that illuminated sins and fought for salvation.

Bulgakov captured this difficult life in his own letters and diaries, which are in a collection that spans from 1921 to 1940. In his first letter, written November 17th, 1921, he had just moved to Moscow. The last letter, composed on February 8th, 1940, a month before his death, is only two sentences to his nieces. While at times serious and at other times anecdotal, the letters give a keen insight into the Russian devils that Bulgakov witnessed. In the first 1921 letter, which is written to his mother, Bulgakov stated: "Suffice it to say that people are undergoing a mad struggle for existence and having to adjust to the new conditions [of being under the Soviet Regime]."⁵¹ As he would explain, people were being fired, business had become a fierce competition, money was greatly inflated, and he struggled to find warm clothes. His one goal was to make it through the harsh winter. In the entirety of the letter, however, he remained optimistic about life, that he would make through and that he could adjust to the change. This dichotomy within the mind of Bulgakov, where he was both extremely confident and cautious, was present in nearly all the letters and diary entries. In a 1923 diary entry, after meeting with Soviet writer Alexei Tolstoy to publish his first short story, Bulgakov made this entry:

In amongst my bouts of depression and nostalgia for the past, living in these absurd, temporarily cramped conditions, in a totally disgusting room in a totally disgusting house, I sometimes, as now, experience a brief surge of confidence and strength. I can sense my own thoughts soaring upwards, and I believe I'm immeasurably stronger than any other writer I know. But in my present circumstances, I may well go under.⁵²

⁵¹Mikhail Bulgakov, *Diaries and Selected Letters*, trans. by Roger Cocknell, (Richmond: Alma Classics, 2013), 3.

⁵²Bulgakov, *Diaries and Selected Letters*, 17-18.

Bulgakov had a strange relationship to the arts and writing, which is first seen in this letter. *The Master and Margarita*, as will be explored later, satirizes many atheistic authors and literary agents, who spread anti-religious propaganda through Soviet Russia. Bulgakov took special offense at this. The novel was his response to their faults, and if they could no longer see Jesus, then maybe they just might recognize the devil. Because the two, Jesus and the devil, always come together.

In 1924, Mikhail Bulgakov published *The Adventures of Chichikov*, based, as name would suggest, after Gogol's *Dead Souls*. It is a play that follows the same main character, who has returned to Bulgakov's Russia and finds that evil still infests the population.⁵³ Over the next decade, Bulgakov struggled over and finished *The Master and Margarita*. As stated earlier, it would not be released until 1966 because of censorship. In a case study on the Russian journal *Internatsional'naiia Literatura*, Samantha Sherry, a historian of the Soviet Union, examines how extreme this censorship had become.⁵⁴ The primary goal of the journal was a socio-political one, as it was tasked with creating a favorable outlook on Stalin's Regime. The freedom of its early years was taken away, and editors who went against the Soviet goal were arrested. The climax of this journal censorship came during the late 1930s, the same time when Bulgakov finished his masterpiece. There must have been a constant awareness of this censorship, and the constant threat that he wrote under.

Bulgakov idolized the writing of Gogol, and that showed in his play, the novel, and a variety of short stories. Even his actions were similar, as both authors burned a manuscript. Bulgakov, in a diary entry, wrote about burning an initial draft of *The Master and Margarita*:

⁵³Emerson, *The Cambridge Introduction to Russian Literature*, 185.

⁵⁴Samantha Sherry, *Discourses of Regulation and Resistance: Censoring Translation in the Stalin and Khrushchev Soviet Era*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015).

"With my own hands I have personally thrown the draft of a novel about the Devil... into the stove."⁵⁵ The idolization is understandable. The authors grew into their respective literary fruition under oppressive regimes. They were each censored for writings that critiqued the government. And they chose the devil as their fictional character to fight real evils. Bulgakov was his generation's Gogol, and Woland is Chichikov with a new face. Two authors, two devils, and a growing literary theme of using the character as a means to stop corruption.

The life of Bulgakov was challenging, often times miserable, and certainly complicated; however, it ended with a brilliance and importance that Bulgakov himself recognized, and the world would come to know thirty years later. In a 1938 letter to his wife Yelena, two years before his death, he shared the urgency that ran through him to finish what would become his masterpiece: "Wouldn't it be good if Woland were to fly to Barvikha! Alas, such things only happen in novels! Any interruption in the typing would mean the end! I lose the connecting ideas, the thread of the corrections and the harmony of the whole. The typing has to be finished, whatever the cost... I must finish the novel! Now! Now!"⁵⁶ To fully understand this importance and urgency of Bulgakov, let us return to the park bench in 1930 in Soviet Russia, as Woland critiques all that has gone wrong with society.

In Walks Woland

Unlike Chichikov, there is no doubt that Woland is the devil, and he is compelled to come to Russia because of the country's troubling social circumstances. This examination of his

⁵⁵Bulgakov, *Diaries and Selected Letters*, 96.

⁵⁶Bulgakov, *Diaries and Selected Letters*, 190.

character is limited to the opening park bench scene. Similarly to the analysis of Chichikov, the focus is on how Woland is characterized, both by himself and in relation to the other opening characters, and how this characterization comments on the larger society. Woland is smart, cunning, and manipulative. He embodies the devil of modernity; he is the nicely dressed person in a suit who revels in the accomplishment of his evil deeds. The complexity comes not from the character, but his literary mode as a critique.

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, there are three characters in the opening park bench scene: Woland, Mikhail Alexandrovich Berlioz, and Ivan Nikolaevich Ponyrev. The novel opens in the middle of a conversation between Berlioz and Ivan, and it is this interaction that attracts Woland to Russia. Ivan, under his pseudonym Homeless, was commissioned by Berlioz to write an anti-religious poem for his self-described "Fat literary journal."⁵⁷ The narrator summarizes the conversation and the faults of the poem:

This conversation, as was learned afterwards, was about Jesus Christ... Homeless had portrayed the main character of his poem—that is, Jesus—in very dark colours, but nevertheless the whole poem, in the editor's opinion, had to be written over again. And so the editor was now giving the poet something of a lecture on Jesus, with the aim of underscoring the poet's essential error... His Jesus came out, well, completely alive, the once-existing Jesus, though true, a Jesus furnished with all negative features. Now, Berlioz wanted to prove to the poet that the main thing was not how Jesus was, good or bad, but that this same Jesus, as a person, simply never existed in the world, all the stories about him were mere fiction.⁵⁸

Bulgakov, from this beginning interaction, is laying out the target for his satire that would span the rest of the novel. These two men, an editor and a poet, are arguing that the goodness and realness of Jesus come across too strong in the poem. Ivan is a poet that wants to bring his

⁵⁷Bulgakov, *Master and Margarita*, 3.

⁵⁸Bulgakov, *Master and Margarita*, 5.

characters to life. Berlioz is an editor who cares little about these common characterizations, but instead is a business man who has commissioned Ivan to write an anti-religious work. Both men are atheists, but there is a fundamental battle about the role of art, the artist, and the audience. It is during this debate that Woland, the devil, walks into the park and interrupts the two men on the bench.

The remainder of the novel's opening chapter is a conversation between the three men, where they talk about atheists, their agreed disdain of God, the logic of Kant, the proofs of Aquinas, the coming decapitation of Berlioz, and the mental illness of Woland. As the topics shift from one to the next, a single thread persists. Woland is in control. He dictates the truth in a country that is running out of it. The whole section is a densely-packed ten pages, but important passages are chosen for analysis that capture the power of Woland's devilry. It is important to linger upon, and show as much of, their conversation as possible. The first passage below is the entrance of Woland:

'May I sit down?' the foreigner [Woland] asked politely, and the friends somehow involuntarily moved apart; the foreigner adroitly sat down between them and at once entered into the conversation:

'Unless I heard wrong, you were pleased to say that Jesus never existed?' the foreigner asked, turning his green left eye to Berlioz.

'No you did not hear wrong,' Berlioz replied courteously, 'that is precisely what I was saying.'

'Ah, how interesting!' exclaimed the foreigner.

'What the devil does he want?' thought Homeless, frowning.⁵⁹

This is the beginning of their back and forth debate on the validity of religious belief, but it is important to recognize the comment by Ivan at the end. This direct reference to the devil sitting next to him appears repeatedly throughout the novel, and is quite similar in function to the "Devil

⁵⁹Bulgakov, *Master and Margarita*, 7.

knew" line from Gogol. In Gogol, however, it came from the narrator, where here it is a direct thought from the character. While a small difference, it is quite meaningful. Gogol created a distance between the devil commentary and the awareness of the characters, while Bulgakov collapses the two upon each other. The effect is a blissfully ironic unawareness of Berlioz and Ivan, who have fallen for the devil without knowing that he is sitting on their bench. This irony is expanded upon as the conversation continues:

'Forgive my impertunity, but, as I understand, along with everything else, you also do not believe in God?' [Woland] made frightened eyes and added: 'I swear I won't tell anyone!'...

'In our country atheism does not surprise anyone,' Berlioz said with diplomatic politeness. 'The majority of our population consciously and long ago ceased believing in the fairy tales about God.'

Here the foreigner pulled the following stunt: he got up and shook the amazed editor's hand, accompanying it with these words:

'Allow me to thank you with all my heart.'⁶⁰

Woland relishes at the opportunity to make the atheist Soviet Union his playground, and Bulgakov is developing the target of his satire. It is against the literary class and intellectuals, who think themselves their own gods and look down upon any religious belief. Woland mocks the two men with his theatric and over-the-top responses, from the fake fear to jumping in joy, and they arrogantly remain clueless. Bulgakov constructs Berlioz and Ivan as the fools of the conversation, while Woland always has another answer and the final say. This dynamic is built upon as they dive into the five proofs of Aquinas, the Kantian response, and the later thinkers:

'But allow me to ask you,' the foreign visitor spoke after some anxious reflection, 'what, then, about the proofs of God's existence, of which, as is known, there are exactly five?'

⁶⁰Bulgakov, *Master and Margarita*, 8.

'Alas!' Berlioz said with regret. 'Not one of these proofs is worth anything, and mankind shelved them long ago. You must agree that in the realm of reason there can be no proof of God's existence.'

'Bravo!' cried the foreigner. 'Bravo! You have perfectly repeated restless old Immanuel's thought in this regard. But here's the hitch: he roundly demolished all five proofs, and then, as if mocking himself, constructed a sixth of his own.'⁶¹

There is a small aside where Woland mentions having lunch with Kant, much to the confusion of the other two men, but he passes their questions and continues the conversation. The five proofs of Aquinas mentioned by Berlioz, often known as the Five Ways, proceed as follows: argument from motion, from causation, from contingency, from gradation, and from design. The sixth proof of Kant is derived from practical reason. Kant's argument is that in order for there to be morality, there has to be a God, or else such concepts of good or evil would become meaningless.⁶² Berlioz calls on reason to disprove God, but Woland counters with Kant, who was the master of reason in Modernity, and his sixth proof, which is derived through reason. Again and again, the wits of Woland have a counter to the arguments of Berlioz and Ivan.

These three passages from the chapter are emblematic of the Woland that is to come in the entirety of the novel. He is the devil, who has come to Soviet Russia because of the country's growing atheism. He is lively and theatric, while simultaneously cruel and derisive. And he is always the most intelligent person in any conversation. The complexity of his character, however, is not contained by his speech and his actions. There is an interesting dynamic, as described by Edward Ericson, former Professor Emeritus of English at Calvin College, between Woland and Jesus.⁶³ The devil is incarnated into Woland, just as God was incarnated into Jesus.

⁶¹Bulgakov, *Master and Margarita*, 9.

⁶²Charles Taliaferro and Elsa Marty, *A Dictionary of Philosophy of Religion*, (New York City: Continuum, 2010), 154.

⁶³Edward Ericson, "The Satanic Incarnation: Parody in Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita*," *The Russian Review* 33, no. 1 (1974): 23. doi:10.2307/127619.

Woland is rejected by those who have fallen for sin, being in this scene Berlioz and Ivan, similarly to how Jesus is rejected by the Jews in John 1:11. It must be remembered, even with these Jesus parallels, that Bulgakov is criticizing the spreading atheism in the Soviet Union, not religion. Woland is a parody of Jesus, but the target of this parody is the people who have strayed from God. Ericson describes the existence of the devil as the "seventh proof." By the end of the novel, those who believe in the devil like nature of Woland still have hope, while the people who reject Woland are beyond saving. Woland is the messiah for sinners that have recognized evil and grasp for redemption.

This dynamic of Woland as savior is exemplified at the end of the park bench scene:

'Bear in mind that Jesus did exist,' [said Woland].

'You see, Professor,' Berlioz responded with a forced smile, 'we respect your great learning, but on this question we hold to a different point of view.'

'There's no need for any points of view,' the strange professor replied, 'he simply existed. that's all.'

'But there's need for some proof...' Berlioz began.

'There's no need for any proofs,' replied the professor, and he began to speak soft, while his accent for some reason disappeared: 'It's all very simple: In a white cloak with blood-red lining, with the shuffling gait of cavalryman, early in the morning of the fourteenth day of the spring month of Nisan...'⁶⁴

There are two important aspects of the conversation to note: Berlioz's respect for Woland's title of professor, and Woland's insistence on faith. Berlioz is beyond saving, as he regards too highly the intellect and reason of Woland, so much so that he rejects the seventh proof that sits next to him. Woland recognizes how essential faith must be. In the end, Berlioz would be decapitated by a street car, just as Woland tells him in this first scene. Ivan, who did not doubt to the extent of Berlioz, is transformed into a creature of the night, but forgiven by the end of the novel. The

⁶⁴Bulgakov, *The Master and Margarita*, 14.

level of faith of the characters directly correlates to their outcomes. Lastly, the final line of this scene transitions into the Pontius Pilate trial, which will be expanded upon shortly, as it ties directly into Bulgakov's satire of the literary and intellectual class.

Woland is creative, cruel, and smart. Just as Chichikov represented the better version of the townspeople's corruption, Woland is everything that the literary class strives to be. He understands complex philosophies, he is quick on his feet, and he always has the better answer. In a conversation with an editor and a poet, Woland was able to best them both. The satire that spans the novel is epitomized in this the park bench scene, and now there is a shift to how Bulgakov, through Woland, specifically critiques the faults of the literary class and their growing atheism.

Satirizing the Literary and Intellectual Class

The Pontius Pilate scenes in *The Master and Margarita*, mentioned at the end of the first chapter, are a book-within-a-book, written by the Master, who is an author outcast by the Soviet Union for his religious writings. His depiction of Jesus is altered to be more appropriate for the likes of Berlioz and the literary class, but his ultimate fault is that he tries to adhere to a sense of historicity. This attempt to be historical leads to his rejection by Russia, as they deem any religious writing that flaunts fact to be inappropriate for public consumption. There is an interaction between the Master and Woland that leads to the most famous line of the novel. Woland, in his curiosity, demands that the Master hand over his book, but the Master responds that he has thrown it in the stove. Woland, later in the novel, returns the original book to the

Master, and tells him, "Manuscripts don't burn."⁶⁵ This burning of manuscripts is starting to become a common theme. Gogol burned the unfinished parts of *Dead Souls*. Bulgakov burned an initial draft of *The Master and Margarita*. And now Bulgakov's creation, the Master, throws his novel into the stove. The Soviet Union greatly suppressed arts and writing that did not align with their carefully crafted picture of the country, which led to the tragic self-destruction of work. Woland's response to the Master and his burned manuscript is telling to Bulgakov's perspective on the power of literature and the limits of Soviet censorship. Atheism could not stop faith. It could not eliminate the writing of the Master. And the Soviet Union could not prevent the lasting satire of *The Master and Margarita*.

Justin Weir, a professor of Slavic languages and literatures at Harvard University, explores the complex search for truth that Bulgakov has undertaken in the novel, as he reaches into the past and confronts the present.⁶⁶ These two worlds of past and present collide in the trial recreation of the Master, a Soviet author writing about religious history. The first world is Bulgakov's present day Moscow. Weir explains how characters like Berlioz have become so dependent on reason and skepticism that their own identities are alienated from the self. They are too focused on discrediting past belief, like the Aquinas five ways, that they have no current beliefs of their own. Instead of possessing knowledge, the intellectual class is trapped in a perpetual state of not knowing, developed through their continued desire to be skeptical. Bulgakov fears the shift toward a lack of truth, and while he values authorship, he does not approve of the Soviet Union's direction. These faults are exemplified in the arrogant and ignorant Berlioz, who rejects both faith and the devil. The second world is tradition, and for the majority

⁶⁵Bulgakov, *The Master and Margarita*, 254.

⁶⁶Justin Weir, *The Author as Hero: Self and Tradition in Bulgakov, Pasternak, and Nabokov*, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2002), 33.

of the novel, this means the Christian past. The connection between Woland and Jesus was explained earlier, but this parody stretches throughout the length of the novel. Parody requires an object to be functional, and while it may appear to be religion, the actual target is the tradition that has been lost. Berlioz refuses to entertain the idea of God, and rejects the seventh proof of Woland. When the devil is incarnated into Woland, the first two people who he interacts with are a poet and an editor. This choice says a lot about Bulgakov and his disdain toward the literary class. The manuscript burning is the final collision of these worlds, as the past cannot be destroyed, but the present persists.

Where Weir presents the satire through how the worlds collide, Gary Rosenshield, a professor Slavic languages and literature at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, argues that the past and the present of *The Master and Margarita* must be seen as two separate events that cannot be bridged.⁶⁷ Outside of the basic structure, there is little parallel between the Russian and Roman scenes. Instead of seeing the two worlds as connected, Rosenshield claims, they must be viewed through their differences. Pilate, in the Master's reenactment, has authority and power, where that is lacking in any of the characters that Bulgakov depicts in Moscow. In the Jerusalem scenes, the characters possess a certain psychological ambiguity, similar to how Chichikov can appear both good and bad. In Moscow, the characters tend to be caricatures of the society that they represent. Instead of trying to connect Jerusalem to Moscow, Rosenshield's main point is that *The Master and Margarita* should not be seen as a puzzle that must be solved. The aporia between past and present does not need to be bridged. Instead, the divide should be cherished, as two worlds on opposite ends of the spectrum.

⁶⁷Rosenshield, Gary. "The Master and Margarita and the Poetics of Aporia: A Polemical Article." *Slavic Review* 56, no. 2 (1997): 187-211. doi:10.2307/2500782.

While Weir and Rosenshield arrive at different perspectives, they approach the same point: Bulgakov understands the schism at the heart of society. Whether the two worlds collide or not, there are still questions that need to be answered. Should tradition be cherished? Is the present moment dangerous? Can the past and present co-exist? For Bulgakov, living in a Soviet Union that threatened his livelihood and faith, the devil, through Woland, was his answer. He incarnated the devil into a professor, and then sent him to show Moscow how dangerous their reliance on reason could be. Aquinas has five proofs, Kant presented the sixth, and now the devil has become the seventh.

Before moving to Revelation, it is important to do a quick comparison between Chichikov and Woland. In the conclusion, the two are grouped together, as they are quite similar, but differences do arise. The most glaring is the ambivalence of Chichikov in relation to the clarity of Woland. They are on a spectrum of devilness, and this changes the way in which they are read. Chichikov has a small sense of being redeemable, while Woland has no need for salvation. Another difference is their end goal. Chichikov wants to steal dead souls, and he leaves town once the plan has been discovered. Woland simply desires to make Russia his temporary playground. The agenda of Chichikov drives *Dead Souls*, while *The Master and Margarita* relies more on the lives of the surrounding characters. As a critique, however, the two are quite similar, and for this reason they are grouped together in the conclusion of the essay.

Now, just like Bulgakov did in his novel, we must travel into the past in order to understand the present. The cunning, clever devils crafted by Gogol and Bulgakov, who capitalized on Russia's sins, will make way for the blasphemous beast of Revelation 12-13 that threatened first century Rome.

Chapter Three - The Devil of Rome

And war broke out in heaven; Michael and his angels fought against the dragon. The dragon and his angels fought back, but they were defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. The great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. (Revelation 12:7-9)

In the above section, a cosmic war has erupted in heaven between Michael, his angels, and Satan. Five different descriptions, each carrying their own long pasts, evoke devil imagery: the great dragon, the ancient serpent, the deceiver of the world, Satan, and the Devil. In Revelation 12 and 13, the Devil falls to earth and resumes his war, summoning two gruesome beasts to do his bidding. The section is packed with symbolism, both pulled from the Roman culture and earlier Old/New Testament writings. Instead of three sections of analysis, as was done for Gogol and Bulgakov, there are only two: a brief overview of Revelation's history and dating, followed by an exploration of the web of allusions and connections entwined into the chapter. It is difficult to analyze the text by itself without examining the use of symbolism and allusions, since these literary devices are so present and fruitful. The Devil of Revelation is a combination of all those devils that have come before, and another stepping stone for the next devil that will arrive.

Revelation and the Social Context of Rome

The dating of Revelation has posed a challenge for scholars, and three dominant schools of thought have arisen.⁶⁸ The longest standing belief is that the book was written sometime during the reign of Domitian, which spanned from 81 to 96 CE. It was proposed more recently, in the twentieth century, that the book was written during the reign of Nero, closer to the fall of the temple in 70 CE. Lastly, recent scholars have combined the two schools, arguing that the visions dominating the book occurred during the time of Nero, but they remained unwritten until Domitian. The evidence being used for the dating, however, is the same for the three interpretations, and by examining this evidence, the community context and societal stakes of Revelation are outlined.

There are three pieces of information that are especially important to the dating of Revelation 12-13: the text's familiarity with persecution, the link between the beast and the legend that Nero would return, and the possible connection between beast and emperor worship.⁶⁹ First, the audience of Revelation, specifically mentioned in the text as cities in Asia minor, faced persecution under multiple emperors near the end of the first century.⁷⁰ Persecution of Christians was predominantly enforced by the Jewish community, who themselves faced their own persecution, but there are suggestions that the persecution came from the larger Roman context as well. There are, however, few specifics to solidify this claim. Both Nero and Domitian carried out some scale of Christian persecution, and Domitian's personality was compared to Nero's cruelty. Since persecution of some form happened under both, this does not help the

⁶⁸John Christopher Thomas and Frank Macchia, *Revelation*, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2016), 27.

⁶⁹Thomas and Macchia, *Revelation*, 27.

⁷⁰There has been debate on the severity and extent of the Christian persecution under Domitian. Michael Gilbertson mentions that it was not systematic or extreme, and that the oppression was lessened during Domitian's reign. Any persecution or oppression warrants a response from literature, and while it may factually be true that it not at a peak, a single threatened life is enough to spread fear through a community.

dating. The second bit of evidence is that non-Christian documents likened Nero to a beast, and legend told that the emperor would return after his death. There are claims that the second beast of Revelation 13 is Nero's return, which would suggest the earlier dating; however, while similar, the link between Christian and non-Christian texts does not run any deeper. Third, and lastly, in Revelation 12 and 13 there is dragon and beast worship, which suggests a possible critique of emperor worship in Rome. While the link is logical, there is no clear empirical evidence of emperor worship under Nero or Domitian. Even though the exact date is shrouded, this has not diminished the scholarly significance of Revelation 12 and 13. Christians were under threat, and the author, John, represented that threat through the Devil.

This date debate ties directly into the apocalyptic and prophetic genre of Revelation. The combination of the two styles creates an "already and not yet" approach, as described by G.K. Beale, a prominent Revelation Scholar at Westminster Theological Seminary.⁷¹ Prophecy understands divine intervention to come in the midst of history. For example, Daniel 9:25 tells of the Messiah's coming, and over five hundred years later, Christ is born. This divine intervention unfolds with history. Apocalypse, however, expects divinity at the end of history. In the shorter ending of Mark 16, Jesus sends himself out through the disciples to preach eternal salvation. Prophecy does not necessitate an endpoint, while apocalypse requires these eschatological elements. In Revelation, the two genres are melded together, creating a hybrid that looks for divine intervention in both the middle of the story and at the end. The result captures the severity of the historical situation. There are two ways to read this combination. First, the historical context was apocalyptic enough that the end seemed near, but not so severe that prophecies needed to quickly come true. Or second, the apocalypse was near, and the current situation was

⁷¹G.K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 37.

so severe that immediate divine intervention was also desired. Under persecution, the second option seems just as likely as the first. The Christian population feared for their lives in a Roman empire that actively sought to rid them from the community. John wrote Revelation as the world around him sinned, something that Gogol and Bulgakov would each do nearly two millenia later.

Michael Gilbertson, Vicar of Stranton who completed his doctoral work at the University of Durham, builds upon the hybridity of genre, and says that, "The text [is] *both* reaching out to ultimate spacial and temporal realities *and* focusing sharply on the earthly present."⁷² The spatial dimension of apocalypse encompasses the social context and the cosmic orientation. The temporal aspect wraps together the eschatological elements on earth. Both are highly prevalent in Revelation 12 and 13, in which a heavenly war is brought down to the world, the struggles of society are captured through symbolism, and the end time is approaching. These elements must be kept in mind as we move into the book itself, in order to understand the Devil that terrorizes Rome.

The Many Faces of Satan

Two qualities define the Devil in Revelation 12 and 13: his power, and his universality. The establishment of these characteristics first comes through the four names, plus a title, used to reference the creature: great dragon, ancient serpent, the devil, Satan, and the deceiver of the whole world (Rev 12:9). Each carries with it a past and a multitude of interpretations. The great dragon, while predominately in Revelation, first appears in Ezekiel 29:3, when God likens Pharoah to a great dragon in the Nile. Later, in Revelation 12, this river imagery reappears:

⁷²Michael Gilbertson, *God and History in the Book of Revelation: New Testament Studies in Dialogue with Pannenberg and Moltmann*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 45.

"Then from his mouth the serpent poured water like a river after the woman, to sweep her away with the flood" (Rev 12:15). Parallels like this are common throughout the book. The ancient serpent dates back to Genesis 3, and earlier the craftiness of the character was compared to Chichikov. In John 8:44, as well as in the synoptic version, the devil is used, as Jesus declared to the Jews who do not believe him and have strayed from Abraham: "You are from your father the devil, and you choose to do your father's desires" (John 8:44). The 'capital S' Satan figure, as mentioned in the introduction, first appeared as response to Jesus in Mark 3, in which there was established to be a Kingdom of God and a Kingdom of Satan. Finally, the devil's deception is a common occurrence. An example of this effect is in Psalms 5:6, "You destroy those who speak lies; / the Lord abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful." The evocation of the past and these interpretations happens in a single line in Revelation. This is the start of the power and universality of Revelation's Devil, and it is built through the interconnected literary history of the Bible. Northrop Frye, the highly influential Canadian literary critic from the University of Toronto, argues that Revelation must be read typologically, "As a mosaic of allusions to Old Testament prophecy."⁷³ John, the author of Revelation, was deeply aware of the Hebrew Text, which itself pulled from prior mythologies in the region. The Devil of Revelation was crafted well before the text: he lives through thousands of years and has travelled to a plethora of cultures. While the majority of allusions and symbols in Revelation 12 and 13 must be ignored for the sake of space, there must be a constant awareness of the past, the present, and the future of Revelation's Devil.

After the establishment of the Devil's titles and history, the text moves to the agents summoned by the Devil to do his bidding. There is much to learn about the Devil from how the

⁷³Northrop Frye, *The Great Code: The Bible and Literature*, (New York: HBJ Publishing, 1982), 199.

two beasts are characterized, but before that, an important note. These beasts are summoned by the Devil, and derived from the Devil's being. The authority and power of the Devil is expansive, to the extent that these great and gruesome beasts are his minions. The relationship between Devil and beast must be seen in a similar power structure as God to creation. More is learned about God through creation than through direct contact with God, and the same holds true to the Devil and his beasts. With that note, the beasts are summarized below, followed by their importance in relation to the Devil (Rev 13:1-18). Summoned by the dragon, the first beast rises out of the sea, possessing seven heads and ten horns. It is given power, authority, and a throne over the land. The whole earth proceeds to worship the beast and the dragon. The first beast exercises authority for forty-two months, and constantly utters blasphemies to God and heaven. Afterwards, a second beast comes out of the land, with two horns and the speech of a dragon. It takes authority from the first beast, sends fire down from the heavens, deceives the people, and has the number six hundred and sixty six. In the remaining seven chapters of Revelation, the sea beast, the second beast (whose name is shifted to 'false prophet'), and the dragon (a thousand years later) are cast into the Lake of Fire, and then Christ promises his return.

There are a multitude of symbols and allusions working through the beasts, so only the most important are highlighted. For the first beast, it is best interpreted as a combination of the four beasts in Daniel 7:1-8.⁷⁴ The seven heads are a composite of the four beasts, the ten horns mirror the horns of the fourth beast, and the blasphemous names are a reference to Daniel 7:8. The numbers seven and ten, connected respectively to the heads and horns of the first beast, signal total and reaching oppressive power. The fourth beast of Daniel 7 represents the Greek Empire and the first beast of Revelation 13 represents the Roman. By recalling Daniel, the

⁷⁴Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 683.

human nature of oppression in Revelation is not contained by a single moment, but stretches throughout history. The second beast is a parody of the messianic Lamb in Revelation 5:6, and represents the anti-Christ, false prophet character.⁷⁵ Where the first beast is the threat of the Roman state as a whole, the second beast is the threat of deception and corruption in its various institutions. Together, the beasts strike a balance between power and finesse, between brute force and cunningness. The Devil, through these two beasts, achieves an expansive interpretation. First, he is powerful and oppressive, represented by the first beast. A beast who is cruel and blasphemous. People worship it, which connects back to the emperor worship mentioned earlier. Second, he is deceitful and clever, as seen in the second beast. The beast is cunning, resembles the ancient serpent, and tricks the population into worship. Instead of existing through a single character, the Devil lives in multiple beasts, and through their incarnations infests the minds of those who have sinned.

To better understand the structure of this scene, Job 40-41 must be explained. God tells Job that two Satanic beasts will oppose divinity: the land beast Behemoth and the sea beast Leviathan.⁷⁶ Behemoth will be destroyed with a sword by God (Job 40:19). Leviathan is a creature without equal on the earth, it will try to trick humans through its words, and future battles will be fought with it (Job 41:33, 41:3, 41:25). In description and physical features, the beasts of Revelation more closely resemble Daniel 7, but in structure, this Job scene is important. The two beasts of Job manifest in Revelation, just as God said. It is another layer in a growing web. To understand how far-reaching the Devil's web is, selected passages from Revelation 13, and their corresponding scenes from the Old Testament, are below:

⁷⁵Thomas, *Revelation*,

⁷⁶Behemoth will be used by Bulgakov for the name of Woland's large werecat sidekick. Throughout the novel, he drinks, plays with a pistol, and constantly tells jokes.

| Characteristic | Revelation | Old Testament |
|----------------------|--|--|
| Arrogance | The beast was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words (Rev 13:5) | There were eyes like human eyes in this horn, and a mouth speaking arrogantly. (Dan 7:8) |
| Physical Appearances | And I saw a beast rising out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads; and on its horns were ten diadems, and on its heads were blasphemous names (Rev 13:1) | A fourth beast, terrifying and dreadful and exceedingly strong. It had great iron teeth and was devouring, breaking in pieces, and stamping what was left with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that preceded it, and it had ten horns. (Daniel 7:7) |
| Deception | [The second beast] deceives the inhabitants of earth, telling them to make an image for the beast that had been wounded by the sword and yet lived; (Rev 13:14) | Will [Leviathan] make many supplications to you? / Will it speak soft words to you? / Will it make a covenant with you / to be taken as your servant forever? (Job 41 3:-4) |
| | Let anyone with understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a person. Its | And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. |

| | | |
|------------------------------------|--|--|
| Satanic and Divine Numbering | number is six hundred sixty-six. (Rev 13:18) | So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation. (Gen 2:2) |
|------------------------------------|--|--|

The power and significance of these Revelation selections comes through their interconnectedness to prior biblical passages. Arrogance is a common trait to associate with the devil. Physical appearances repeat themselves. Deception is the mode for producing sin in humans, as seen actively in Revelation and passively in God's warning to Job. The Satanic numbering of six falls just short of the divinity of seven, because it is on the seventh day of creation that blessings occurred, while humans, born on the sixth day, introduce sin into the world by turning away from God. These characteristics are captured in Revelation 12 and 13 when read by themselves. The chapters demonstrate the power of the Devil, the arrogance, the trickery, and his ability to plant sin and fear into humans. When read through the Old Testament, however, all these Devil features are stretched over a thousand years and spread across the world. This literary and cultural history of the Devil must always be in that awareness, but that does not take away from Revelation's ability to critique the present state of its Rome.

In Revelation 13, John is critiquing the Roman rule, and Beale explains, "The world system in which the Christians of Asia Minor live is a Satanic parody of God's ordering of the world."⁷⁷ Unlike Gogol or Bulgakov, where the parody comes through the characters, in Revelation it occurs through literary and thematic structure, through its allusions and symbols. It is by making anew the dream sequence in Daniel 7. It is through the number 666, which falls just

⁷⁷ Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 729.

short of the divine 777. Just like the Father gives authority to the Son, the dragon gives authority to the beasts. The devil tries to mimic divinity, but always falls short. In this way, Revelation is different from later parodies. Chichikov and Woland are not defeated, but in fact enact redemption for a select few. There is no redemption for the Devil of Revelation, or for the people that have strayed from God. This captures the severity of the social situation and how far sin had spread when the book was written, whether it be during the time of Nero or Domitian. Parody has a direct purpose and a distinct goal, and there are two ways to understand its manifestation in Revelation: by connecting the dots of the past, and by exploring the passages' relevance in modern postcolonial and liberation studies.

Steven Friesen, an early Christianity expert at the University of Texas at Austin, connects the dots by contrasting the utilization of myth in Imperial cults and their use as a means to resist dominant regimes through symbolism in the Book of Revelation.⁷⁸ He explains how mythology was incorporated into Imperial cultist architecture, and gives the example of the south portico of the Sebasteion at Aphrodisias. A sculptured panel on the third floor of the portico depicts a heroic, nude Nero conquering the Amazon, which utilizes the same iconography of Achilles killing Penthesilea, the queen of the Amazon. Imperial cults used past heroes like Achilles to divinize the dominance of Nero, as the Roman empire spread through Asia Minor. Revelation enacts the same mythology in an act of resistance. Where imperial cults made Roman leaders divine, Revelation turned their oppression into the Devil. Friesen starts by connecting Daniel and Job, as was done earlier. He then shifts to the reinterpretation of imperial cults, and a common theme that appears in both their rhetoric and Revelation's: Roman rule is based on the power of the military. Imperial cults transformed Nero into a hero, while John writes them into the

⁷⁸Steven J. Friesen, "Myth and Symbolic Resistance in Revelation 13," *Journal of Biblical Literature* Volume 23, No. 2 (Summer 2004): 281-313. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3267946>.

atrocious and blasphemous beasts of Leviathan and Behemoth. Both interpretations, while on opposite end of the spectrum, feed off military activity. Revelation is religious resistance through literature, and the Devil became a prominent character within that resistance story.

For modern relevance, Jean-Pierre Ruiz, a priest in the Diocese of Brooklyn and an associate professor of theology at St. John's University, explores Revelation through a post-colonial perspective.⁷⁹ He begins by evoking the work of Gustavo Gutierrez and James Cone, and how their work in the seventies on liberation theologies encouraged and supported reading the Bible through the oppressed. Revelation is one of the most popular texts in the sub-discipline, as it portrays stark differences between the rich and the poor, the powerful and the marginalized. While post-colonialism builds upon much of liberation theology's foundation, Ruiz asserts that it does not commit the same faith to the Bible. Where liberation theologies regard the Bible as the message of liberation, post-colonial studies are cautious of its use as a weapon of oppression in colonialism. Just like Freisen, Ruiz examines Revelation 13 and the significance of imperial cults in Asia Minor. There is a reason this story resonates with minority populations today, as he explains:

But the stories of Revelation's readers are far from over: the rich are getting richer and the poor are becoming poorer still. Disenfranchisement and marginalization have not been driven from the scene and speaking the truth to power still exposes the would-be prophet (whether true or false) to deadly risk.⁸⁰

Revelation speaks to the oppressed, the marginalized, and the poor. Through two different happy endings, the text gives hope that devils can be conquered. First is the happy ending within the book, as a new Jerusalem is formed and heaven colonizes Earth. Second is the happy ending

⁷⁹Jean-Pierre Ruiz, "Taking a Stand on the Sand of the Seashore: A Postcolonial Exploration of Revelation 13," in *Reading the Book of Revelation* ed. by David Barr. (New York: SBL Press, 2003).

⁸⁰Ruiz, "Taking a Stand on the Sand of the Seashore: A Postcolonial Exploration of Revelation 13," 312.

outside of the book, when Rome's imperialism falls and Christianity rises. The Devil of Revelation was written to be destroyed. No matter how powerful, how many connections to Job or Daniel or any other parts of the Old Testament, the Devil lost and good won. This is the exact opposite outcome of Chichikov and Woland. Revelation gives hope that the Devil and oppression are temporary, and that same hope has been instilled into liberation and post-colonial theologies.

The Devil of Revelation as a literary character, if contained to the book alone, is nothing extraordinary or special. The power of its Devil is woven into history and allusions, and it continues to function in 2019 in the experience of oppressed populations. This is a truly terrifying Devil at work. A Devil that infests humans, deceives, controls empires, and calls on magnificent beasts as his minions. A Devil which stretches through history and societies, and has willed the oppression of millions who have laid in his path. But hope is always there, because no matter how terrifying or powerful the Devil of Revelation may be, he is always fated to lose at the hand of Jesus.

Conclusion

Chichikov, Woland, and the Devil of Revelation have each been analyzed separately, but now comes the task of understanding how the three characters work together. What does understanding the Russian devils illuminate about the Biblical portrayal, and vice versa? How is the devil similar and different in each of these texts? While these aspects may have been touched upon throughout, two key differences and three similarities are expanded upon, in order to see the perpetual nature of the ever-growing devil.

The three differences, as explained when discussing Revelation, are the physical portrayals, the end goal of the character, and Revelation's ability to stretch across time. When it comes to physical attributes, both Chichikov and Woland take on human form. For Bulgakov, his character was very much viewed as an incarnation of Satan, similar to how God is incarnated into Jesus. This is not the case with Revelation. The Devil appears as a dragon, and the two beasts that do his bidding are far from anything normal in the human realm. While the Devil may infest and corrupt the human mind, there is a strict dichotomy between what the Devil is and what humans are. This dichotomy does not exist for Chichikov and Woland, and the two are actually the ultimate form of what corrupt humans strive to be. The second difference is the end goal of the characters. Chichikov and Woland, for the most part, finish what they set out to do. Chichikov collects dead souls, and is driven out of the town by the people. Instead of being defeated, however, he simply moves to another part of Russia. Woland makes the Soviet Union his playground throughout the novel, and exposes the evil which had become so common in the population. The Devil of Revelation definitively loses. The text states that Jesus will return, and the holy city will be realized (Rev 22). There is no room for doubt, and the power of the Devil is shown to be always limited by the power of God. Together, these two differences create an interesting picture. The human devils of Chichikov and Woland are more powerful than this great dragon of Revelation, and it is because their power comes through being the peak version of human sin, in a post-Enlightenment world where God appears less involved in history.

The final difference is Revelation's unique ability to stretch across history and cultures. It is a text that functions primarily through symbolism and allusions to other parts of the Bible. The same cannot be said about *Dead Souls* and *The Master and Margarita*. They may pull from prior devil writings, but with nothing to the extent of direct links found in Revelation. In many ways,

the two Russian texts are building their own devil canon. Chichikov and Woland closely resemble each other, and Bulgakov is heavily inspired by Gogol. It is important to note that less than a hundred years separate them. There are approximately seven hundred years distancing the Book of Daniel and Job from Revelation. For allusions and symbols to stand that test of time further exemplifies their importance and power to both readers and authors. The Devil of Revelation is constructed through history, which is simply not the case for Chichikov and Woland.

While the differences are important, it is the similarities that push how to understand the devil. First is the repeated use of deception. If there is any universal devil characteristic, deception is it. Chichikov tricks the townspeople into selling him dead souls. Woland's whole projection of a character is built around a constructed persona. The Devil of Revelation, through the beasts, deceives humans into worshipping him over God. The devil turns humans away from good and toward evil. This is always the goal. While the goal is not fully realized for the Devil in Revelation, all three devils successfully manipulate humans away from God.

The second similarity, and most important, is the use of satire and the strong connection to their respective societies. Each of the texts must be read as a literary response to some sort of evil. Gogol wrote against the serfdom system. Bulgakov worried about the rapid spread of atheism and disavowment of reason in the Soviet nation. John witnessed the oppression and persecution of Christians. The three authors chose the devil to be the answer to their problems. While the end goal of their devil characters differ, these initial choices exemplifies why the devil keeps arising in literature. The devil is a way to represent the faults of human society. It arrives simultaneously with Jesus. This phenomenon happened in the Gospel of Mark, in the Book of Revelation, and now in these Russian texts. If the devil begins appearing in literature, there needs

to be serious critical reflection on what the character is critiquing and how society has strayed from good. Humans recognize and project their faults onto the devil, and the characteristics of the devil will continue to grow as authors repeatedly represent those faults through the character.

This study examined only three texts in a vast field of devil literature. Their similarities and differences speak to a common truth, however, and they distinctly represent the societies, both the good and the bad aspects, from which they came. In order to fully understand the devil perpetuation in literature, more works must be examined across the course of history. The time between the Book of Daniel and Revelation was four hundred years. From Daniel to 2019 is over twenty-two hundred years. The literary devil has been fostered for over two thousand years. It is in this time that the devil has perpetuated and continued to gain power, and will only keep doing so. The devil carries with them a history of sins within great societies and within individual humans. It is through understanding the literary devil that the power of these sins can be understood, and by studying the literature, there is hope that we can recognize and be ready for when the devil returns to society.

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