CONTEMPORARY WOMEN IN THE EARLY DRAMA OF M.A.BULGAKOV

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by

Yvonne Karijo-Katz

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AUTHOR: Yvonne Karijo-Katz
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to contribute to the knowledge of the role of the female character in Russian literature through an exploration of the female image in the first cycle of plays by the dissident Soviet dramatist, M. A. Bulgakov. Background information, provided in the first and second chapters, allows the reader to view Bulgakov in his proper literary and historical context. In the course of the study, some attention is devoted to the male characters in the plays under consideration. This offers a contrast to and a reference point for discussion of the women personages. An examination of female characters in two tragedies, two comedies, and a science fiction fantasy shows that Bulgakov's women are dramatically significant. Further, they are depicted with particular sensitivity and serve as vehicles for the expression of some of Bulgakov's personal skepticism and ambivalence towards the newly established Soviet order in Russia.

TITRE DE LA THESE: LA FEMME CONTEMPORAINE DANS LE PREMIER CYCLE DE THEATRE DE M. A. BULGAKOV

AUTEUR: Yvonne Karijo-Katz
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RESUME

Le but de cette étude est de contribuer à la connaissance de la femme telle qu'elle apparaît dans la littérature russe, en explorant son image dans le premier cycle de pièces de théâtre du dramaturge soviétique dissident, M. A. Bulgakov. Des renseignements donnés dans le premier et le second chapitre montrent Bulgakov dans son contexte littéraire et historique. Au cours de l'étude, on prête aussi attention aux personnages masculins dans les pièces de théâtre sous considération, ce qui offre un contraste aussi bien qu'un point de référence pour la discussion des personnages féminins. Une analyse des femmes telles que presentées dans deux tragédies, deux comédies et une pièce de théâtre de science-fiction, montre que les femmes chez Bulgakov ont une importance dramatique. De plus, elles sont présentées avec une sensibilité particulière et elles sont des véhicules qui expriment une partie du scepticisme et de l'ambivalence que Bulgakov éprouvait envers le régime soviétique récemment établi en Russie.

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PREFACE

The transliteration employed in this study corresponds to system number II recommended by J. Thomas Shaw (see Bibliography for full reference). This system will be adhered to in the transliteration of Russian words and names both in the text and in the references. The name "Gogol," for example, will be rendered by its more accurate transliteration "Gogol'" (with the appropriate apostrophe indicating the Russian soft sign). The names of persons and places which accurately end in "ii" will be rendered by the conventional "y". Hence, Paustovskii will appear as Paustovsky; Alexandrinskii will appear as Alexandrinsky.

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

M. A. Bulgakov (1891-1940) was a creative writer whose life spanned a crucial period in the history of Russia. Bulgakov was a journalist, a writer of short stories, a novelist and a playwright.[1] In the context of literary criticism, the nature of Bulgakov's work--a mixture of the realistic, historic and fantastic--has provoked a great deal of interest among scholars.

In this thesis a study will be undertaken of the women characters in the early drama of M. A. Bulgakov, showing the major functions of these personages. The purpose of the thesis is twofold: firstly, to determine whether Bulgakov, a male playwright, portrayed his female characters in a balanced, sensitive, and realistic manner; and secondly, to explore the nature and development of the skeptical and ambivalent feelings of the playwright as they are reflected in the female characters in these early plays.

Hopefully, the study which follows will contribute to an understanding of the new and changing role of women in society, as reflected in early Soviet literature, as well as offering a new insight into Bulgakov the dramatist. In Russia

as in many other countries, the role of women has changed significantly over the past century. Generally, nineteenth century Russian women were cloistered and their responsibilities were limited to the home and family. The 1917 Russian Revolution attempted, in part, to liberate women by providing them with equal social opportunity. New roles and a new status have had vast emotional and psychological impacts on Russian women. Nevertheless, until recently little attention has been devoted to this phenomenon either by Soviet authors themselves through their works, or by literary critics.

The male characters in Soviet literature often express Marxist principles and virtues. Usually, they attract more critical interest than do their less politically oriented female counterparts.[2] The life goals of the Soviet male character are fairly standardized: to serve the State through working and fighting unselfishly in the name of the Party, and for the future of the Motherland. Where authors have occasionally given women important roles, they are portrayed in a similar mold, as stereotyped Soviet 'heroines'. Quite naturally, these characters project an alien and unconvincing image to the Western critic. No doubt, this is one important reason for the paucity of studies of female characters in Soviet literature in the West.

Gasiorowska has noted that official demands and limitations set on literature in the USSR were particularly stringent before the beginning of the 'thaw' in 1953.[3] With de-Stalinization, many authors began to portray society in a more sensitive way. Over the past two decades, women in particular have increasingly come to be depicted in a more true-to-life manner. Their emotional world, submerged for many years in idealistic literature, is now being given greater attention.

On examination, however, it is evident that even before de-Stalinization some authors were less inhibited by the literary policies of the State than were others. A few of these writers dared to challenge the State through their writings. M. A. Bulgakov was one such talented author and dramatist. He believed in the realistic literary portrayal of women as well as of men.

No comprehensive attempt has yet been undertaken to examine the women characters in Bulgakov's drama. An exploration of the manner in which a playwright has touched on the position and potential of women in Soviet society would be both revealing and valuable.

To date three major works, all theses, have been written dealing with different aspects of Bulgakov as a writer. The

first work is a Ph.D. dissertation, "Comedy in the Early Works of M. A. Bulgakov" (1968).[4] It takes a Bergsonian approach in seeking out the comic elements in situation, words, and character in a selection of Bulgakov's works. This study supports the notion that behind the comical elements on the surface of Bulgakov's literature there is a grim and mocking irony directed against both the social conditions and the characters themselves. Satirical and grotesque elements are also discussed.

The second of these is an M.A. thesis entitled "Elements of Satire and the Grotesque in the Prose of M. A. Bulgakov" (1969).[5] It suggests that Bulgakov's work is infused with personal and analytic reflections. By using a "veiled" approach, the author was able to express his feelings towards the new Soviet state. However, this study does not discuss the characters in Bulgakov's work as vehicles allowing the writer to express himself.

The third work is a Ph.D. dissertation, "The Major Works of M. A. Bulgakov" (1971).[6] It aims at "elucidating and not convincing."[7] It explores the writer's literary contributions and gives an account of his life. Bulgakov's themes, the characters, and devices typical of his most important works are examined.

The first and second of these theses (by Partridge and by Blake) see Bulgakov's art as conveying personal feelings in a particular way. That is to say, they claim that Bulgakov's opinions are not expressed outrightly, but either under a 'veil' or 'mask'.[8] Our study also assumes that there is more to Bulgakov's work than meets the eye, and that the author found special ways of disgursing his opinions and feelings. However, rather than see Bulgakov's negative reactions as they are expressed through humour or grotesque elements, they are here examined through his characters, women in particular. Preliminary examination suggests that Bulgakov had a particular interest in, understanding of, and ability to depict the female character. For example, Proffer notes that Bulgakov's females are all basically strong characters.[9] This tendency can be detected not only in many of his plays (as will be illustrated in the course of this study), but also in other of his works such as his famous novel The Master and Margarita.

In addition to the above mentioned materials, anecdotal and biographical information about the author has been written by some of his colleagues such as Yermolinsky and Paustovsky. Critics such as Lakshin have also made important contributions to the understanding of Bulgakov and his works.

In these articles some personal and psychological aspects of the writer's life are revealed. Various other articles of lesser importance have also been written about Bulgakov and his literature in Russian, English and French. The articles used in this thesis are listed in the Bibliography (under "Secondary Sources").

In order to fully appreciate the nature and significance of Bulgakov's characterization of women, it is necessary to set them in their proper historical context. Bulgakov was undoubtedly familiar with the drama of earlier Russian artists. His female characters occasionally echo those of earlier playwrights.

An examination of the women characters in a selection of prominent plays written in the late 18th, 19th and early 20th centuries will indicate that women personages have often been used in a special way to reflect social types and to express the social criticisms of their authors. They are often responsible for creating the nastroenie (atmosphere) of the play.

Prostakova, in Fonvizin's Nedorosl' (The Minor) (1781), is probably the first prominent woman character in the history of Russian drama. She is portrayed as a member of the

landed gentry during the reign of Catherine the Great. Fonvizin caricatured Prostakova, making her the terror of her household. Her foul language, crude manners, and the ways in which she takes advantage of others have a satirical effect. Prostakova finds it natural that she should have absolute power in her household. At a time when Russia was reigned over by an authoritarian female monarch, it is not surprising that Fonvizin chose a domineering woman figure to be his protagonist.

Griboedov's comedy Gore ot uma (Wit Works Woe) was completed one year before the Decembrist uprising of 1825. The political climate was ripe for a change, yet Sof'ia, the main woman character in this play, belonged to a traditionally oriented society which had taught her to be inflexible and non-receptive to new ideas. Although boredom and dissatisfaction characterized her daily life, she could not think of casting aside what she had been taught. Griboedov portrayed Sof'ia with a certain amount of understanding, but it is doubtful whether he sympathized with her because he introduced an avant-garde, young protagonist in the play, Chatsky, who overshadowed her personality. Chatsky strove towards attaining a new society and a new way of life, whereas Sof'ia sought to maintain the status quo where her place was assured, even though she was not necessarily happy.

The numerous women in Gogol"s play Revizor (The Inspector General) (1836) serve as background characters just as they do in the author's novel Mertvye dushi (Dead Souls). Their role consists of gossiping and spreading rumours. These personages are part of the base, provincial society which Gogol' shunned.

In Pushkin's drama women usually are romantic objects, not actively used to express social deficiencies. At times Pushkin did not even find it feasible to include women in his theatrical works. For example, of four Little Tragedies (The Covetous Knight, Mozart and Salieri, The Stone Guest and A Feast During the Plague), only two contain women. Even these serve only as socially necessary ornaments.

In 1850 we find a new approach to female characters. Turgenev found it worthwhile to consider the psychology of certain women. In Provintsialka (The Provincial Lady), for example, he depicted the fate of an unhappy young woman, Dar'ia, whose misfortune it was to find herself leading a monotonous life in the dull countryside where her husband worked. Having been brought up in Petersburg, she longed to return to the exciting life in the capital. This craving to move to a better situation and a more enjoyable milieu is repeated in many Russian plays, thus becoming a dominant motif.

In Ostrovsky's trilogy Groza (The Thunderstorm), Les (The Forest) and Bespridannitsa (The Girl Without a Dowry), there is a definite design on the part of the dramatist to trace the fate and development of Russian women in "The Kingdom of Darkness"[10] over a period of twenty years, 1859-1879. This was the period which followed the tyrannical reign of Nicholas I. People were frightened and suspicious of the new ruler. They did not know whether they could trust Alexander II to be any more compassionate than the previous tsar had been. Skepticism and distrust pervaded daily life. Harshness and cruelty characterized social morality.

Young girls at this time were raised very strictly, kept at home to learn household chores, and not given any opportunity for initiative. After marriage, the young woman moved to her husband's home, but her situation did not change. She remained a prisoner. Obsolete traditions and national superstition imprisoned her. How long would it be before the young woman would protest? How long would she be oppressed by her society? These were the questions around which Ostrovsky's trilogy revolved.

Ostrovsky depicted two basic types of women: the older selfish samodur (petty tyrant) and the young dependent woman who was a complete prisoner of her tyrannical society. The

nineteenth century critic, Dobroliubov, remarked that the strict morals of society had the strongest effect on women.[11] Men were able to move around at will and escape the immediate surroundings when the pressure became too great. The young woman was denied this privilege.

In The Thunderstorm, the matron Kabanova, made the sensitive young Katerina's life so miserable by her dogmatic and narrowminded ways, that Katerina ultimately drowned herself in the Volga. Her action was a means of escaping from an anachronistic and apathetic society.

The Forest was written ten years after The Thunderstorm. Social conditions had changed somewhat, although they still had an especially negative effect on women. The viability of the 'Kabanova' type domination had been called into question by Katerina's suicide. In The Forest, the samodur, Gurmyzhskaia was forced to admit that her domination of the family was diminishing. Gurmyzhskaia's niece, Aksiusha, was not prepared to bow to her aunt's wishes. Nevertheless, she remained largely at Gurmyzhskaia's mercy. The latter was portrayed as being a comical, jealous, and hypocritical individual. She was obsessed by wealth and used it to ensure that she was surrounded by admirers.

Ten years later, in The Girl Without a Dowry, one finds

a more passive samodur, Ogudalova, who no longer had the matriarchal power enjoyed by Kabanova and no longer felt the need to be surrounded by groups of admirers as Gurmyzhskaia had been. Ogudalova turned all her energy to the accumulation of wealth. At this time in history, Western merchants were beginning to influence Russia. Trade was in progress and new ideas were penetrating the country. The upper classes began to cast aside their superstitions and re-evaluate old traditions. Ogudalova, influenced by the new climate, strongly believed in the power of money. She reached for it through flattery and hypocrisy. These were the values which she tried to teach her daughter, Larisa, but the young girl strove to remain independent. She chose to seek sympathy and love, but failing to find these elements in her world, she, like her mother, turned to seeking wealth.

"What causes the downfall of women?" asked Dobroliubov rhetorically. His answer was: "The lack of true moral development, no support from within and the tyrannical pressure from without--these are the factors which provoke lack of morality in women in 'The Kingdom of Darkness'."[12]

Late in the nineteenth century a number of authors and dramatists observed that Russian society had become stagnant. The old values were fading away, but new ones had not

yet been formed. L. Tolstoi's play The Power of Darkness, for example, is a reflection of a decaying and amoral society. The characters in this play are simple country folk and their speech as well as their actions are boorish and lowly. The women in the play are anything but feminine; their mannerisms and behaviour are crude. It is interesting to observe that in this play the women have more initiative and moral strength than the men. The latter spend a large part of their time resting on the "oven";[13] the former, criticizing the men and scheming.

Anton Chekhov's major plays depict the fading landed nobility. A generally gloomy atmosphere pervades these works. Women are obsessed with petty, daily occurrences. Boredom and monotony mark their days. Yet, the personages go on living and hoping for a better future. For example, in Uncle Vania, Sonia, in her depressed state finds herself looking forward to death and to happier and more peaceful days beyond the grave. The mood of The Three Sisters is very dull. The eldest sister, Olga, is a school teacher whose life is devoid of romance. Masha is unhappily married and the youngest, Irina, is engaged to a baron who is killed in a duel. In The Three Sisters we find a recurrent theme, that of trying to get away from the tedious life in the country and moving to the exciting city of Moscow.

In considering the foregoing sample of women characters in Russian drama from the late eighteenth to the early twentieth century, one finds a combination of assertiveness, depression, boredom, and hope. These emotions serve as indications of the personages' response to their social background.

A certain development can be traced in the characterization of women. From the unrestrained Prostakova, to the strongly influenced Sof'ia, and to the submerged women in Gogol''s The Inspector General and in Pushkin's Little Tragedies, there seems to be a type of regression, as women are progressively less recognized as significant entities in their social milieu. Then with Turgenev's Dar'ia, a new trend is discernible. Dar'ia expresses her dissatisfaction with a dull life and struggles to improve it. The notion of women struggling to improve their lot is further developed in Ostrovsky's trilogy. In The Power of Darkness by Tolstoi, we find women going to the extreme of exploiting men. In Chekhov's plays women are more placid. They have, however, reached the point where their moods and desires penetrate and determine, or at least influence, the direction of the play.

As a result of Lenin's policy of sexual equality, Russian women in the post 1917 period found themselves suddenly confronted by a different set of obligations. In comparison, men's lifestyles changed less radically. Women acquired new rights and freedoms, but in addition they became part of the working class. For men the concept of duty towards society was not a novelty, but for the woman it meant the loss of some of her former privileges of pursuing family and personal interests, as well as the assumption of new responsibilities. Some sources claim that the Revolution did not ultimately fulfill all its promise to Russian womanhood.[14] Whether this is so or not, there is no doubt that the Revolution did effect fundamental changes in the situation of Soviet women.

Many talented artists greeted the Revolution with enthusiasm (Blok, Esenin, Mayakovsky), but a number of years passed before Russian playwrights attained sufficient perspective to deal with the Revolution realistically. It was almost a decade later before dramatists could present characters offering varying points of view on the great social upheaval they had experienced. It is interesting to note that one of the first important plays dealing with the Revolution in a true-to-life way was, in fact, written by M. A. Bulgakov,

although his sympathy with the revolutionists was questionable. Bulgakov expressed a certain amount of understanding for the people who, like himself, unwittingly became involved in the Revolution.

Early Soviet plays were often dramatizations of stories and novels. Bulgakov's The Days of the Turbins (1925), for example, grew out of his novel The White Guard. Ivanov's plays The Armoured Train (1926) and The Blockade (1929) were dramatizations of his novels by the same name.

Early Soviet drama usually mirrored changing political and social preoccupations. As the revolutionary and Civil War periods gave way to social and economic reconstruction and industrialization, playwrights increasingly keyed their plays to the drama of factory, mine and railroad sites. The problems involved in the establishment of collective farms were also depicted.

Characters appearing in plays at this time were very politically oriented. They were used, to some extent, as tools of propaganda. Furthermore, it was usually the men who appeared in the limelight on the Russian stage.

In the 1930's, however, some playwrights began to write more personal plays. In 1938 Pogodin, a renowned dramatist, turned from plays of mass action to ones of

private life. Thus he wrote, for example, the sensitive Giaconda, which showed a man recuperating at a rest house and brought back to happiness by a woman whose smile reminded him of Leonardo da Vinci's Mona Lisa. In The Moth (1930), a comedy, Pogodin depicted a negative woman who seemed secretly to gnaw away at the ideals of her husband. In 1943 the playwright wrote The Boatwoman, a play centered around the siege of Stalingrad. Here, the heroine served her country with a strong sense of devotion by running a ferry transporting soldiers and food across the Volga to the besieged city. In these three plays we find Pogodin experimenting with women in different positions--from an object of idolatry, to an anti-Soviet character, to a dedicated Communist fulfilling her political role with fervour.

Another noteworthy playwright, Afinogenov, also turned to the personal play in his later work. When a male playwright turns to personal or psychologically oriented plays the female sex inevitably appears in some significant role. In Mashenka, for example, Afinogenov depicted a fifteen year old girl awakening a new interest in her grandfather--an interest in the new generation and the new Soviet country.

Bulgakov's works also reflect his concern with different social questions. The characters in his plays often

mirror their author's reactions to the new Soviet society. This personal quality of his drama often allows Bulgakov to draw his characters with insight and understanding. This seems to be particularly true of Bulgakov's female personages. While the image which is presented of the male characters is largely based on their actions, the women characters appear to have greater psychological depth.

Since it is not feasible to analyse the entire repertoire of Bulgakov's literature or even his drama, to explore this phenomenon our study will concentrate on the following plays: Dni Turbinykh (The Turbins) (1926); Zoikina kvartira (Zoika's Apartment) (1926); Beg (Flight) (1928); Bagrovyi ostrov (The Crimson Island) (1928); and Adam i Eva (Adam and Eve) (1931).[15]

There are several important reasons for choosing to examine the female characters in the first five of Bulgakov's major plays. The themes of these first five plays are based on the Civil War or the immediate post-war situation in Soviet Russia, thus forming a unity. The first four of these plays were written in the 1920's. The fifth play, Adam and Eve, was written in 1931 and serves to complete the first cycle of plays. After Adam and Eve, Bulgakov moved on to explore new themes.

The genre of the first group of plays is not uniform.

The first play, The Days of the Turbins, is realistic whereas the four subsequent plays are either allegorical and 'fantastic', or possess some elements of the 'fantastic'. Contemporary women figures appearing in the first cycle are both diverse and colourful individuals who form an integral part of the content of these works, their themes, and their purposes. The female personages introduced in Bulgakov's later plays seem to be of far lesser significance.

Through the women characters Bulgakov seems to be searching for the image of the new contemporary woman. The reader can easily sense a certain oscillation or questioning on the part of the playwright in his varied--sometimes realistic, sometimes obscure--ways of portraying the initial group of women figures. What is their new role in Soviet society? How do they adapt to the new way of life?

In his characters Bulgakov found a means of expressing some of his opinions and feelings about the new regime. He achieved this end in a subtle and inconspicuous manner through the depiction of women in particular. Women were generally more tacit in their expressiveness. Besides, the censors would be less apt to suspect women of being agents of Bulgakov's rather unorthodox self-expression.

E. Proffer found that there is no development in the

comic characters of Bulgakov's work.[16] It may be argued that this is true from one point of view: The characters are stable and their personalities do not change during the course of the plays. Nevertheless, the background turmoil in Bulgakov's drama is such that the female personages are often in one situation at the start of each play, and have shifted to a different one by its end. This is similarly true of the women in the tragedies, also to be discussed in this study. Throughout each play the female characters encounter a large degree of turbulence and unrest. Their personalities are revealed as they deal with adverse situations. The hardships which they undergo often lead to pessimistic feelings about their lives and about the new society around them.

Seven of Bulgakov's twelve major plays will not be discussed here. These include: Polounnyi Zhurden (Half-witted Jourdain) (1932); Mertvye dushi (Dead Souls) (1932); Blazhenstvo (Bliss) (1934); Poslednie dni (The Last Days) (1935); Kabala sviatosh (The Cabal of Hypocrites) (1935); Ivan Vasilievich (Ivan the Terrible) (1936); and Don Kikhot (Don Quixote) (1938).

These seven plays, written after Adam and Eve, are quite different from the first group because they no longer deal directly with contemporary themes. After 1931 and the

completion of Adam and Eve, Bulgakov had completed his quest for the nature of the new woman figure. The playwright then turned from this initial theme--the Civil War and post-war conditions in Soviet Russia--to fantasy, history, and foreign literature.

Some of the women in the second cycle of Bulgakov's plays are borrowed from a foreign culture or from the literary works of other authors. In the case of Bliss and Ivan the Terrible, both science fiction fantasies, the role of the women characters is not very noteworthy. None of the women characters in the seven plays constituting Bulgakov's second dramatic cycle serve the purpose which they do in his first cycle--to promote the quest for the new Soviet woman.

How will the purpose of this study be achieved? To determine whether Bulgakov depicted the female personages in the first cycle in a realistic, sensitive and balanced way, several questions will be posed: Do Bulgakov's women characters visibly display concern about others, and are they hospitable to them? Do they in turn solicit help and comfort from their male counterparts in difficult situations? Can they be flexible and display courage when necessary? Do Bulgakov's women characters appear to be less politically

oriented than their male counterparts, are they more often concerned with daily matters? Can they also be verbally expressive? If the answer to all or to most of these questions is affirmative, then Bulgakov can be considered to be a writer who is indeed sensitive to and understanding of the "contemporary Soviet woman."

In order to discover how and to what degree Bulgakov's female characters express his own 'skepticism' and 'ambivalence'[17] towards the Soviet regime and ideologies in general, we will look at the actions and dialogue of the female personages in the context of the plays in which they appear.

Chapter II will be devoted to an examination of Bulgakov the dramatist. Here we will explore his personal and literary background. Chapters III, IV and V will discuss the five proposed plays (with one exception the plays are ordered chronologically, i.e. Flight was written after Zoika's Apartment but for practical purposes it will be discussed in its proper chapter). In the "Conclusion" the findings of this study will be summarized.

NOTES

[1]Bibliographical information on Bulgakov has largely been collected from the following sources: Yves Hamant, "Bibliographie de Mihail Bulgakov," Cahiers du monde russe et sovietique, no. 11 (1970), 319-348; Konstantin Paustovsky, "Bulgakov i teatr," Mosty, XI (1964-65), 378-400; Sergei Yermolinsky, "O Mikhaile Bulgakove," Teatr (1966), 79-96.

[2]In her book entitled Women in Soviet Fiction 1917-64 (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1968), p. 3, Xenia Gasiorowska points out that although "there have been numerous studies of male characters in Soviet literature, both in the Soviet Union and in the West, fictional women have been, in comparison neglected." Similarly this may be said about women in Soviet drama.

With the current trend found in Soviet drama--a return to psychological plays--more attention has been given to women characters (see Emilie Stichling, "Recent Trends in Russian Drama with special reference to Alexander Volodin," Canadian Slavonic Papers, no. 11 [1969], 466-475).

Indeed, since the "thaw" (1953), marked changes are noticeable in Russian literature and drama. Today heroines are more credible and more attention is being paid to Soviet women although the findings are often not optimistic. Gasiorowska points this out in her recent article "On Happiness in Recent Soviet Fiction," Russian Literature Triquarterly, no. 9 (Spring 1974), 473-485.

[3]X. Gasiorowska, "On Happiness in Recent Soviet Fiction," op. cit., pp. 474-475.

[4]Helen Partridge, "Comedy in the Early Works of M. A. Bulgakov" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Georgetown University, 1968).

[5]Barbara Blake, "Elements of Satire and the Grotesque in the Prose of M. A. Bulgakov" (unpublished M.A. dissertation, McMaster University, 1969).

[6]Ellendea Proffer, "The Major Works of M. A. Bulgakov" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University, 1971).

[7]This is a literal, if unclear, quotation from p. i of Proffer's thesis.

[8]H. Partridge claims that Bulgakov's use of comedy is merely "the 'mask' behind which lurks a tragic reality," p. 2.

[9]E. Proffer, op. cit., p. 425.

[10]"The Kingdom of Darkness," named by the Russian writer N. A. Dobroliubov refers to the period around 1860. Dobroliubov, of course, died in 1861, but the grim era to which he gave a name continued until the turn of the century.

[11]N. A. Dobroliubov, Stati ob Ostrovskom (Moskva: Goslitizdat, 1956), p. 135.

[12]Ibid., p. 124.

[13]"Oven" refers to an old-fashioned Russian home heating appliance on top of which more than one person could rest or sleep.

[14]X. Gasiorowska, Women in Soviet Fiction 1917-64, op. cit., p. 11; Kate Millet, Sexual Politics (New York: Doubleday and Co. Inc., 1970), 168-176.

[15]All quotations from Bulgakov's first cycle of plays are translated from the following editions: M. Bulgakov, Dni Turbinykh ("The Turbins") (Letchworth: Prideaux Press, 1970); M. Bulgakov, Beg ("Flight") (Letchworth: Prideaux press, 1970); M. Bulgakov, P'esy (Adam i Eva, Bagrovyi ostrov, Zoikina kvartira) (Paris: YMCA Press, 1971).
Throughout the study quotations will be identified by the relevant title of the play, in English, followed by the page number. The full reference will not be repeated.

[16]E. Proffer, op. cit., p. 423.

[17]The term "ambivalence" should not be confused with "ambiguity." Ambivalence is defined as: having opposed attitudes towards the same person or object; a capacity to see two or more sides of an issue or a personality. This is the meaning which will be used in this study. "Ambiguity" in literature suggests two or more appropriate meanings to words, or a basic meaning and overtones. See Shaw's Dictionary of Literary Terms (New York: McGraw Hill Books Co., 1972).

Chapter II

BULGAKOV THE DRAMATIST

Bulgakov's Early Dramatic Career

In 1920 Bulgakov decided to end his medical career and take up creative writing. He moved to Vladikavkaz, where he worked for a year in the podotdel iskusstv,[1] the local organization designed to help writers and artists and to arrange lectures as well as literary events. He also contributed to local newspapers. In Vladikavkaz, he made his first attempt at playwriting. He wrote five plays: Samooborona (Self-Defense), Brat'ia Turbiny (The Turbin Brothers), Synov'ia Mully (The Sons of Mulla), Parizhskie kommunary (The Paris Communards), and Glinianye zhenikhi (The Clay Suitors). The first three of these plays were staged with great success, but Bulgakov was never satisfied with any of his early attempts at drama and he eventually destroyed them.[2]

In the winter of 1921, Bulgakov moved to Moscow where he was to establish himself and where his literary career was to bloom. He spent the rest of his life in the capital. The Civil War had just ended, but emotions still ran high. Every day brought new attacks on the former ruling class to which Bulgakov belonged. He was witness to the destruction of

everything in which he had believed since childhood. The Civil War and the political upheavals which he had experienced in Kiev during 1918-1919 made a strong impression on him. Political instability made the young writer realize the need to reconstruct his earlier beliefs about Russia and Russian society. This experience, reinforced by the poor conditions which he found in Moscow--lack of heating, famine, and low morale--generated nagging questions and doubts in Bulgakov about the viability of the new Soviet regime.

Bulgakov was not a Marxist and he never joined the Communist Party. He could never fully accept the new political regime. Yet, when Bulgakov's two brothers moved to Paris around 1918, he did not join them.[3] Although he might be considered a francophile, he was not prepared to emigrate because of the patriotic and psychological bonds which tied him to his Motherland. Over a decade later, his theatrical career having suffered countless disappointments, his patriotism still held firm. In 1930 he was quoted as having remarked to Stalin, "Lately I've been thinking, can a Russian writer live outside of his homeland? I believe that he cannot."[4]

Bulgakov was an individualist. He could not and did not belong to any literary group. He himself maintained that

an author had to be "independent to the end, otherwise he would find himself more or less on a string."[5] Nevertheless, Bulgakov did have a particular interest in the Civil War and the Revolution, and the effect of these occurrences on the individual. He shared this interest with two prominent literary groups, RAPP and Poputchiki.

Initially, Bulgakov ridiculed the new regime in newspaper articles. Later, realizing that this was a futile strategy, he began to think about ways to defend the values of the intelligentsia through literature. Basic to his The Days of the Turbins and Flight as well as to much of his other work, is the idea that the intelligentsia represents the 'best' in Soviet society.[6] In the two plays mentioned directly above, Bulgakov depicts the Whites as normal human beings, members of the intelligentsia. This is not to say that they are all portrayed as amiable individuals--characters like Khludov and Talberg, for example, are selfish and undesirable--but that they are not incorrigible monsters, as the Soviet propaganda machine wanted the people to believe. The central idea of subsequent plays by Bulgakov is different from that of Flight and The Days of the Turbins. The heroes and heroines are not all portrayed as members of the White intelligentsia. Their roles are more varied. Some of the Reds in

Bulgakov's first cycle of plays are drawn as dogmatic and inflexible personages. Adam and Daragan are examples of this type of character. Many of the people who cannot clearly be identified with either of these two groups (Whites or Reds) are concerned with more mundane and non-politically oriented aspects of daily life. For example, Yelena and Eve are depicted as this type of character. Sometimes the characters in this group are drawn as self-interested individuals, such as Zoika. In general, it seems that Bulgakov's female personages belong to this third category.

In their uncommitted attitude they are more readily able to take an objective view. In this way, of course, women could easily be used by the author to express his own feelings. Bulgakov himself stated that he made "great efforts to be objective and to stand over the Reds and the Whites."[7] This fact supports the notion that the female personages in his early plays are used in a special way to express the author's skepticism and ambivalence towards the new regime.

In summary, it may be said that in Bulgakov's ambivalent attitude towards the USSR we see reflected the universal dilemma of the intellectual, whose world view would not allow him to see any issue in pure black and white terms, who could not unquestioningly accept the simplistic answers

provided by dogma and self-interest. He was in essence an émigré in his own country. This intellectual relativism is the source of much of Bulgakov's literature and can be traced especially in his early plays when events were urgent and his career as yet undulled by repeated attacks and disappointments.

Bulgakov's Attitude Towards Drama

Bulgakov's attitude towards drama and his relationship to it were largely influenced by two factors: firstly, his experiences as a struggling writer in the Soviet Union, and secondly, the dramatic tradition with which he identified and from which he learned much. It is these two elements to which we will now turn for examination.

From his childhood Bulgakov was attracted to the theatre. Accounts written by his colleagues and by himself show how engrossed he became in theatrical performances. It might be said that the stage was his opiate. At one point in Moscow he commented: "The theatre for me is enjoyment, peace, diversion. In a word all that is pleasant . . ."[8] A play would sometimes captivate Bulgakov to such an extent that he craved to become part of it. In the following passage he explains how this would occur:

> Bitter feelings possessed me when the show was over and I had to go out into the street. I very much wanted to put on the same caftan which the actors were wearing and participate in the acting. For example, it seemed that it would be very good to suddenly go out having stuck on a collosal, snub, drunken nose, wearing a tobacco caftan, with a walking stick, holding a snuff box, and say funny things.[9]

The above is an indication of the power which drama had on Bulgakov. It is not surprising that the artist began to create his own plays.

The 20's were very eventful years for Bulgakov, the playwright. During this decade, despite harsh criticism, he produced four plays based on contemporary themes. In 1926 The Days of the Turbins was staged in the Arts Theatre. This play was received with great acclaim by the public. Stalin himself found that the play was "not so bad" and that it did "more good than harm,"[10] in ideological terms, of course. However, many critics were dissatisfied with this non-Communist work. They called it hostile, virulent, and offensive. The playwright was called posredstvennyi bogomaz (a mediocre painter of religious pictures) and the Arts Theatre was called teatr beloi kosti (a blue-blood theatre).[11] Soon after the production of the first play, Bulgakov wrote Zoika's Apartment. This play was premiered in the Vakhtangov theatre where it ran for three out of the six nights for which it was

scheduled. Apparently Zoika's Apartment was played in several cities and was shown over one hundred times in Moscow before it was banned.[12] The critics called it a "one sided misconception of the truth."[13] Flight, which Bulgakov intended for the Arts Theatre, was censored before it was premiered the following year. One critic called Flight "the most reactionary play of our times."[14] Shortly thereafter Bulgakov's fourth play, The Crimson Island, was staged in the Kamerny theatre, but it was also soon censored.

Members of the RAPP were highly critical of Bulgakov's non-ideological drama and they critized Lunacharsky's Commissariat of Education for giving The Days of the Turbins a restrained but favourable rating. The playwright found very little support among critics. In this regard, Gorky was an exception to the rule. For example, he judged Flight as "an excellent comedy with deeply hidden satirical content . . ."[15] The Arts Theatre was also prepared to accept it. By 1929 the negative evaluations of Bulgakov's plays so heavily outweighed positive reaction that the authorities decided to ban all of the author's plays. The dramatist was overwhelmed by this decision. As I. Babel had frequently done, Bulgakov began a period of silence and meditation.

Attacks against him were merciless. Some suggested

that Bulgakov write a letter to the government renouncing his previous plays and promising to write the party line in the future. He could not do this because he was not a Communist and consequently "he could not write a Communist play."[16] He refused to compromise his beliefs. In 1930, during a period of depression and moral exhaustion, Bulgakov decided to write an 'honest letter' to Stalin. In this letter he explained that of the 301 articles which had been written about him and his work over a ten year period, only three were positive. The remaining 298 were hostile and injurious. Concerning future plays he explained:

> I am unlikely to impress the Soviet Government by pretending to be a confused, politically naive, tame animal who will jump through any hoop to order. I have therefore not even tried to write a Communist play because I know before I start that it would be a failure.[17]

In these lines the reader can detect Bulgakov's straightforwardness once again. He refused to be a hypocrite. As usual, he stood by his convictions and was not afraid to express them. In a moment of desperation, he boldly asked to be allowed to emigrate. Later, his tone changed.

Bulgakov concluded his letter with a plea to Stalin for a job in the theatre as an assistant producer. If this was not possible, he requested employment as a stage extra or even a stage hand. Finally, he asked that if none of

these opportunities were presented, the authorities should do with him whatever they saw fit, but he pleaded that they 'do something'.[18] Like Solzhenitsyn today, Bulgakov's literary production was strongly linked to the panoply of daily Russian experiences. Emigration would have been the penultimate sacrifice. It would, no doubt, have spelt an end to his writing career.

In one section of the letter, Bulgakov bravely admitted to a "deep skepticism" in regard to the revolutionary process which was taking place in his "backward country."[19] This is the same skepticism which the author expressed in different ways in his literary works. Bulgakov's skepticism in the revolutionary process taking place in his "backward country" can be detected in his early drama and in a particular way through the female personages in his first cycle. It seems strange that at a time when the Soviet government was so actively engaged in spreading its ideology and eliminating adverse elements, a dissident playwright should dare to voice his "skepticism" towards the viability of the Soviet regime. It was even more unusual that the author was not rebuffed for his audacity. In fact, Stalin made a positive response to Bulgakov's plea.[20]

Bulgakov's boldness and strong convictions bring to

mind an episode in Flight. In the second 'dream' the orderly, Krapilin, in a moment of frankness, launches a tirade against General Khludov. He denounces Khludov's cruelty and makes accusations against him. Khludov seems to be surprised at Krapilin's boldness, but he is impressed by Krapilin's honesty and straightforwardness. When the orderly falters, however, suddenly fearing that he may have been too blunt, and begs forgiveness, Khludov has a change of heart. He orders Krapilin hanged for his cowardice. One has the impression that if Krapilin had stuck to expressing what he truly believed, his fate would have been different. The playwright seems to suggest that a person is always better off if he is honest with himself and with others rather than being hypocritical.

Of course, there was a limit to the extent to which Bulgakov could be honest through his plays if he wanted them to be produced. He would therefore often resort to 'veiling' his message. Many critics have noticed Bulgakov's cautious approach to self-expression.

> Bulgakov's task was not only to find an artistic form which would express his ideinaia dialektika (ideological dialectic), but also to cover it like a secret, to save it from party censorship. The screen, however, had to be such so as not to completely extinguish the true meaning of the novel (in this case, the play) . . . not to deface the true message.[21]

The social upheavals in Russia left their mark on Bulgakov. His world changed dramatically. This experience shaped his literary works. Moreover, when he tried to express his doubts in writing, he found obstacles at every turn. The harsh criticism made against him while he was trying to establish himself in the theatre no doubt increased his cynicism towards the new society. He was not prepared to accept the changes that were taking place around him without contesting them. It is not surprising that in his early drama one can recognize the iconoclast in Bulgakov.

Bulgakov's theatrical and other works were exceptionally varied. Paustovsky notes that each of Bulgakov's plays was written with something new and "Bulgakovian." The dramatist's vivid imagination and need for self-expression ensured that he never repeated himself. Although he developed a bold and individualistic style of drama, it would be wrong to assume that Bulgakov's works were not influenced by other nineteenth and twentieth century authors. Bulgakov inherited many traits from his predecessors.

Some critics, such as Smirnova, feel that Bulgakov's plays originate in the mainstream of Russian drama. They follow in the line of Tolstoi, Turgenev and Chekhov. Yet his drama is very different from theirs in its particular presentation of reality and in its laconic nature.[22] This is

particularly noticeable in The Days of the Turbins, which largely follows in the classical tradition, as does the novel The White Guard from which it originated.

In her thesis, Partridge shows that Bulgakov's works are descended from the comic and satiric tradition of nineteenth century Russian literature. He felt "an affinity to Gogol', Saltykov-Schedrin and Sukhovo-Kobylin." From Gogol' Bulgakov took a sense of style and form as well as a certain vitality and liveliness commonly associated with the Southern or Ukranian temperament. He was also inspired by Gogol''s use of fantasy or the supernatural. Bulgakov considered Saltykov-Schedrin to be his teacher.[23] Some feel that the genre of Flight is similar to that of Sukhovo-Kobylin's Delo.[24]

There is a certain amount of controversy concerning Bulgakov's feelings towards Chekhov, and the degree to which Chekhov influenced him. Yermolinsky believes that Bulgakov was indifferent to Chekhov and that any attempt to find a similarity between the two authors would be a mistake.[25] Proffer basically agrees with Yermolinsky, but notes that at a certain point in The Crimson Island the dialogue develops in a Chekhovian manner.[26] At another point she admits that some critics find that Bulgakov was influenced by Chekhov's later plays. This is because elements of nostalgia are to

be found in the "at home scenes" in The Days of the Turbins.[27] The observations made by Proffer lead one to believe that there is a certain degree of Chekhovian influence in Bulgakov's work despite her basic agreement with Yermolinsky that there is no similarity between the two.

It has been noted by Rudnitsky, by Lakshin, and also in an article edited by Vladimir and Lapkina that the two authors, Bulgakov and Chekhov, shared a close attention to elements such as details, minor dialogue and insignificant actions. Bulgakov followed Chekhov's need to express psychological depth and finesse as well as sharing a sense of refined humour.[28] The RAPP organization also found a similarity between Bulgakov and Chekhov. Members of this group could not see either author in a favourable light, but they contented themselves with calling Bulgakov "a decadent writer in the line of Chekhov."[29]

The Playwright and His Characters

Bulgakov was fond of his heroes and heroines. In his own words, geroev svoikh nado liubit'[30] (one must love his heroes). Most of the dramatist's characters projected his own ideas and thoughts about the Revolution and the Civil War and how these events affected society. Therefore, he naturally felt close

to his creations. Even the less sympathatic personages were treated with a certain amount of understanding. This was the playwright's way of showing that he was not narrow-minded, but that he considered everybody's position. For example, the cruel actions of Khludov, in Flight, are condoned on the grounds of his psychological illness. In The Days of the Turbins, Talberg's cowardice and flight do not elicit hate on the part of the reader, because one tends to feel sorry for this harmless, "rat-like" creature who is too concerned about his own safety and public image to care about anybody else.

Twentieth century readers, unlike their Victorian predecessors, do not subscribe to the view that characters exist independently of the plays in which they appear. For Bulgakov, however, his personages did have a life outside of the theatrical works. Often, they came into being before the work in which they figured. The playwright's wife affirmed that when he was dictating to her and looking out the window, she had the distinct impression that her husband actually saw what he was describing.[31] According to the critic Lakshin, Bulgakov would not write about anything which he did not see vividly in his mind's eye.[32] Bulgakov's colleagues, Yermolinsky and Paustovsky, also spoke of the dramatist's unusual talent of seeing his dramatis personae and explained that he actually

conversed with them. In addition, he was able to take on the personality of any of his creations and act out their roles. Smirnova called this 'creative process' of Bulgakov his teatral'noe voobrazhenie (theatrical imagination):

> This ability to see a play which was not yet staged and not yet written as if it were already produced, as well as see and hear one's heroes as if in real life and already taking on a living human form, is undoubtedly a particular talent of imagination. This talent may be termed "theatrical imagination."[33]

In Black Snow: A Theatrical Novel, Bulgakov reveals to us how his "theatrical imagination" works. The dramatist tells us how the personages of The Days of the Turbins were born:

> As before, I woke up in tears. What a fool I felt! Again there were those same people, again that distant city, the side of a grand piano, the sound of shots and again someone falling in the snow. Born in a dream, these people were now emerging from their dream and coming firmly to life in my cell-like room. There was obviously no getting away from them. But what was I to do with them?
>
> At first I simply talked to them and then I somehow found myself taking the copy of my novel out of the drawer. In the evenings I began to feel that something coloured was emerging from the white pages. After staring at it and screwing up my eyes, I was convinced that it was a picture--and a picture that was not flat but three-dimensional like a box. Through the lines on the paper I could see a light burning and inside the box those same characters in the novel were moving about. . . .
>
> After a while noises began coming from the room inside the book . . . Of course, if I had told this to anybody I suppose that they would

> have advised me to see a doctor. They would have said that someone was playing the piano downstairs and they might even have told me exactly what they were playing. I would have paid no attention . . . They were certainly not coming from downstairs. Why did the little room grow dark, why did the pages fill with a winter's night by the Dnieper, why those horses' heads and above them men's faces under sheepskin hats? I could see their sharp swords, hear them as they whistled through the air. . . .
>
> I could have watched the page play this game for ever . . . But how was I to pin down those little figures so that they would never run away from me?
>
> One night I decided to describe that enchanted little room. How was I to do it?
>
> It was very simple. What I saw, I wrote down; what I didn't see, I left out. . . .
>
> I was fascinated by this game . . . I spent three nights playing around with the first scene and by the end of the third night I realised that I was writing a play.[34]

This excerpt is a significant one because it shows the creative mind of the author at work. When critics speak of Bulgakov's ability to communicate with his characters, this is apparently not just a figurative way of saying that his personages were vividly portrayed--it is a true description of a real, but unusual, phenomenon.

Although the above excerpt refers to the birth of the characters in a particular play, the revealing details and the authentic tone of the passage are convincing. They lead one to believe that other characters and plays were born in a similar way--first the personages appeared to the playwright and then they were placed in a dramatic setting.

Bulgakov was concerned about the authenticity of his characters and their ability to depict reality. It was precisely this notion which linked him to the Arts Theatre. He consciously agreed with its creative position, which can be summed up as stsenicheskii realizm (realism on the stage).[35] A realistic play presented concepts which were comprehensible to the audience and with which they could identify. One way in which Bulgakov was able to achieve his goal was through his masterful and rapid characterization.[36]

Bulgakov stood for a poniatnyi teatr (an understandable theatre). Although he generally avoided criticising his literary colleagues, on one occasion he did criticize Meyerhold for his futuristic theatre saying that the latter "was born too soon."[37]

Bulgakov's characters were indices of contemporary social and political scenes. Heroes such as Aleksei Turbin, Charnota, and Daragan were more apt to represent the political drives of society than were the heroines. For example, Yelena, Serafima, and Eve illustrated the social and pragmatic side of daily life--they were less interested in political events. Yet, they had a way of reflecting the concerns of their society as well as the skeptical and ambivalent feelings of the author to their milieu.

Partridge affirms that in The Days of the Turbins and in Flight, the two plays discussed in her study, Bulgakov's treatment of character is more dispassionate than in some of his other works.[38] This appears to be so because the playwright deliberately attempted to give his personages independent life and not to look upon them as puppets on a string. Nevertheless, he does treat the personages in these two plays with a certain amount of pathos and humour.

Myshlaevsky, Shervinsky, and Larion are the major comic figures in The Days of the Turbins. Each of these three characters is enamoured of Yelena who, herself, is not a comic character. In this respect Bulgakov appears to have allotted a certain amount of insight and understanding to Yelena and he has largely deprived the main comic characters of these qualities. Since they are all drawn to Yelena, the reader can deduce that one role of the comic personages is to offer contrast to the more sophisticated ways of the woman figure. At times Yelena is witty and humourous at the expense of her suitors.

When, for example, Larion plays the love sick lad at the beginning of Act IV, telling Yelena how much he would enjoy spending the whole century at her feet under the Christmas tree, she does not take his profession of love

seriously, but points out that he would soon become bored. Later in the same act, Myshlaevsky compliments Yelena on her fine skills and excellent qualities, adding that he would be happy to marry her. She tells him bluntly that she would not marry him. In Act I, when Shervinsky arrives at Yelena's house, he presents her with a bouquet of flowers and expresses great happiness at seeing her. When he adds that he has not seen her for a long time, Yelena retorts that if her memory does not deceive her, he was over the previous evening.

In The Days of the Turbins the comic element in the characters is generally light-hearted, but in Flight it is sarcastic and ironic. This is because the personages in Flight are cast in a harsher light.[39] They endure greater calamities and sufferings. Charnota, in Flight, is both a comic and pathetic figure. Korzukhin is a scapegoat who is ridiculed and Khludov expresses deep sarcasm and irony. He both mocks others and unconsciously mocks himself.

Of the two women in the play, Lius'ka and Serafima, the latter is ill throughout most of the play. When she is well, she is too dignified to be comic. Lius'ka at first is comic in her strong attachment to and reliance on Charnota, but she later becomes emancipated and freely uses wit and sarcasm. In her bluntness she may be likened to Yelena.

For example, in Constantinople she does not hesitate to accuse Charnota of having spent the little money they had at the cockroach race and telling lies about the hawkers tray and silver cartridge holders. She mockingly asks Charnota:

L.: "They were stolen?"

Ch.: "Uh-huh."

L.: "Of course, it was a man with a black beard who stole them, right?"

Ch.: (weakening) "Why should he have a black beard?"

L.: "Because it is always a man with a black beard who swipes things from rascals at the Grand Bazaar. So you give me your word that they were stolen?"[40]

Bulgakov wanted to determine how his personages reacted to and fit into the new way of life in Soviet Russia. Generally, he found that the new environment had a negative influence on his characters.[41] Sometimes Bulgakov's personages could not do what they were skilled in and they were forced to deceive, seek adventure, and so on. For example, the heroine of Zoika's Apartment found that she was a victim of the NEP period and that her ambitions and skills in private enterprise were subdued by tight government controls. The resulting fate of the heroine was to a certain degree similar to that of the superfluous men of the nineteenth century drama.

Pushkin's Onegin and Turgenev's Rudin had their ambitions stifled by their milieu. There is, of course, little similarity between Zoika and the classical nineteenth century heroes themselves. Onegin and Rudin were educated men, whereas Zoika possessed only an innate cunning. Nevertheless, there is a parallel in their fates. They were all forced to seek an exit from a world in which they felt frustrated.

Bulgakov does not stress the effects of the Soviet lifestyle on his characters in all cases. At times he prefers to leave the effect ambiguous. This is the case of Eve who seems satisfied to follow the current trends. Most of the male characters (there are some exceptions such as Ametistov, Efrosimov, and Ponchik) react to the political situation either by accepting the regime and fighting for it, or by outrightly rejecting it. Generally, it seems that while the female characters are less politically involved, they are nevertheless more affected by the social changes than are their male counterparts. Bulgakov's female characters are sometimes able to express their reaction to the new society both verbally and through their actions.

Discussion of Bulgakov's early dramatic career, his attitude towards drama, and his characters is essential to an understanding of the playwright. In the case of Bulgakov,

his literature closely reflects personal experiences during the Revolution and the Civil War. Background information allows us to examine a specific aspect of Bulgakov's drama, in this case the image of the contemporary woman, with more lucidity. It is not possible to analyse Bulgakov's female characters in their dramatic setting without alluding to the male characters. The latter must be referred to where they provide contrast and insight into their female counterparts.

NOTES

[1]V. Lakshin, "O proze Mikhaila Bulgakova i o mem somom," Mikhail Bulgakov - izbrannaia proza (Moskva: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1966), p. 7.

[2]Y. Hamant, "Bibliographie de Mihail Bulgakov," Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique 11 (1970), 328.

[3]E. Proffer, "The Major Works of Mikhail Bulgakov," (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University, 1971), p. 8.

[4]S. Liandres, "Russkii Pisatel' ne mozhet zhit' bez rodiny," Voprosy literatury 7-12 (1966), 139.

[5]S. Yermolinsky, "O Mikhaile Bulgakove," Teatr (1966), 89.

[6]E. Proffer, op. cit., p. 30.

[7]Ibid., p. 34.

[8]M. Furonsky, Russkaia mysl', May 27, 1969, p. 8.

[9]K. Paustovsky, "Bulgakov i Teatr," Mosty XI (1964-65), 382.

[10]S. Yermolinsky, op. cit., p. 83.

[11]V. Lakshin, op. cit., p. 29.

[12]E. Proffer, op. cit., pp. 151-152.

[13]S. Yermolinsky, op. cit., p. 83.

[14]V. Lakshin, op. cit., p. 29.

[15]Ibid.

[16]E. Proffer, op. cit., p. 31.

[17]M. Glenny, "Mikhail Bulgakov: Return from Obscurity," Soviet Affairs, vol. 6, no. 2 (March-April, 1968), 17.

[18] Ibid. See also Proffer, op. cit., pp. 30-32 and S. Liandres, "Russkii pisatel' ne mozhet zhit' bez rodiny," Voprosy literatury, no. 7-12 (1966), 138-139.

[19] E. Proffer, op. cit., p. 30.

[20] Apparently Stalin phoned Bulgakov and told him he should apply for work at the Arts Theatre because they would agree to hire him. See Proffer, op. cit., p. 33 f.n.

[21] K. Pomeramtsev, "Zaveshchanie Mikhaila Bulgakova," Russkaia mysl', May 22, 1969, p. 8.

[22] V. Smirnova, "Mikhail Bulgakov - dramaturg," Sovremennyi portret (Sovetsky Pisatel', Moskva, 1969), 300.

[23] H. Partridge, "Comedy in the Early Works of Mikhail Bulgakov" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Georgetown University, 1968), pp. 10-12.

[24] This observation was made by V. Kaverin, "Zametki o dramaturgii Bulgakova," Teatr 10 (1956), 72.

[25] S. Yermolinsky, op. cit., p. 91.

[26] E. Proffer, op. cit., p. 214.

[27] Ibid., p. 120.

[28] K. Rudnitsky, "Mikhail Bulgakov," Voprosy teatra, 1966, p. 130; V. Lakshin, op. cit., p. 41; Vladimir and Lapkina, ed., "Bulgakov," Ocherki istorii russkoi sovetskoi dramaturgii 1934-45 (Moskva: Iskusstvo, 1966), p. 125.

[29] V. Lakshin, op. cit., p. 29.

[30] Ibid., p. 41.

[31] E. Proffer, op. cit., p. 39.

[32] V. Lakshin, op. cit., p. 41.

[33] V. Smirnova, op. cit., p. 287.

[34] Black Snow: A Theatrical Novel, trans. by Michael Glenny (London: Hodder & Stoughton Ltd., 1967), pp. 61-63.

[35] V. Lakshin, op. cit., p. 37.

[36] E. Proffer notes that in a novel one has the time to characterize slowly, but "rapidity and economy of characterization are usually a basic requirement" in writing plays. This, she observes, is one of Bulgakov's strong points. Op. cit., p. 114.

[37] M. Furonsky, "Teatr M. A. Bulgakova," Russkaia mysl', May 22, 1969, p. 8.

[38] H. Partridge, op. cit., "Abstract," p. 2.

[39] Ibid., p. 265.

[40] Flight, p. 65.

[41] M. Mikulashek, Puti razvitia sovetskoi komedii: 1925-1934 godov (Praha: Státní Pedagogické Nakladatelstvi, 1962), p. 93.

Chapter III

WOMEN IN BULGAKOV'S EARLY TRAGEDIES

In his own time, Bulgakov's literary reputation rested upon his diverse and extensive repertoire of dramatic productions. Within the spectrum of these theatrical works, only two plays may be properly classified as tragedies. These are The Days of the Turbins and Flight. Although differing in style and presentation, they are important elements in Bulgakov's literary development. They were written against the background of a newly emerging social order in Russia, which challenged Bulgakov's intellectual and emotional world-view. It is these plays which will now be examined with special attention given to the particular way in which women figures were depicted.

For purposes of analysis, these two plays have been grouped together, although there is some debate as to their relationship. Critics generally claim that Flight is an historical continuation of The Days of the Turbins.[1] Two prominent Bulgakov scholars, Partridge and Proffer, have differing points of view on the question of their relationship. Partridge agrees with the Central Repertory Committee in asserting that Flight is a sequel to The Days of the Turbins, but she discounts the Committee's opinion that this sequel is a "dramatic requiem of the white guard movement."[2] Proffer

does not believe that Flight is a sequel to The Days of the Turbins, but thinks that it shows another side of the White Movement. The Whites in The Days of the Turbins are disillusioned and they accept the inevitability of Bolshevik victory. In Flight we see the fate of the Whites who kept on fighting.[3]

Although there is obvious divergence of opinion between these positions regarding the relationship of the two plays, a common ground is discernible: Both plays deal with different aspects of the fate of the White intelligentsia in the years following the 1917 Revolution. The Days of the Turbins covers the early Civil War period (1918-1919). Flight explores this issue as it manifested itself in the later Civil War period (1920-1921). Strictly speaking, they are not sequential. It may be said, though, that they are linked by a common theme--the fall of the White Movement--presented in chronological perspective.

The Days of the Turbins

The action of The Days of the Turbins is centered around the Turbin family--two brothers and their sister Yelena, members of the intelligentsia. They are a closely knit group, concerned about the others' well-being. The mood of the play is one of tension and instability. The main

characters--the Turbins and their friends--are all anxious about the outcome of events but they are too subjectively involved to fully appreciate what is happening around them. Generally, they tend to cling to the old way of life to which they are accustomed. They do not welcome change. Mirroring the feelings of Bulgakov, they fear the unknown and are skeptical about the feasibility of a change of regime. Strategies are discussed, pessimism and hopes are expressed in the house of the Turbins.

Unlike the other characters, the two adolescents in the play, Nikolka and the Turbin's cousin from Zhitomir, Lariosik, are not very concerned about the war. Rather, they tend to see it as an almost romantic adventure. In Act I, scene I, Nikolka seems to be surprised that his family is in a state of "complete disorder," while he says: "By nature I am more inclined to optimism."[4] Lariosik feels very safe and comfortable staying at Yelena's house. He feels cut off from the horrors of the fighting by the "cream coloured curtains" at her windows.

Myshlaevsky feels very strongly about the progress of the war and supports the cause of the Whites. By the end of the play, however, when a change of regime is imminent, he realizes that Aleksei was right in pessimistically saying

that the people were not with the Whites, but were against them.[5] Their cause had been a losing one from the start. Therefore he, Myshlaevsky, is prepared to move to the winning side. Shervinsky is generally more lighthearted and optimistic concerning the outcome of events than the others, although he is in close contact with the Hetman and with developments at the front. He seems to be mainly enmeshed in his love for Yelena and with his own 'opera' voice, which Yelena so admires. Nevertheless, at one point Shervinsky does admit that he has been greatly affected by the course of military developments, and that they have changed him substantially. Studzinsky is probably the only personage in the play whose belief in the White Movement is shown to be unshaken throughout. He plans to continue fighting for the 'Great Russia' in which he believes.

Yelena is the only woman in the play. According to her admirers (Shervinsky, Myshlaevsky, Lariosk, Studzinsky), she is very attractive. Being the only woman, she represents everything that is feminine in the play.[6] Just as in The Days of the Turbins Bulgakov expresses himself in the manner of the classical Russian school,[7] so Yelena is reminiscent of the classical Russian literary female figure. Like other classical female characterizations, Bulgakov's Yelena is shown to

experience inner conflict and express ambivalent feelings towards her husband and other men in her life. She is similar to Griboedov's Sof'ia in Gore ot Uma inasmuch as she, like her predecessor, is to a certain degree torn between tradition and change. Unlike Sof'ia, she is not given an option. Changes are imposed not only on Yelena, but also on everyone else in her situation.

In some ways, the heroine reminds one of Chekhov's female personages. She is the wife of a soldier and her home is the stage upon which her psychology is revealed to the reader. In addition to being an excellent hostess, Yelena is also intelligent, talented and brave. Her speech is marked by expressions of sympathy and concern, witty and sarcastic statements, and inquisitive questions. She is straightforward and honest with herself and with those around her.

Further, in Act I, Shervinsky notes that she is "intellectually developed," "plays the piano" and is "a woman to a T." In the last scene of the play, Myshlaevsky observes that Yelena is an outstanding woman: "She speaks English, plays the piano and, at the same time, can heat the samovar."[8] Above and beyond Bulgakov's indulgence in evident satire, in this list of her 'accomplishments' is a description of a serious and central characteristic. She embodies both

common skills such as the ability to "heat the samovar," and Western cultural traits signalled by her English language ability and her piano playing.

It is difficult to determine to what extent Bulgakov wished us to perceive Yelena as understanding the momentous historical events occurring at that time. We may assume that she is meant to be au courant, since the soldiers who come to her house for discussion and debate have no qualms about talking openly in her presence about military issues. Yelena is not protected from the pessimistic thoughts and the fears of the soldiers. Early in the play, for example, Aleksei expresses his skepticism about the White cause openly in his home and in his sister's presence. Even the unappealing and furtive Talberg does not hesitate to tell his wife 'in secret' about the extremely serious position of the Hetman, and the measures which he, Talberg, will take to ensure his own safety.

When the Civil War is raging in Kiev, and Yelena is particularly worried about her brothers, both Shervinsky and Studzinsky try to comfort her by saying that everything will turn out for the better. Myshlaevsky tries another approach. He reminds her that she knows "everything." In other words, nothing is being kept from her. Only in one instance does

does one of the soldiers, Studzinsky, ask Yelena to leave the room while certain aspects of the war are being discussed. Studzinsky requests this in order not to cause her additional anxiety.

The soldiers, however, do try to keep secret the truth about the fate of Nikolka and Alekseï as long as possible. It would seem that they cannot bear to expose the 'charming' hostess to pain any more than they themselves wish to believe that the one may be crippled for life and that the other is dead.

For her part, Yelena is generally strong and confident in her relationships to men, although her rapport with them is not always consistent. A changing attitude is illustrated in various scenes. For instance, upon initially showing affection and understanding towards her husband, she is rebuked by him. As she progressively comes to see his undesirable side, she grows to despise him. At first, she is offended when Shervinsky makes approaches to her and speaks disdainfully about her husband. Eventually, however, her feelings towards Shervinsky oscillate and then change. By Act III, she can tall Lariosik that she does not wish to hear the name of her husband mentioned again in her house. In these chronological scenes we are witness to the behaviour of a character who is

obviously meant to be seen as strong and self-willed. She does not hang on the desires of any and all men.

With her most ardent admirer Shervinsky, Yelena seems to be playing a game. She has ambivalent feelings towards this character,[9] expressed in the manner in which she treats him. When he professes his love for her, she promptly retorts that that is "his own business." Having been disillusioned with Talberg, Yelena doubts that she can find happiness with anyone else. Shervinsky tries to assure her that she could be happy with him, but she does not find him "suitable." Later, with the suitor's persistence, Yelena finally admits that she is attracted to him, but soon calls him a snake and warns that his efforts to woo her are futile. Finally in Act IV, she consents to marry him. Even this event is tinged by her independent indifference. "Well, all right!" she says, "I am bored and lonely. All right! I agree!"[10]

The strange relationship of these two 'lovers' echoes an ambivalence which rebounds at the political level. Proffer has described Shervinsky as an ambiguous character. "Among other things he is described as a charming lover, . . . an idealist, . . . an opportunist. . ." and "frivolous" even though "he can take his job very seriously."[11] Could this not also adequately describe the new revolutionary government?

Is there not a hint of Lenin's or Stalin's personality here? Yelena's not-too-eager acceptance of Shervinsky as her new mate runs parallel to her reluctance to welcome the new regime in Russia. Through the heroine one can also detect Bulgakov's own complex, anti-ideological feelings vis-à-vis the Communists.

Yelena's presence adds an important dimension to the play. In the broadest sense, a sincere interest in her family and friends, coupled with her wit, often distract from the military events described. The scenes which centre around Yelena serve as a major counterpoint to the general civil violence also described (the scene with the cowardly Hetman and the Germans, the depiction of Petliura's cruel men, the fighting in the Alexandrinsky Gymnasium). In the divergence and convergence of these two components Bulgakov is able to convey a great depth of insight into the human dimension of ideological conflict. For example, in contrast to the scenes of hate and violence, we see the human side of the situation in Yelena's house. Thus, Lariosik seems to be speaking for everyone when he says how comfortable he is in Yelena's house. "Dear Yelena Vasilevna!" he says, "I cannot express to you how well I feel at your place . . ."[12] In Act IV Lariosik reaffirms his earlier expression of well-being when he says: "I feel better here, much better than I felt in childhood."[13]

The constant juxtaposition of mindless cruelty and concern for personal welfare throughout the play expose the tragic contradiction of ideals and the reality of man's emotions. It is this discrepancy which is at the heart of Bulgakov's intellectual position and his consequent vacillating feelings with regard to events in Russia after the Revolution.

This ambivalence is further reinforced in the picture which Bulgakov draws of Yelena's emotional behaviour. She often questions developments and gets reassurances from family and friends. This is evident early in the play (Act I) when Shervinsky tries to calm her by saying that all will be well and that there was a large reception at the court the previous evening with the Hetman present. "Yes," she responds skeptically, "do they know that the Germans are leaving us to the hands of fate?"[14] Her despair grows as the play progresses. In Act I, scene II she asks Shervinsky: "What will happen to us? . . . How will this end? What? . . ." "Generally everything around us is getting worse and worse."[15] Yelena's mind cannot be put at ease. At the end of Act I, she expresses herself in the following way: "All our life is caving in. Everything is lost. All is crumbling in."[16] The turmoil and desperation which echo in the heroine's words mirror the skepticism which was being experienced by a large number of the

intelligentsia at that time. Among these was undoubtedly Bulgakov himself.

Being a sensitive person, Yelena often fears the worst. In the first act she has an ominous dream which is very real to her. This dream prompts fears and anxieties which haunt her throughout the play, often causing her to despair. When the play opens, we find her worrying about her husband's safe return. Later in the play, she becomes concerned about the fate of her brothers. Yet even during times of tension, Yelena does not abandon her hostess' role. She offers her house as a place of refuge and relaxation. Perhaps caring about others would temporarily alleviate the strain under which she laboured. Perhaps being a hostess made Yelena feel that she was doing her part for the 'cause'. Indeed, her reaction to events in Kiev offers some insight into the position of women during the Revolution. In other words, many intellectual women probably also felt the desire to participate in some way in the happenings of the period on either the Red or the White side.

Nevertheless, Yelena is portrayed as a human being and, on occasion, she does lose her composure, suggesting that she is experiencing internal conflict. In Act I, as a result of Shervinsky's advances, she briefly breaks down, saying, "This is torture. Honest to goodness!" In her confusion she

continues in a non-sequitur, "The dishes are dirty. My husband has gone off somewhere. Around me the light . . ."[17] At the end of Act III, when she learns of the death of Alekseı, she cries out once again under pressure, "I knew this would happen . . . They killed Alekseı . . . They killed Alekseı . . . They killed him . . . And you?! The older officers. The older officers! You all came home but the commander has been killed!" Shortly thereafter, Yelena catches herself and apologetically explains why she spoke in such an unbecoming way. "I spoke out in grief. My mind became clouded . . . I went mad."[18] A moment later she faints. Here the heroine's disjointed phrasing suggests that a change is taking place in her. She seems to be struggling to accept what is happening.

In the last act, as the Bolsheviks approach, Yelena is somewhat shaken to discover that several of the people around her readily express relief and happiness at the prospect. Yelena's surprise and disappointment also give evidence of criticism on Bulgakov's part. Why was the intelligentsia ready to capitulate so easily? Theoretically Yelena, and by implication Bulgakov, would probably have preferred to go on fighting. Bulgakov, it seems, wanted us to believe that she was not prepared to give up all that she had been brought up to believe in and all that she had grown accustomed to so

suddenly. The observant Lariosik seems to recognize this when he remarks that life had been very difficult for the heroine. He notes: "Yelena Vasil'evna, here, has also experienced much, very much, and she deserves happiness because she is an outstanding woman."[19] She is indignant with Shervinsky because he readily admits that he is a sympathizer and looks forward to better times in the "new way of life."

It is probable that in the original copy of the play there was a strong expression of disappointment at the prospect of the imposition of the new regime.[20] Perhaps this was true not only in the case of Yelena but of several of the characters in the play. The Days of the Turbins required several rewritings before it was allowed to be rehearsed.[21] Bulgakov was obliged to eliminate some scenes and characters from the first draft. Cuts and revisions continued over a period of one and a half years, before the play was finally premiered in October, 1926.[22]

Bulgakov's perspective in The Days of the Turbins is that of the sympathetic humanist. He is sympathetic to Yelena--to him she embodies the values of the old intelligentsia. Proffer remarks that Yelena runs in the literary tradition of the "strong and noble Russian woman, married to a man who is not really worthy of her."[23] It is likely that this

is the impression which Bulgakov wanted to convey.

Flight

Generally, their environment has a negative impact on the characters in Bulgakov's plays. This is particularly evident in Flight. In this play, Bulgakov surpasses himself in creating a terrifying landscape. Flight is the story of a motley collection of White refugees who can no longer bear to stay in Russia under the new Soviet regime. They flee first to the Crimea, later to Constantinople. A depressing mood characterized by sickness, poverty and hardship follows them.

As in The Days of the Turbins, the characters are mainly drawn from the military and the intelligentsia. While the background of the characters is similar in both Flight and The Days of the Turbins, in Flight they are shown in a harsher light and they undergo greater stress and strain.[24] Commenting on the dramatic quality of some of the characters in Flight, Proffer observed that in scope and depth of characterization, as well as in wit and vitality of language, "Flight has an almost Shakespearian quality."[25] Still, it is very Bulgakovian in style with its share of mystical and supernatural literary elements which allow the playwright the latitude to indulge in the ambiguity and ambivalence which typify so much of his work.

In The Days of the Turbins Bulgakov was fairly sympathetic to the human aspects, the fears and the pessimism of the Whites whom he depicted. In Flight he treats those Whites who continued to fight for their cause amid defeat and flight. These characters are depicted in a more detached manner. Some of the personages express 'dark feelings', but they find no solution to their dilemma. Like his characters, Bulgakov was reluctant to recognize the legitimacy of the new Soviet regime, and he regretted the negative impact which it had on the White intelligentsia. On the other hand, he could also readily see the melodramatic, banal evil of the Whites. The generally pessimistic, black comic mood of the play points to the iconoclastic viewpoint of the author.

The author's position is strikingly expressed in both the structure and the setting of the play. The acts are divided into 'dreams'. The time of day alternates between dusk, sunset and occasionally night. Bulgakov's rejection of simplistic dogmatic answers to social problems thus finds expression in an accent on the transitional, indefinite and illusory periods of the daily cycle.

There are five major characters in Flight: three are male, two female. Among Bulgakov's main plays, Flight is the one in which the female image carries particular force both quantitatively and qualitatively.

Especially in drama, where visibility of characters has such immediate impact on the audience, relative numbers of male and female characters per play are important. A simple comparison between the early plays will amply illustrate the significant visibility of the women personages in Flight. Of five main characters in Flight, two (or forty per cent) are female. In comparison, twenty per cent or less of the personae dramatis in the other early plays are women characters. In this regard, The Crimson Island is an exception, but since female characters here are, for the most part, not Russian, their impact on the reader is attenuated.

Qualitatively, the women in Flight have been sketched with such universal, emotional complexity that they are definitely no less significant than their male counterparts, and even outshine them in some respects. Below we will discuss in brief the weight of the male character group, and then, in greater detail, the force of the female image in Flight.

Golubkov expresses an aspect of Bulgakov's skeptical feelings about the Soviet regime by stating that he was forced to leave Petersburg because conditions were such that it was impossible to work there. Khludov is used by the playwright as an example of the effect the environment could have on a person in Khludov's position. The brave and generally well-

meaning General Charnota represents those dedicated, high-ranking White officers who are torn by ambivalent feelings towards the USSR.

Nevertheless, without underestimating the importance of men in Flight, one can say that generally they are less adaptable than the women. Although they start out with high motivations, they seem to break down under psychological pressure. Serafima and Lius'ka, on the other hand, seem to gain in strength in the course of the play.

Serafima and Lius'ka, like Yelena, are both morally strong and straightforward individuals. Serafima shares nobility and honesty with her predecessor.[26] Lius'ka resembles Yelena in her wit and quick reactions. Serafima is a well-bred Petersburg lady whose goal is to be reunited with her husband in the Crimea. The vibrant Lius'ka is an adventuress who delights in the opportunity of following her common law husband, Charnota.

Partridge feels that Serafima is a very pale figure in "Dream I" especially in contrast to the vibrant Lius'ka.[27] However, one must make a distinction between 'paleness' as a personality trait and 'paleness' as a function of role. Serafima's 'paleness' seems to be only a personality trait, just as Lius'ka can be described as vibrant. Rather than call

Serafima a pale figure, perhaps it would be more appropriate to call her generally reserved and composed when opposed to the temperamental Lius'ka. As for Serafima's role, it is not a pale one as she has definite contributions to make both to "Dream I" and in the play as a whole.

In a most forceful way, the two major women in Flight serve as expressions of Bulgakov's skepticism of absolute ideas, morality and causes. The major male characters in Flight begin with high ideals and great goals, but as the play progresses they lose much of their initial fervour and stature. Khludov's mental illness engulfs him and he loses his strength. Charnota degrades himself in Constantinople and Golubkov runs around seeking solace, which he expects to find in money.

Serafima and Lius'ka on the other hand, are portrayed by Bulgakov as being outside of the political and ideological realm. As mentioned earlier, this was the position from which Bulgakov himself viewed the situation.[28] They stand aloof from dogma and therefore do not run the risk of becoming broken individuals, as are their male counterparts. Although both women are exposed to great hardship and are largely disappointed in their quest for a better life outside of Russia, they show more stamina than do the men. At times they are torn by ambivalent feelings--should they continue to stand by

their men folk, or should they seek an alternative? Ultimately, unimpeded by 'high ideals', they are able to make a rational choice. In these actions, Serafima and Lius'ka reveal Bulgakov's skepticism of absolutist ideals.

The versatility of the women characters points to Bulgakov's understanding of the opposite sex. This is not to say that he paints them 'lily white'. To the contrary, they also have their shortcomings, as illustrated by the playwright. Lius'ka, for example, is a complex character. At first, she is presented as a kind and considerate friend of Serafima. By the end of the play we discover her in Paris, mistress of Serafima's wealthy former husband and willing accomplice of his defrauders. It is unusual, especially in Soviet Russian literature, to find so devious a female character.

It is possible to learn more about Lius'ka and Serafima by examining their relationship to other characters in the play. Observing the two women as they interact with others, insight is provided into their spirits; that is to say, the reader can recognize the positive and the negative feelings which Lius'ka and Serafima experience when they leave Russia and live in exile. For example, Serafima and Golubkov add a romantic dimension to the play. Throughout the course of Flight, Golubkov grows fonder of Serafima. When he finds her

in exile in Constantinople, he is saddened at seeing her poverty and degradation. He states his dismay. Serafima, who is rarely irritable, takes offence at what she considers to be Golubkov's "reproaches." Her anger with Golubkov is a result of her frustration and dissatisfaction with her situation. She does not appreciate being reproached in addition to being miserable.

Later, rather than consider his declaration of love, Serafima takes out her bad feelings on her suitor. "Leave me alone," she says, "I don't want to hear anything else! I am tired of everything! Why did you come to me again?" She continues pessimistically: "We are all beggars! I don't want to have anything more to do with you! . . . I want to die alone. My goodness what a disgrace! What shame!"[29]

Serafima's disjointed sentences, spoken at a time when her life is changing for the worse and she is struggling to come to terms with herself and her milieu, reminds one of Yelena when she spoke in similarly emotional and somewhat confused phrases, as shown in the previous chapter. Yelena was seen in an equally pessimistic mood, also provoked by an unstable political situation.

This linguistic device, used in the case of both women, may indicate that Bulgakov once again wanted to depict his

female characters as realistic human beings. They are not robots but sensitive individuals. They can get carried away and at such times they reveal their emotions. When Yelena and Serafima cry out in short, jerky sentences, it is clear that they are experiencing some inner turmoil.

With Khludov, Serafima's relationship is different again. At the beginning of Flight she feels awe towards the powerful commander, to whose protection the Whites are fleeing. Gradually, her attitude towards him changes. By the last 'dream', we find a complete reversal of roles: Serafima is nursing Khludov--he is dependent on her. As she becomes tired of caring for him, doubts set in. She blames herself for having left Petersburg and for shunning Golubkov. However, influenced by compassion, she is reluctant to leave the sick man behind. In this situation, a strong sense of ambivalence on her part is clearly evident. Should she return to the city she knows and loves, or should she remain in exile? This is the question which she tries to answer. Her dilemma is compounded by the conflict of her uncertainty of finding Petersburg as she remembers it, and her female instinct which will not allow her to abandon the needy Khludov.

Lius'ka's involvement with Charnota follows a path similar to the Serafima-Khludov relationship, as their roles

also gradually reverse in the course of events. In these two strikingly parallel situations we see that the strength of womanhood is not an idiosyncratic thing, limited to only one woman. That is to say, Bulgakov wishes to convey the idea that non-ideological individuals, in this case women, are more flexible and adaptable than 'ideologues'. Consequently, they ultimately come out on top.

Serafima does not have much contact with General Charnota. His rigid ways are foreign to her. Lius'ka, on the other hand, initially admires the determined and adventurous General who is so au courant with political and military affairs. By Act IV, her confidence in him has completely dissipated. He is no longer the man he was earlier portrayed as being. She finds herself in a position where she has to 'control' him. He fears Lius'ka's strictures concerning his activities, especially his betting at the ludicrous and hilarious cockroach races. She confronts him after he has thoughtlessly squandered their money, and she demands that he sell his service revolver in order to come up with some needed cash. His feeble, childlike resistance is cut short by her chilling warning: "If you dare touch me with a finger I will poison you at night."[30] Now, he is no match for her. She handles him like a naughty boy, calling him podlets (scoundrel).

Lius'ka is fed up with her lot and now finds she "hates Charnota." In her furore, she projects this feeling, hating herself and then hating "all Russians," implying that all of Russia is responsible for her misery.

The development of strong negative emotions in Lius'ka, emotions which spread to become hatred of "all Russians," reminds one of the playwright's intense concern with the personal dimensions of ideological conflict. Bulgakov's characters, Reds and Whites, bear both good and bad characteristics. The Whites are not naively portrayed as being all positive heroes. This is adequately shown in the grotesque portrayal of Khludov. General Charnota also has his shortcomings. The Whites in Flight exhibit the frustration of people involved in the unsolvable dilemma of their cause. In some cases the reader is witness to the 'banality of evil' which sometimes characterizes their behaviour. In other instances we are present at their degradation as human beings functioning under harsh living conditions.

In summarizing the significance of Serafima and Lius'ka in Flight, the following observations may be made. Serafima's role in the play is to lead us into Dream I and lead us out of the last dream. On both these occasions, Serafima is accompanied by Golubkov, whose presence makes dialogue possible.

At the beginning of Act I, Golubkov speaks of his dreams and of his longing for Petersburg. Determined to continue, Serafima warns him of the danger of such thoughts and suggests that perhaps he should stay behind. At the end of the play it is Serafima who admits to Golubkov that she wishes to return to Petersburg. She regrets her flight and wanderings which have lasted one and one-half years. Both at the beginning and at the end of the play Serafima appears to exhibit a more assertive personality than does Golubkov. In both situations, she makes the decisions.

Lius'ka's aggressive and vibrant personality adds a lively element to the play. At the end of Flight she strikes out for Paris, while Serafima turns back to Petersburg. In this respect she, Lius'ka, is the stereotype émigrée.

In Serafima and Lius'ka, Bulgakov has created two very different personalities: Serafima is a cultured lady, wife of a high government official; Lius'ka is a common woman, a camp follower. Still, their similarities are also significant. In this motley band of fleeing Whites, they are the only ones who join for reasons unrelated to the 'cause'. Serafima is attempting to rejoin her husband. Lius'ka is following hers. We follow the band of Whites as they suffer the consequences of defeat in a conflict of ideological 'visions'. In his

focus Bulgakov has come close to creating a play which possesses many of the attributes of a report on a laboratory experiment in social relations. Who will fare better, the male ideologues or the pragmatic, flexible women? Bulgakov's answer is evident: It is the pragmatists who succeed. To his credit and literary vision, Bulgakov has given the role of pragmatist to women characters. Once again, albeit in a less anti-Soviet manner, Bulgakov's female characters reflect their author's skepticism of political dogma as a principle of social organization.

NOTES

[1]S. Vladimir and G. Lapkina, eds., Ocherki istorii russkoi sovetskoi dramaturgii 1934-45 (Moskva: Izdatel'stvo iskusstvo, 1966), p. 129.

[2]H. Partridge, "Comedy in the Early Works of Mikhail Bulgakov" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Georgetown University, 1968), p. 223.

[3]E. Proffer, "The Major Works of Mikhail Bulgakov" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University, 1971), pp. 175-76.

[4]Bulgakov, The Days of the Turbins, p. 10.

[5]Ibid., p. 103.

[6]E. Proffer, op. cit., p. 138.

[7]V. Smirnova, Sovremennyi portret (Moskva: Sovetski pisatel', 1964), p. 291.

[8]Bulgakov, The Days of the Turbins, see pp. 41 and 105 for Shervinsky's and Myshlaevsky's words respectively.

[9]Proffer notes that in the final act Yelena's attitude towards Shervinsky has changed and is not "quite so ambivalent," p. 141.

[10]Bulgakov, The Days of the Turbins, p. 98.

[11]E. Proffer, op. cit., p. 144.

[12]Bulgakov, The Days of the Turbins, p. 32.

[13]Ibid., p. 92.

[14]Ibid., p. 31.

[15]Ibid., p. 40.

[16]Ibid., p. 44.

[17]Ibid., p. 43.

[18]Ibid., pp. 89, 90.

[19]Ibid., pp. 109, 110.

[20]See Proffer's thesis for changes made in the later versions of the last scene in the play, pp. 133-135.

[21]E. Proffer, op. cit., p. 19.

[22]H. Partridge, op. cit., p. 186.

[23]E. Proffer, op. cit., p. 140.

[24]H. Partridge, op. cit., p. 265.

[25]Ibid.

[26]Ibid., p. 224.

[27]E. Proffer, op. cit., p. 178.

[28]See Chapter II, note 7.

[29]Flight, p. 72.

[30]Ibid., p. 68.

Chapter IV

WOMEN IN BULGAKOV'S EARLY COMEDIES

Interspersed at intervals throughout his dramatic career are Bulgakov's 'comedies'. In his first cycle of plays, Zoika's Apartment and The Crimson Island comprise the comic-satiric element. In these plays the characters assume an added dimension of importance: Bulgakov's biting mockery and criticism are directed not only at existing problems--for instance, the housing crisis or capricious censorship--but also at the people involved, the corrupt and muddled officials, the seedy opportunists, and so on. In this chapter we will explore Bulgakov's handling of several of his female creations in the comic genre.

Before proceeding with an analysis of these two plays, it will be of value to examine the relationship of ambivalence (on the part of the playwright) and satire. In the West, the concept of satire has been largely conditioned by the writings of Jonathan Swift. Properly speaking, however, Swift's 'satire' represents an extreme of the form. It is the nasty and often cruel work of an unusual personality. It is less satire than outright accusation. Bulgakov's satires, in the context of his literary development, point to a more normal

conceptualization of the idea of satire and expose the strong link between it and ambivalence. Bulgakov's comedies, in the first cycle of his plays, alternate with his tragedies, giving the impression that the author employed them as 'breathers'. In other words, Bulgakov's indulgence in satire in Zoika's Apartment and in The Crimson Island represents his freely poking fun at the foibles of the Soviet regime. This view of satire implies a certain amount of ambivalence: Bulgakov ridicules the faults which he observed in the Soviet system, but he does so in a 'fond' manner. While he may not appreciate the injustices and imbalances in the system, it seems nevertheless that he understands that he is reliant upon them, even respects their historical and political lineage. In this respect, ambivalence is at the core of satire. Bearing this in mind, let us now turn to Bulgakov's early comedies giving special attention to the portrayal of female characters.

Zoika's Apartment

The first of the two plays which we will examine in this chapter is Zoika's Apartment. It is set in the NEP period in the Soviet Union. The New Economic Policy was a relaxation of government control of the economy. Capitalism, of the small enterprise variety, was reintroduced. In Moscow alone a multitude of shops and shoestring businesses sprang up.

Taking advantage of this policy, many people scrambled to amass enough money to emigrate before this 'liberalization' changed again.

As in Flight, the lighting of the play is subdued. The first act opens in Zoika's apartment. It is sunset of a May day. With the exception of one brief scene, the entire action of the play is set in this apartment. Through the window is heard the raucous sound of a market. Bulgakov refers to this noise as an adskii kontsert (hellish concert). There is an element of ambivalence in this phrase which juxtaposes a negative and a positive concept. Further, this 'music' changes throughout the play but it is seldom absent, the sound of the initial noise lingering and echoing on, a reminder to us of the revulsion and attraction which Bulgakov experienced towards the New Economic Policy.

In Zoika's Apartment Bulgakov expresses his sense of ambivalence and his skepticism of the Communist experiment in Russia by focusing on the problems of the NEP. He makes two basic statements: Firstly, he shows that the most idealistic impulses of the Soviet system, of a dogma, are inevitably foiled by human nature. They even encourage the emergence of scoundrels and rogues. Secondly, he implies that a corrupt milieu may destroy the aspirations and life of an ambitious but honest woman, in this case Zoika.

In discussing Zoika's Apartment, Proffer has called

Bulgakov a playwright superior to such contemporaries as Faiko, Erdman, and Romashov. Although Bulgakov's "themes, characters and even turns of phrases may be conventional for the time, he handles them better than the other writers." His use of economy of means attests to Bulgakov's thorough understanding of the requirements of the stage. He uses fewer characters and less complex plots than do some of his contemporaries.[1]

Applying the concept of 'economy', it is possible to expand Proffer's judgment of this play. There is also great economy of action in Zoika's Apartment. For example, the reader does not see the work that goes into planning the sewing shop cum bordello. We learn of it unexpectedly both when Zoika produces some legal papers signed by Gus' (Goose) and through the film-like visit of the two strangers. According to his wife, Bulgakov wrote the original draft of the play in five days. Subsequently, it was substantially reworked. Apparently the revisions were only partially dictated by political considerations. The greater part of the changes were designed to provide artistic improvements. It is evident in the economic use of dramatic technique that the play has benefited much from this constant attention.[2]

With regard to Zoika's Apartment, Proffer has advanced

the rather unusual suggestion that no central character can be identified in the play. In supporting this assertion, she points out that the play does not focus intensively on any one of the main comic figures: Ametistov is considered by Proffer to be peripheral to the main dramatic situation; Goose never emerges as a main character because he is neither savage enough to ensure revulsion nor humanized enough to allow the viewer to identify with him. Concerning Zoika, Proffer feels that she does not receive enough exposure to warrant being considered the 'heroine'. Zoika describes her plans and gives orders. Her speeches are short and she never seems to take a large part in the action of the play, "even though she is the mastermind behind the original scheme."[3]

After a thorough reading of the play, it is difficult to agree with Proffer's insight. To the contrary, Zoika herself is the organizer of the enterprise around which the play is built. She is so adept at planning and scheming that she seems to be responsible for the organization of the very play itself. It is through Zoika and in her apartment that the reader learns of the unscrupulous activity taking place in her milieu. Zoika is the one who "sets the ball rolling," as it were, by planning a workshop cum bordello. She is also the one who encourages everyone to flee at the end of the play

when her dealings are uncovered and her workshop is seized. In her ability to organize and scheme, Zoika may be compared to Ilf and Petrov's Ostap Bender, velikii kombinator (the great schemer). For these reasons it would not be unreasonable to call Zoika the central personage in the play.

It is noteworthy that Bulgakov chose a woman to reveal the corruption in Moscow during the NEP period. The playwright may have felt that a woman, revealing a base society and participating in it, would attract more dramatic attention. She would elicit more controversy than a man in a similar position simply because she is a woman. The reader would be shocked to find 'innocent womanhood' in such a situation. Bulgakov's message in this play is clear--the society has a negative effect on women as well as men.

Zoika is shown as being capable of dealing with all obstacles that come her way. However, at the end of the play, when the government officials themselves force their presence upon her, she is no longer able to resist. In the closing scene of Zoika's Apartment we once again witness Bulgakov's intellectual skepticism. The playwright shows that even a shrewd and cunning woman who is prepared to compromise with the new regime is unable to please the stringent government.

The portrayal of Zoika is not a stereotype either in

terms of the women appearing in Bulgakov's first cycle of plays or when compared to other Soviet literary women figures. Bulgakov's women characters vary substantially. Every one of them reflects moods and visions of their author in different ways. In The Days of the Turbins, Bulgakov takes care to show the concerns of women belonging to the intelligentsia at the onset of the new leadership. In Flight the playwright depicts two women, wives of Whites, who undergo hardships and sufferings but finally adapted themselves to the new situation. In Zoika's Apartment we find an example of a woman who tries to survive in the new society by participating in the corruption around her. Zoika is a unique character in terms of Bulgakov's plays. The depiction of Zoika is also, of course, very unconventional in the context of Soviet literature.

Zoika sometimes appears to be grotesque, and the play in which she appears has been called "pornographic,"[4] but undoubtedly Bulgakov wanted the reader to see her as being a realistic depiction of women in her social position. This may be assumed for two reasons: Firstly, she is placed in a true-to-life milieu, interacting with realistic, although caricatured Soviet functionaries and laymen. Secondly, Zoika is shown to be a clear-thinking individual who molds herself to suit the circumstances.

Zoika does not seem to develop in the play, although we see different aspects of her in the course of events. When the curtain rises we find Zoika, a psychologically strong and determined individual, prepared to deal with anything that may come her way. She holds strong until the end.

The dramatic strength of the character Zoika may largely be determined through an examination of her relationships with men in the play--relationships in which she generally dominates. This observation once again confirms Bulgakov's view of women as reflected in literature. They should not be passed over in a cursory manner if their role in society is to be duly appreciated.

Zoika is dramatically the strongest of the female characters in the plays under discussion, and she seems to be the strongest of all the personages in Zoika's Apartment. She is shrewd, realistic and clever. She can be hard or kind depending on the circumstances, but she is always cunning. Some of the individuals around her react to Zoika's cunning. Alla calls her a devil. Portupeia accuses Zoika of consorting with the devil. Ametistov points out that Zoika has become hardened in her apartment and that she has torn herself away from the masses. Ametistov's accusation implies that a change has taken place in her and that her situation has

resulted from the recent or current circumstances. Zoika herself admits that she has suffered when she cries out: "It seems that I still have to bear my cross."[5] Zoika obviously feels that she is a martyr!

The main male characters surrounding Zoika serve as targets for satire. They are unattractive individuals. Obolianinov, Zoika's 'husband' and business partner, tries to explain his indolence by claiming that the government inspired living conditions under which a "decent man cannot exist." Portupeia is an officious and corrupt house committee chairman; Gus' (Goose), a vulgar and self-indulgent director of the Metal Trust; and Ametistov, an opportunist and a scoundrel. The characters in the play are products of their society. There is a strong impression that Bulgakov enjoyed portraying these undesirables and watching them work to foil the government.

Obolianinov often seems to be more of a burden than a help to Zoika. He is subordinated to her in several ways. He is the weaker of the partners: It is Zoika who does the planning, and Obolianinov always agrees with her. He trusts Zoika and relies on her: When pressure is too great on him, he turns to morphine, supplied to him through Zoika. Zoika herself does not attempt to escape reality through drug use.

Ironically, she controls Obolianinov by controlling his morphine connection.

In Obolianinov, Bulgakov has utilized an instrument for the ridicule of such ideological spin-offs as the concept of 'former person'.[6] The scenes in which Obolianinov complains of being a 'former count' are perhaps the most outrightly funny in the play. At the same time, Obolianinov's plaint provides an opportunity to show Zoika's control over him. Upon explaining his bewildering new 'title', Zoika is able to respond consolingly that by Christmas she will have him rich and in Paris.

In her dealings with Portupeia, Zoika exposes the hypocrisy and the corruption of officialdom, in this case of those involved in the housing committee. Zoika is annoyed with Portupeia's behaviour and she is curt to the point of rudeness. She expresses her disrespect for the housing committee by calling it a shaika (a gang), and its members bandity (bandits). She also 'makes a face' at Portupeia, the representative of the housing committee. Zoika knows very well just how far she can go without endangering her own well-being. She then offers Portupeia a bribe, which he has been waiting for and naturally accepts. Nevertheless, Zoika recognizes the delicacy of her position and warns her associate, Ametistov,

to be careful in his dealings with Portupeia.

Zoika is beholden to the all-powerful, corrupt and self-indulgent bureaucrat, Goose. It is he who signed the papers entitling her to set up her enterprise in the apartment. Consequently, she makes every effort to be sure that he enjoys himself when he visits her 'models'. She flatters him and caters to his male ego. Zoika's rapport with Goose is unusual inasmuch as it exposes the great pressures brought to bear on the 'little' man in the criminal situation. We may be fooled into thinking that Zoika is the corrupt kingpin of the play, but scenes such as this one are a strong hint that the real beneficiaries are the powerful figures who somehow elude publicity.

Ametistov is Zoika's match. They each attempt to exercise control over the other. Ametistov's threats of blackmail cause Zoika to cry out to 'fate'. She too can threaten him, with the result that he labels her a 'snake'. In spite of the threats, Zoika and Ametistov are essentially the same kind of person, although their fate is shown to be different: Ametistov escapes unpunished, but Zoika is caught in the end. By contrasting Ametistov's and Zoika's fate, Bulgakov is hinting at his vacillating feelings towards certain opportunistic members of the Soviet society. Should

they be permitted to consistently escape justice and continue on their self-interested path, or should they be brought to account by the government?

Zoika is not a physically appealing person. According to a vague description of her in Black Snow: A Theatrical Novel, she has an "asymmetrical face." Further, her authoritative and calculating ways categorize her as less than feminine. Maniushka and Alla, on the other hand, are sexually appealing. They provide the opportunity for two subplots with romantic overtones.

Zoika is generally sympathetic to these two women. For instance, she tries to be understanding towards Alla. When the latter is unable to pay her debts, Zoika cancels them in return for receiving her services in the bordello. At first glance, it may seem like a case of crude and simple exploitation. On the other hand, Alla's employment is only temporary and she is substantially remunerated. Possibly Bulgakov wished the audience to see Zoika as simply trying to make the best of a difficult situation.

The remaining women, the 'models' and their seamstress, serve as background characters. Their presence contributes to the creation of an atmosphere of mystery and suspicion in Zoika's apartment.

In Zoika's Apartment Bulgakov shows his skepticism towards the feasibility of the Soviet Regime by depicting how it can infiltrate and ruin a person's life. Zoika serves as an example of an individual living in the NEP world and her apartment serves as a meeting place for different scoundrels who function in the new society.

Circumstances prompted Zoika to 'expand' her workshop. The reader finds her planning to earn enough money to emigrate to Paris with Obolianinov. However, negative elements--from the "hellish concert" outdoors--begin to penetrate her apartment. Before long she is squeezed out by force. In her parting "farewell" to her apartment at the end of the fourth act, one can sense a feeling of nostalgia for "what used to be." The playwright seems to sympathize with Zoika who was driven from her refuge. The apartment represented Zoika's island in the USSR. It was the one place where she could enjoy a little privacy.

The Crimson Island

The Crimson Island is the second of Bulgakov's major comedies. Once again Bulgakov engaged in satirizing different aspects of Soviet life. In a bold and rather unconventional manner, the playwright dared to speak his mind.

The structure of The Crimson Island is unusual for Soviet drama. Bulgakov placed a play within a play,[7] a technique pioneered by his Italian contemporary Pirandello. The origin of the play was a story entitled "The Crimson Island" written by Bulgakov in 1924, and subsequently published in the Berlin newspaper Nakanune.[8] Later this story was adapted to become the controversial play under discussion.

The inner play is evidently a parody of the propagandistic literature which was being turned out in the immediate post-revolutionary period.[9] Different characters represent the leading political figures of the time: Kerensky, Lenin, and Trotsky.[10] With this satirically allegorical offering it almost seems as if Bulgakov was once more deliberately courting vicious official reaction.

Consistent with Bulgakov's individualistic stance, but somewhat unusual in the light of his satiric target, is the playwright's uncomplimentary portrayal of the 'West'. Contrary to the generally accepted nineteenth century view, but in accordance with Soviet policy, Westerners are seen as meddlesome, unwelcome and amusing intruders. From the time of Peter the Great onward, the tendency was to look to the Western European countries for technical and artistic inspiration. Under Soviet governments this has changed. Russia

has gained confidence and become reasonably self-sufficient. In The Crimson Island Bulgakov sketched Russia as possessing something to offer to the West. This 'something' is symbolically represented by the pearls which are harvested off the coast of the island and which lure the Europeans.

The subject of the outer play is censorship. The Crimson Island has been labelled the first call for freedom of the press in the USSR.[11] The main male characters form a triangle: The censor, Savva Lukich, on whose whim the fate of the inner play depends, is at the apex. At the base of this triangle are the producer Gennady, and the playwright Dymogatsky.

Gennady appears to us to be a hardened individual, familiar with the ways of the theatre. He acts accordingly. Dymogatsky, on the other hand, is less familiar with the barriers which he may encounter in having his play produced. He seems surprised at Gennady's pronounced caution. Of course, Bulgakov experienced both the aspirations and frustrations of a playwright facing harsh censorship. He drew these two characters with great sympathy and feeling. He certainly used the two characters to expose the sad lot of the dramatist and producer of plays in the Soviet Union, and perhaps also to solicit understanding from his audience.

Gennady communicates his tension and the pressure under

which he operates graphically through his actions and words. His instructions to the cast are curt and to the point. His relationship with the censor is often affected and oversolicitous; his conversation with Savva Lukich is filled with superlatives and diminutives, depending on the desired effect. It is clear that his overriding objective is to cater to the censor in order to receive the needed permission to stage the play.

Dymogatsky is far less loquacious than the producer. He seems to be new in the field, naive, and sees little cause for concern. When his play is banned, however, he undergoes that wild depression so characteristic of dramatists. He is upset to the point of blurting out incoherent sentences and dangerous accusations. He outlines the hardships which he experienced in working on his play over a period of one and one-half years, adding: "And then a wicked old man appears."[12] Soon thereafter he utters the most dangerous, the most central of all political questions: "Who are the judges?"[13]

At first glance the women characters in The Crimson Island do not seem to be very significant. However, on deeper examination they are seen to be complexly drawn and make important contributions to the play.

In Lida and Betsi, in the outer play,[14] Bulgakov

offers his impressions of women affiliated with the theatre. These characters are worthy of close examination because they provide us with an uncommonly direct reflection of Bulgakov's feelings towards a particular kind of woman, one with whom he undoubtedly had close contact. These two female creations are shown in a rather unflattering light, although Bulgakov does not seem to have gone out of his way to malign them. As introduced by her husband Gennady, Lida is a "grande coquette," and on several occasions throughout the play she is shown to live up to this description. Betsi is a sharp-tongued and perceptive person. As early as the prologue of the play, Bulgakov pinpoints the major characteristics of female thespians: jealousy and bickering. Jealousy characterizes Betsi's attitude towards Lida when the latter, being Gennady's wife, gets a larger role in Dymogatsky's play. Lida's every remark is contradicted by Betsi. For example, Lida states that Dymogatsky's face is inspiring, to which Betsi replies that in her opinion it is a plain face. In the subtly drawn scene in Act III, jealousy on Lida's part is exposed: Stung by the liaison between Betsi and her, Lida's, much admired Kiri-Kuki, she fires Betsi with the excuse that she has broken one of Lida's precious china cups.

Further, Betsi is an instrument for exposing hypocrisy

in the outer play. For example, Betsi becomes indignant and angry at Gennady when he tries to calm her by asking if she has no 'fear of God'. Her response directly exposes the hypocrisy of producers. She says: "Only last night at the general meeting you, Gennady Panfilovich, asserted that there is no God, because Savva Lukich (the censor) was present. However, as soon as he left, God instantly reappeared on the stage."[15]

There are certain parallels between the two women in the prologue and the two in the inner play, but their behaviour changes in the epilogue. Here Bulgakov's portrayal of female actors is more complimentary. Circumstances force the bickering to give way to a new way of acting. Savva Lukich bans Dymogatsky's play and the atmosphere in Gennady's 'temple' becomes very strained. The producer makes a determined, if lackey-like, attempt to reverse the censor's decision. At this crucial time Lida and Betsi gather their inner strength and collaborate in an effort to offer something positive to the deteriorating mood of their colleagues. The idea that in times of stress and strain women somehow are capable of planning and acting in a positive way seems to be one held by Bulgakov. In Flight we observed Serafima and Lius'ka in equally unhappy circumstances, seeking to alleviate the burdens of their group.

The 'womanly instinct' to comfort men in their times of distress also seems to be one of Bulgakov's generally held beliefs. In The Days of the Turbins, Yelena is the archetypal hostess, the comforter of everyone--for example, her brother Aleksei, trying to dispel his 'dark thoughts' in Act I. Similar female figures appear in the other plays under examination. In The Crimson Island we are witness to a parallel picture. When Dymogatsky cries out in desperation for his banned play, Betsi and Lida immediately and simultaneously respond with: "Poor Vasili Arturich, calm down!"[16] Both women kiss him and together they lead him from the room. Later, when the 'revised' version of the play is proposed, it is the two women who bring Dymogatsky into the room, supporting him under the arms. Finally, when Savva Lukich reconsiders the initial ban and approves the play for performance, again together the two women congratulate him. This 'twin' behaviour on the part of Betsi and Lida suggests that Bulgakov is saying that under the circumstances women could not behave otherwise.

The Crimson Island, itself, is a scene of turmoil and political unrest. Interestingly enough, there are no female personages on it, only men engaged in political warfare. As mentioned above, within the parody of the Revolution, Bulgakov also took the opportunity of offering his concept of the

Europeans. Among the Europeans who are seen in a less than favourable light, Bulgakov introduced two female characters. Both women appear as rounded individuals expressing varying and vividly depicted moods. On one level the two women, Lida a high society woman referred to as Lady, and Betsi her maid, seem to represent stereotypes for the playwright. However, as will be shown below, on another level the maid serves a second purpose.

Lady belongs to a high class English milieu. She bears the characteristics of many upper class colonialist women often depicted in nineteenth century literature. For example, she complains of her boredom and longs for some excitement on several occasions in the play. Like many of Chekhov's female characters, Lady is weary of the lack of excitement in her life. In some ways she resembles Anouilh's Lady Hurst, in Bal des Voleurs, who risks losing her money and jewels in return for a little diversion in her life. However, Bulgakov's Lady was greedy and materialistic and it is doubtful that she would part with any of her possessions, but she is similar to Lady Hurst in her pronounced ennui.

Lady displays other traits which often typify her class. She treats her maid in a disdainful and haughty way and ensures that all her own needs are seen to. For example,

when she feels faint in Act III after being greatly surprised, she asks for her eau de cologne and at 5:00 P.M. she asks for her tea.

As seen in the 'outer' play, Betsi was jealous of Lida receiving preferential treatment when it came to assigning roles. In the 'inner' play one finds an instance in which the tables are turned and Lady becomes very jealous of Betsi, but for different reasons. Lady's anger is provoked when Kiri, her paramour, makes advances at Betsi. Her unrestrained reaction reveals an unpleasant nature. After finding a pretext to fire her maid, Lady haughtily seeks Kiri's aid in subtracting ten shillings for the broken cup from the ten shillings which represent Betsi's salary, to find out how much she, Lady, owes her.

When Kiri asks Lady whether she will make Betsi answer for the broken cup, Lady responds: "No, I will pay her back for her offence with magnanimity." The humourous effect produced by Lady's answer is compounded by Kiri's subsequent exclamation: "What an angelic heart!"[17]

Lady's inability to do simple arithmetic, her insensitivity to the feelings of others, and her self-righteous attitude bring to mind the tyrannical Prostakova in Fonvizin's The Minor, even though these characteristics are more

accentuated in the latter female character. A talking parrot, often accompanying Lady, becomes associated with her personality, reflecting her limited and totally eclectic intelligence.

It seems clear that Bulgakov had a very low opinion of the social class which he represented in his creation of the character of Lady. Nevertheless, he portrayed her realistically, showing her psychological reactions to events. For example, Lady's anger changes to feelings of guilt and self-pity for having "sacrificed" herself to Kiri and having "betrayed" her husband, although as far as the reader can see, the relationship between Lady and Kiri was limited to a bit of flirtation only. Perhaps Bulgakov was hinting that Lady's guilt feelings were a reflection of her thoughts. Soon afterwards she has Kiri swear his fidelity and she forces him to embrace her.

Betsi plays the role of the dedicated but unappreciated maid in the inner play. She seems to have a better understanding of what is happening around her than Lady. Betsi is somewhat reminiscent of some of the servants in Chekhov's plays, such as Anfisa and Firs who, having given many years of service to their masters, seek security in return. Betsi has been with Lady for only a few years, but

she seems very fearful of losing her job, perhaps because she suspects that her low opinion of Lady may show. Consequently, she does her best to cater to her mistress.

Sometimes, however, Betsi does express some of her true feelings about her mistress. When she is fired, Betsi does not hesitate to remind Lady of how she would have to "get up at night at the sound of the bell, . . . do Lady's hair, and sew hems," as well as "endure Lady's endless caprices and scenes involving false hysterics."[18]

Betsi also reveals ambivalent feelings towards Lady when the latter, charmed by the gallant Kiri, calls for a handkerchief. Observing Lady's behaviour, in an aside Betsi labels Lady as being an "affected creature," but nevertheless she graciously obliges her mistress. This incident shows that on the one hand Betsi thinks very little of Lady but, on the other hand, she fears being sent away.

Before leaving Lady's service, Betsi becomes very depressed. Her subsequent plaintive cries sound symbolic. No doubt Bulgakov carefully chose these words which hint at his own literary skepticism and ambivalent feelings towards the Soviet regime.

> Where will I go? Where will I hide? Farewell castle. The wicked lady threw me out and a black abyss appeared before me. Only one thing remains, to throw myself off the wharf into the sea.[19]

Since Betsi is all alone when she utters these cries of desperation, one may well imagine a different speaker and other circumstances.[20] An analogous situation may be portrayed by substituting a few of the nouns. The castle could be interpreted to mean Russia, the wicked Lady could mean the new regime, and the black abyss could represent desperation for the Whites. The sea may well stand for exile which, for Bulgakov, meant death. One may also note that the initial letter of Betsi's name is also the first letter of the playwright's name. This also, although remotely, supports the notion that a parallel exists between the maid's words and the playwright's feelings.

NOTES

[1]E. Proffer, "The Major Works of Mikhail Bulgakov" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University, 1971), pp. 163, 164.

[2]Ibid., pp. 152-53.

[3]Ibid., pp. 168, 169.

[4]See Proffer, p. 151.

[5]Zoika's Apartment, p. 208.

[6]A "former person" refers to the titled persons of the tsarist regime who, of course, lost their titles after the Revolution.

[7]The play composing the prologue and the epilogue will be referred to as the "outer" play. Dymogatsky's play "The Crimson Island" shown within the prologue and the epilogue will be referred to as the "inner" play.

[8]See Proffer, p. 194.

[9]Ibid.

[10]Ibid., p. 201. See H. Partridge, "Comedy in the Early Works of Mikhail Bulgakov" (ubpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Georgetown University, 1968), pp. 163-181 for an ample discussion of the allegorical nature of The Crimson Island.

[11]See Proffer, p. 196.

[12]The Crimson Island, p. 184.

[13]Ibid.

[14]Lida (or Lidia) is called Lady in the "inner" play. Betsi's real name is mentioned only once in the entire play, Adelaida Karpovna.

[15]The Crimson Island, p. 93.

[16] Ibid., p. 184.

[17] Ibid., p. 152.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid., p. 156.

[20] "Cries of desperation" can also be found in some of Bulgakov's later plays. For example, in Dead Souls, Chichikov makes a plaintive cry against the authorities when he finds himself in prison. In Don Kikhot, the hero cries out against a world which would not let him be himself.

Chapter V

EVE, IN AN EARLY SCIENCE FICTION PLAY: ADAM AND EVE

Although most of Bulgakov's major works have received scholarly attention, Adam and Eve has not yet been considered in a critical manner. It is the first of the playwright's three science fiction plays, followed by Bliss in 1934, and Ivan Vasilevich in 1935. It has been mentioned that Adam and Eve is less satisfying than Bulgakov's other comedies and far weaker than his dramas.[1] Nevertheless, it is significant both because of its polemic nature and because it forms part of Bulgakov's repertoire; it serves to complete his first cycle of plays.

Adam and Eve has never been published or staged in the USSR.[2] Two versions of the play exist, both published outside the Soviet Union.[3] One version appeared in a 1971 English translation and a second edition was published the same year in Russian, in Paris. There are some distinct differences between the two versions: Primarily the Parisian publication, in Russian, is somewhat less politically oriented and stylistically more compact than the translated version.

As mentioned in Chapter IV, Bulgakov was forced to make alterations and tone down the initial draft of Zoika's

Apartment. In Chapter III it was noted that the playwright wrote several drafts of The Days of the Turbins for similar reasons. In a like manner, Bulgakov made changes in Adam and Eve. One of the striking discrepancies between the two available versions of Adam and Eve is that in the English translation the action is set in "Leningrad" whereas in the Russian text, published in Paris, Leningrad is consistently replaced by "the town." The use of "the town" instead of "Leningrad," of course, gives the play a more remote flavour. Further, in the English translation the lack of certain articles--glasses in this case--during the first five year plan is mentioned, but this reference is omitted in the Paris publication. Also, the Parisian version of Adam and Eve has a different ending than the other. The Russian publication suddenly brings us back to Adam's apartment at the end of the play, giving the reader the impression that the whole play was just a dream. The other version of the play has an international ending. The fighter pilot is seen bringing back some foreigners to the little colony in the forest and summoning everyone to return with him to Moscow. The slightly subdued tone of the Parisian edition suggests that it was written later than the English translation. Probably political pressures forced Bulgakov to rework certain sensitive areas of the play in an effort to satisfy the censors.

Having written two significant tragedies and two noteworthy comedies, in 1931 Bulgakov began to explore a new genre. Adam and Eve is a science fiction fantasy. The women shown in the tragedies are largely grave and composed. They express much of the playwright's concern about the political situation. The female characters in Bulgakov's comedies are often near caricatures, reflecting the playwright's changed attitude. Here, Bulgakov seems to almost jeer at the status quo. In Adam and Eve, Bulgakov's approach is different again. Eve shows a transition in the author's stand. Through her, Bulgakov seems to be searching for an alternative to dogma and ideology, as will be shown in this chapter.

By writing a science fiction play he gives himself free rein, allowing him to fashion a new world. Bulgakov presents us with a parody of the biblical story of creation and the flood. Adam and Eve, of course, are namesakes for the first couple; Daragan, the aviator, dressed in black, a bird embroidered on his chest, represents the fowl of the air; Ponchik is referred to as the snake on several occasions; Marzikov, the rowdy drunkard and hooligan, stands for the evil which began to spread over the earth; and Efrosimov, the "demigod," is a scientist and pacifist who saves this motley crowd from destruction by the deadly solar gas--read the flood.

The playwright's pessimism in Adam and Eve is shown through the nature of the dialogue between individuals.

Bulgakov's skeptical and ambivalent feelings towards the Soviet regime are more subtle in this play than they were in previous plays. In part they are implied in the context of Adam and Eve, and in part they are blurred by being shown as part of a much larger world problem. Eve plays a special role in Adam and Eve. In this play the playwright expresses iconoclasm not only through Eve's words but also through her actions.

The social setting of Adam and Eve is the first five year plan in Soviet Russia. Act I opens in Adam's apartment. In the first part of the play the atmosphere is light and gay as the reader is introduced to the happy newlyweds, Adam and Eve. However, the mood changes and grows dimmer as the absent-minded professor appears and begins to voice his beliefs, hopes and fears. Act I closes on a note of horror as the deadly solar gas kills the whole population of Leningrad except for a handful of people who are immunized to the effects of the gas by Efrosimov's invention.

Act II opens on a scene of desolation and despair. Dead bodies are found randomly scattered about in a department store. The stage directions indicate that in the window of the store there is a display of "heaven and hell" with grey smoke stretching between them. In this display the reader can once more recognize Bulgakov's ambivalence. The

Soviet Union is both heaven and hell for the playwright, and his feelings waver between these positive and negative elements. More often than not the playwright found himself in the smoky grey area.

The third act opens in a large tent on the edge of a forest. Among the random objects filling the tent is "for some reason a luxurious palace chair." This, of course, symbolizes the old regime and old values, hinting at Bulgakov's nostalgia for the days before the Revolution. The bullets in the tent represent violence. The tent itself is a mixture of fine materials such as brocade, silk and oil-cloth, as well as crude tarpaulin.

The fourth act opens in the forest just before dawn, the least definite time of day. This is the time which most clearly gives the impression of being outside the normal daily cycle, once again reflecting Bulgakov's iconoclastic position. Here Bulgakov is in his most comfortable setting: between conflicting day and night; between conflicting ideological positions. The fighter pilot, Daragan, returns to summon the small colony of survivors to fly with him to Moscow. The reader feels optimistic as the survivors are saved, but this feeling is quickly checked. A horn signal is heard and an ominous shadow is cast over the forest. The ideologues seem

to have triumphed again, and the world continues its irreversible course towards destruction.

Bulgakov had a particular reason for building a façade over his play. Beneath the parody of creation he expresses definite doubts and concerns regarding current social and political developments. Bulgakov seems to be delving towards the roots of human nature in order to seek out the essence of fighting and destruction. Several themes can be discerned in Adam and Eve. Among these is the relationship between the thinker and the man of action.[4] The scientist, Efrosimov, speaks of world peace, trying to understand the causes of violence, while ideologues like Adam and Daragan are intent on building a new Communist way of life, whatever the cost. Another of the themes is the role of science in promoting or curbing violence.[5] Efrosimov, the scientist, introduces this theme in Act I when he explores the dangers of new ideas and "little old men." The solar gas, of course, is an instrument of violence and Efrosimov's invention is a scientific attempt to counteract this deadly gas.

Bulgakov's skepticism in Adam and Eve is not directed solely at Soviet Russian issues. Unlike his earlier plays which were concerned with more identifiably local and Soviet problems, Adam and Eve focuses on more general and interna-

tional issues. Even though the setting of the play is the Soviet Union, universal issues are considered. In the earlier translated version of the play foreigners are introduced.

In Adam and Eve the playwright seems to stage a debate among individuals from different walks of life. Through their interaction ethical and political problems are voiced and discussed, but not solved. Adam, Daragan, Ponchik, and Markizov belong to a camp generally characterized by violence, but their political beliefs vary. Efrosimov represents the pacifist belief. With these people Bulgakov is giving us an example of the type of individuals which the Soviet regime produces. Adam and Daragan are ardent Communists. Ponchik and Markizov represent different aspects of Soviet society. Ponchik, a hack writer of Soviet literature, feels that he was chosen to write the story of "the death" (this refers to the devastation by the solar gas) for future generations. When it suits his purpose, Ponchik is ready to abandon his political beliefs. Bulgakov holds such personality traits in contempt. He felt that one should have the courage of one's convictions. In Act IV, at the height of depression within the colony, Ponchik is found denigrating Communism and Soviet policies. His strong words sound like cries of desperation. Markizov, who is often seen with Ponchik, is

an untrustworthy character who was thrown out of the "professional organization" for his misdemeanors.

Bulgakov represents Efrosimov as being an arbitrator. Since he is a pacifist, he does not have any 'political' convictions and is able to consider the political stands of others objectively. Efrosimov's skepticism towards dogmatic governments is suggested when, observing the unappealing behaviour of Markizov, a product of the Soviet regime, he remarks:

> I regret one thing, that the Soviet government was not present at this scene . . . so that I could show them with what kind of material it intends to build a classless society.[6]

Having said this much about the play in general, let us now turn more specifically to the central subject matter of our study: the depiction of the woman. Bulgakov uses Eve in Adam and Eve to show a progression from the camp of violence over to Efrosimov, the pacifist. Eve's act of rejecting her dogmatic husband in favour of the pacifist suggests Bulgakov's skepticism with regard to the viability of violent and doctrinaire theories. Eve, the first woman, becomes Eve the only woman in Bulgakov's modern rendition of the biblical myth of creation. She is a realistic and sensitive individual placed in an unusual situation. Eve is not an extremist in any way and therefore is not a caricature in the sense in which Zoika and Lady occasionally were. She is closer to Yelena in her sense of kindness and

hospitality. On several occasions we find Eve seeing to the needs of others and offering them food. Unlike Lius'ka or Lady, Eve does not seek adventure. Nevertheless, it comes to her.

At first Eve is presented as being happily in love with her new husband, Adam. As the play develops she is shown to confirm her trust in Adam, calling to him for comfort and aid when she is frightened. This confidence is not reciprocal. When Eve expresses her fears Adam calls her a coward, telling her to keep quiet and shaking her by the shoulders. Later in the play, when she asserts herself asking to speak at the trial, Adam silences her exclaiming that it would be better if she did not speak. In setting this typical domestic relationship against the background of civil war, Bulgakov brings out the essence of his theme: Adam prefers to be the spokesman, the embodiment of the dogmatic, the Communist ideal than to show respect for his wife. Eve, on the other hand, in her confusion and uncertainty reflects the dilemma of the morally aware but impotent general population, and particularly of women.

It was shown in Chapter III that in The Days of the Turbins all the male characters were attracted to Yelena. In Adam and Eve we find a parallel situation with all the major

male personages in love with Eve. Like Yelena, Eve can be curt, even sarcastic with her suitors. She will have little to do with either Ponchik or Markizov. This seems to be Bulgakov's manner of telling us that Eve could not and should not be associated with these two undesirable individuals. Finding Ponchik and Markizov together reading the former's novel during a time of despair, Eve shows disappointment: "Really friends, how can you read at a time like this? Does your heart not sink?"[7] Soon thereafter Eve shows her disrespect for Markizov by telling him not to bring her any more flowers. Sarcastically, she adds that she has time neither to water them nor to throw them out. Later, when Ponchik tries to win her affection and embraces her, Eve sends him away. Her gesture of dismissal is presented listlessly, as if to show Ponchik his meaninglessness and her complete indifference to him. At one point Eve states explicitly that she is fed up with Ponchik and Markizov. At the end of Act III we also learn that Daragan has been secretly courting Eve. She likewise rejects him. The web of courting, naturally centering on Eve, all characterized by Eve's rejection, serves to make the reader more aware of her growing affinity for Efrosimov.

"The situation and character of Efrosimov and Eve are

strongly reminiscent of The Master and Margarita."[8] Just as 'the Master and Margarita' is one of the themes in the novel by the same name, so Efrosimov and Eve is one of the themes running through Adam and Eve. Through this theme Eve as well as Efrosimov are developed. New light is shed on the importance of the woman in the play. From the moment Efrosimov, the scientist, appears in Adam's apartment in Act I, Eve begins to develop a certain attraction for this unusual person. This affinity grows and at the end of the play results in mutual understanding.

By showing Eve's progression from Adam, the Communist, to Efrosimov, the pacifist, Bulgakov seems to be making a statement: Communist or dogmatic ideology is less in keeping with Eve's character than are the more humane pacifist beliefs. Eve herself vividly explains her feelings about her husband's way of thinking and gives reasons for opting for Efrosimov in the last act. Eve is referred to as the "progenitress." By adapting Eve's original role in the story of creation, it is likely that the playwright foresees the seeds of possible failure of harsh and constricting policies and he offers us a conceivable alternative through the modern Eve.

It seems that initially Eve was impressed by Efrosimov's appearance:

> . . . Efrosimov is thin and clean shaven. He has a foggy look in his eyes and in the fog there are little candles. He is dressed in a magnificent suit so that it is immediately apparent that he took an official trip abroad recently and his irreproachable linen shows that he is a bachelor and that he never dressed by himself, but with the help of some old woman who is certain that Efrosimov is a demigod and not a human being.[9]

Perhaps Bulgakov is suggesting that the intellectual, upper-class air about the scientist evoked a certain nostalgia for old values in Eve--a nostalgia which he, Bulgakov, often experienced. Interestingly, Efrosimov denies that he is a bourgeois.

Efrosimov's knowledge as well as his unusual ways fascinate Eve. She refers to him as a 'genius' and a 'prophet'. She comes to idolize this man who appears to possess divine powers, even though the male characters in the play show little or no appreciation of the scientist. Sometimes Eve's fascination is intermingled with fear as she listens to Efrosimov's pessimistic tirades. Eve is frightened at the grim substance of what Efrisomov is saying rather than being afraid of Efrosimov himself. The scientist seems to feel that Eve is a special person and he wishes to save her from destruction. Efrosimov calls Eve a "progenitress" and makes the following recommendations to her: "Into the earth! Down

below! To the nether regions . . . Dig an underground town and flee down below."[10]

These words once again reflect Bulgakov's pessimism. The picture created by these short sentences is that of death. It is possible that at the height of his dark feelings concerning the fate of society, Bulgakov vividly saw death as the ultimate goal. It is rather paradoxical that the playwright sees the 'underworld' as a salvation from destruction.

Efrosimov exhibits a pronounced absent-mindedness to the point of forgetting everyday words such as voda (water) and the word for children, deti. He even forgets his own name. He displays very strong emotions such as an exaggerated concern for his dog. However, despite his eccentric behaviour, Eve tells Adam that she considers Efrosimov to be "completely normal."

Absent-mindedness is a trait which may characterize a professor who is very involved in his work and this requires no explanation. The anxiety which Efrosimov expresses concerning his dog is worth exploring. The scientist-pacifist is worried about the future of humanity. He foresees a devastating war. In the midst of wrestling with this impending disaster, Efrosimov's concern for his dog seems out of place. The intensity of the scientist's feelings for his

pet seems out of proportion unless one stops to realize that the dog synthesizes everything that is important to Efrosimov. Without his dog the scientist feels that he is "completely alone." In the final act Efrosimov tells us that he could see his dog as he stared into the fire. This, he explains in a melancholy manner, makes him feel that he is the most unfortunate of all the survivors because he has suffered the greatest loss. When it came to deciding whether to save the dog or Professor Buslov, the scientist found himself in a moment of turmoil. Eve recognized that he was having nevrastenia (neurasthenia) which may also be called ambivalent feelings. At the end of the play Eve replaces the lost dog with a wounded rooster, thus catering to the scientist's need to look after a living being while simultaneously being concerned with other issues.

The reader may also interpret the verbal introduction of the dog as an opportunity for Bulgakov to express his own complex attitude towards 'men of action'. Generally, the playwright presents the scientist in a favourable light. Efrosimov is the positive hero of Adam and Eve. Nevertheless, Bulgakov's intellectual relativism would not allow him to accept the pacifist-scientist without criticism. From Bulgakov's iconoclastic point of view even the position

represented by the character of Efrosimov has its shortcomings, requiring exposure. Efrosimov's sentimental attachment to his dog, in the context of widespread human destruction, points to the naive and occasionally confused sense of social priorities exhibited by the pacifist.

Another aspect of the relationship between Eve and Efrosimov resides in their complementary nature. The scientist is often slightly at a loss when it comes to everyday living. Efrosimov's eccentricity prevents him from leading a normal life. Only at the end of the play does he have a moment of insight: "Perhaps I do not know how to live."[11] On a variety of occasions Eve shows a willingness to help him. She is able to cope with everyday life more than he is. The following are some examples of the way Eve complements the scientist.

When Efrosimov becomes upset emotionally about the loss of his dog, he turns to Eve. She tries to calm him. In attempting to be understanding, she suggests that he marry. In this instance marriage suggests the union of two similar or complementary forces. However, Efrosimov is unable to accept Eve's advice at this point since he feels alone in his way of thinking and doubts that anyone can help him. He complains that he is frightened when Daragan accuses him of

not giving his invention to the Soviet Union on time. At this point Eve steps in like a protective mother. She says: "You frightened him." In Act III Eve helps Efrosimov to decide to let Daragan fly. At the end of the same act, in desperation, Eve proves that she is prepared to sacrifice her life to protect the man whom she finds "charming." Through Eve's readiness to be by Efrosimov's side when he needs her, Bulgakov seems to suggest that her presence is essential for him to function well.

In considering Eve herself, the reader will notice a change in her attitude in the latter part of the play. This change is characterized by a more pronounced attitude towards what is taking place in her surroundings. Initially, Eve seems to be passive, showing no resistance to what is happening around her. When she finds herself alone in a department store after the disaster, Eve tells the playgoers what type of a person she considers herself to be. She refers to herself as a 'weak' and 'cowardly' woman. As she grows depressed she pessimistically speaks of "death flying over the earth in shreds, sometimes screaming in unknown languages, sometimes sounding like music."[12] In her mind's eye, Eve sees people fighting all over the globe.

A recurring dream marks the beginning of a transition

period in Eve. She dreams that a black horse with a black mane is taking her out of the forest. In reality she feels frustrated and depressed among the men she is with--the horse in her dream represents salvation to her. Like Zoika did, Eve blames the unfortunate fates for her misery.

At the end of the third act, one has the distinct impression that Eve's outlook on life is not the same: it seems that she has been affected by the political debates around her. She suddenly begins to have hallucinations. This may be seen as a way for the playwright to show that the character is trying to escape reality. On the other hand, this may also be interpreted as a means for the author to convey a message. In this case Bulgakov is showing how a woman is affected by politics. In her desperation Eve calls out:

> You are a phantom!
> . . .
> An apparition, you are all like that. I am sitting here and I begin to understand that the forest and singing of the birds--all this is real--but you with your frenzied cries are unreal.[13]

Like the other women in Bulgakov's plays, Eve was not inclined to participate in the politics around her, but would at times express her negative feelings towards the political situation she found herself in. By the "frenzied cries" referred to above, Bulgakov undoubtedly means the strong political state-

ments which the men around Eve are constantly making. Eve prefers to disregard what these men say or treat them and their words as fantasy. At this point Eve opts for solace through nature.

In the last act, Eve finally is able to express her feelings towards Adam and she explains her reasons for turning to Efrosimov. Bulgakov openly has Eve criticize her husband the Communist, "the man with the stone jaw." The catastrophe exposed his real personality to her. He proved to be an organizer, a man who is always talking about war, gas, the plague, human material, and building a town. Eve has reached the point where she can openly reject all these values and show her affinity with Efrosimov the pacifist. In her own words:

> . . . I hate war . . . It seems that we are completely alike, we are one soul cut in half and just think I defended your life.[14]

Now Eve feels that she has proved herself to Efrosimov. She has completed her transition from Adam to the pacifist.

One of Eve's closing observations in the play is directed at Daragan. It shows an appreciation of the existing situation on her part and, at the same time, it is a request to be allowed to go free. In this remark and subsequent plea, the reader will recognize Bulgakov's ambivalent

feelings. He appreciates and recognizes the Soviet system of government, but ideally he would like to be permitted to remain free.

NOTES

[1]Bulgakov, "Adam and Eve," translated by E. Proffer, Russian Literature Triquarterly no. 1 (Fall, 1971), translator's preface, p. 163.

[2]Ibid.

[3]One version is the translation cited above. The other appears in P'esy (Paris: YMCA Press, 1971).

[4]Yves Hamant, "Bibliographie de Mihail Bulgakov," Cahiers du monde russe et sovietique 11 (1970), 344.

[5]In M. A. Bulgakov, "Adam and Eve," op. cit., this theme is suggested by E. Proffer when she writes: ". . . the play states but does not solve basic ethical questions about the uses of science and the uses of violence," p. 163.

[6]Adam and Eve, p. 10. (All quotes given in this study are translated into English from the Parisian publication of the play.)

[7]Ibid., p. 50.

[8]Bulgakov, "Adam and Eve," op. cit., p. 163, preface.

[9]Adam and Eve, p. 9.

[10]Ibid., p. 17.

[11]Ibid., p. 71.

[12]Ibid., p. 34.

[13]Ibid., p. 59.

[14]Ibid., p. 71.

CONCLUSION

In our introductory chapter several criteria were established for the purpose of judging whether or not Bulgakov presented his women characters in a realistic and sensitive manner. In the body of the work these criteria were applied to the contemporary female character creations in Bulgakov's initial cycle of major plays in order to answer the question posed. In addition, a second important question was asked: To what degree was Bulgakov's own skepticism and ambivalence towards the Soviet regime and towards Communism reflected in different ways through his female creations? In the following "Conclusion" the findings of our research will be summarized.

Are Bulgakov's female characters hospitable? Are they concerned about others? On the basis of our survey and analysis the answer must be generally positive. Yelena, in The Days of the Turbins, is the classical housewife and hostess. Not only does she welcome a continuous stream of visitors, offering them refreshments and making them feel at home, but she also expresses genuine concern for their safety and well-being. On several occasions she explicitly expresses worry about her brothers and friends.

In Flight, Serafima and Lius'ka are not shown in their homes and therefore are unable to extend hospitality to others, but they do visibly indicate that they care about those who find themselves in a predicament similar to their own. In one particular instance, Lius'ka dreads to have Charnota leave on a dangerous mission to the Carp Ravine without her. Later, she goes to the extreme of prostituting herself in order to earn money for her group of expatriate friends in Constantinople. In the seventh 'dream' she uses deceit to ensure that a large sum of money is sent to the destitute Serafima. Serafima is generally ill throughout much of the play; however, when her health improves she is shown nursing a sick man, Khludov, who at one time was cruel to Serafima. Nevertheless, when her help is needed she does not let the past prevent her from offering it.

In Zoika's Apartment, Zoika does not appear to be much of a hostess. She is too hardened to her world and is concerned mainly about herself and her enterprise. She does not noticeably show sympathy to the men with whom she comes in contact. On the other hand, she does show some understanding for the women around her. For example, Maniushka and Alla are sensitively treated by Zoika under the circumstances.

The fickle and arrogant Lady of The Crimson Island selectively extends her hospitality as she sees fit. Meanwhile, her maid Betsi bears the brunt of Lady's snobbishness. Lady shows no consideration for others. Her personal interests do not allow her to develop outside of selfishness. In the epilogue both women show concern for Dymogatsky.

Early in Adam and Eve, Eve is shown warmly greeting Adam's friends. After the catastrophe, however, she is no longer in a position to entertain since most of the population of Leningrad has been killed off. Despite her unusual and strange situation, she shows considerable concern for the small band of survivors, particularly for Daragan and Efrosimov, and even for the reprehensible Markizov.

The female characters who extend themselves expect to receive appreciation and comfort in return. In The Days of the Turbins, for example, Yelena turns to the male characters for moral support and reassurances on several occasions. In Flight, Serafima depends on Golubkov to help when she is unable to continue because of illness. She and Lius'ka are both shown fleeing to Khludov for protection.

Lius'ka as well as Zoika are portrayed as independent women and fairly self-sufficient individuals. They seem reluctant to turn to anyone for comfort or help. Lady is not

presented as being in any way under stress or strain, and consequently does not need the help of anyone else. Betsi, however, desperately seeks comfort from Tohonga after she is fired by her mistress.

At the beginning of Adam and Eve, Eve turns nervously to Adam when she is frightened. Towards the end of the play she receives moral comfort from Efrosimov. The course of the play shows her transfer of dependence from the one to the other. It would seem that those women who are presented in less than tragic situations are generally less inclined to solicit help from or extend comfort and consolation to others.

Bulgakov's female characters are generally shown to be flexible. They also exhibit strength and courage when necessary. Yelena is frightened by all the political activity around her and she is beside herself with grief over the loss of her brother. Nevertheless, after that great shock she adapts herself to the new situation. A few months later, at Christmas time, she is shown peacefully decorating the tree and approximating a normal state of affairs.

Serafima and Lius'ka have a very difficult life in exile but they learn to live with their hardships. On several occasions they are portrayed as being brave and resourceful after the men could no longer bear the strain. Bulgakov

wanted us to believe that the tough Zoika had adapted herself to the new way of life before her introduction to the reader. One would hesitate to call her courageous, but she is certainly of a stoical nature, especially in comparison with the cunning male figures in the play. Ametistov is constantly sliding away from danger; Obolianinov is a helpless pawn of fate; and Goose fattens himself cleverly at Zoika's expense. Supposedly corrupt, it is Zoika who is being 'had' by the surrounding male characters, yet she is the only one among them who approaches 'judgment' with at least a shred of dignity.

In The Crimson Island, Lady and Betsi do not appear as Soviet women in the inner play (Dymogatsky's play), but in the outer one they offer the reader an idea of the type of life Soviet actresses lead. Their life under the Soviet regime probably does not vary substantially from the life which they led under the old government, but there is an added element of intrigue involved: Will the play for which they are rehearsing be approved for production by the censor?

In Eve, of Adam and Eve, we may denote a definite change of attitude in the course of the play. At first she appears to be petrified as she realizes that the world is disintegrating around her, but she does adapt herself to the new

milieu. On occasion she even displays courage by reassuring or standing up to the men.

Regardless of the genre, the women created by Bulgakov in his first cycle of plays are far less politically oriented than their male counterparts. They prefer to concern themselves with daily chores and needs. Yelena is vicariously exposed to all the civil strife around her; Lius'ka and Serafima are immersed in the terror of the Civil War. These women are all visibly affected by the unrest of their environment, but their reactions are distinctly not political ones. Bulgakov shows that daily routine matters, personal affairs and romantic involvements occupy their minds and their days. Their thoughts are not tuned to political matters. These they are prepared to leave to the male characters.

Bulgakov is sensitive to the fact that a woman's mind cannot and does not respond to political changes in the same way in which a man's mind does. On the other hand, all the major female characters make some mention of food or drink in the course of the plays. Most of them occasionally speak of the fulfillment of such physical needs as sleep. The men, however, are not shown to be bothered with such 'trivia'. The portrayal of women in this way should not be construed as overly patronizing on Bulgakov's part. It is evident

that for Bulgakov politics were not a glorious thing and, in fact, they often imposed on the essential integrity and dignity of everyday life. From this perspective, women may be seen as somewhat more important than would appear at first glance because they generally do not let politics override essentials.

Romance also duly appears in Bulgakov's drama. The classic triangle is presented in both The Days of the Turbins and in Adam and Eve. There are also romantic scenes shown in differing degrees of visibility in the other plays. On balance, the women of these affairs are portrayed in an understanding way, without an excess of the 'mindless female' stereotype or the 'new equality' of Soviet realism.

The women in Bulgakov's lighter plays generally have the same tendencies as the women in the tragedies. In other words, they are all apolitical and oriented to daily and personal needs and interests. Zoika, for example, accepts the new society in the light of what it can do for her and her enterprise. Lady is particularly selfish and narrowminded: her goal is self-gratification, expressed in terms of romance and adventure. Betsi is worried about her own security and safety. When Tohonga takes her off to the Crimson Island she feels very alienated from the political turmoil which she

finds there. Here, Bulgakov seems to be saying that this type of situation is not in keeping with Betsi's character. In the outer play it is the male protagonists and not the females who strive to humour and appease the censor. It is the men who are more directly involved in the politics of negotiations and diplomacy. The role of the women seems to be restricted to the soothing of male emotions where necessary.

Eve, like Yelena, is the only woman in a group of political men. She, like the women in the other plays under examination, displays no political interest but concentrates on daily concerns: preparing meals and fostering her romantic inclinations. The women in general seem to offer a distinct contrast to the politically concerned men, thus reminding the reader that there is more to the outer political and dogmatic façade presented by most Soviet playwrights than propaganda would have people believe.

A cursory reading may miss the importance of the dialogue of Bulgakov's contemporary women characters. An examination of what they say, in this study, has shown that they are portrayed as being sensitive individuals. Although they all differ from each other in their interests and preoccupations, they all seem to add a personal dimension to Bulgakov's drama. In brief, the women characters depicted in Bulgakov's first

cycle of plays show some sensitivity and warmth in a politically controlled society, and their author appears to be very aware of the psychological differences which exist between men and women.

It is appropriate that Bulgakov should have used female characters to express some of his own skepticism and ambivalent feelings towards the new Soviet regime, since the Revolution did not, indeed could not possibly have kept its promise of full equality and social participation to women. The Russian Revolution defied the principles of the dialectical process laid down by Karl Marx. It was essentially imposed from above by a dissident group of intellectuals (like Lenin and Trotsky) on a rural, primitive and illiterate population. All the glorious intentions of Marxist idealism could not change the stereotypes, prejudices, and practices of the peasantry regarding the role of women in society. If the idealistic new rulers of Russia had faith in the innate 'goodness' of the people and in their ideology, Bulgakov the iconoclast did not. He was quick to see that good intentions are inadequate and often result in unexpectedly unpleasant consequences. It is this idea which is part of the core of his drama and which directs his portrayal of and usage of the female character in

his plays. Women were an ideal vehicle for the expression of his skepticism and ambivalent feelings towards the program of the new regime.

Yelena is shown to be very worried about political turmoil. She dreads the disintegration of the values and lifestyle of the intelligentsia and its replacement with a new form. Although the men fight this imposition for similar reasons, Yelena is generally able to express herself more freely and with greater verbal skill. She is, after all, a woman and therefore less restricted in the expression of her fears and anxieties concerning the changing political reality. She also tells of her ominous dream, further echoing her pessimism. Her ambivalent attitude towards Shervinsky seems to reflect the unstable political climate. In other words, the outcome of the relationship of Yelena and Shervinsky is undecided, just as the nature of the new regime remains to be known.

The degrading circumstances in which Serafima and Lius'ka are forced to live, in Flight, indicate the playwright's cynical attitudes. Bulgakov deplores the conditions which result from strict adherence to dogma and ideology. The progressively greater and greater dissatisfaction of the female characters tends to mirror Bulgakov's skepticism in

the revolutionary process. The final act of these two women, seen as a whole, points to the dramatist's own vacillating feelings towards the Communist government. At the end of the play Serafima returns to the USSR and Lius'ka emigrates to France. Bulgakov's sympathies lie with both of these women. The two choices, emigration or remaining, echo the playwright's own dilemma.

Through Zoika, Bulgakov found a way of criticizing some of the undesirable aspects of Soviet society. In a way, Zoika expresses his skepticism with regard to the 'success' of Soviet policy, in this case, economic policy. She points to the corruption around her, as well as being involved in it herself. Bulgakov disguises his criticism under a veil of light satire; his feelings towards Zoika and other personages involved seem to be rather ambivalent. They are not all bad, but simply struggling to survive in a corrupt society.

Bulgakov may have wanted us to believe that Zoika was initially a skeptical individual. However, as we see her in the play, what may have been at one time a skeptical attitude has turned into cynicism. She has withdrawn from society and is found primarily concerned with herself. Bulgakov seems to suggest that this is what the new society has done for her.

Bulgakov's skepticism is inherent in the satirical presentation of The Crimson Island where the playwright

ridicules the criteria used in censorship. The presence of Lady and Betsi allows him to satirize foreign culture. Even in the parody of khaltura (potboilers), in the form of propagandistic literature, Bulgakov uses a woman, Betsi, to allegorically represent a person under the tyranny of stringent authority. In other words, the women in The Crimson Island are instrumental in helping the playwright achieve his goal.

Eve, in Adam and Eve, journeys through the playwright's iconoclastic stand from dogma and ideology to the other extreme--pacifism. Through her dialogue as well as through her major action of shifting from the ideological Adam to the pacifist, Efrosimov, she indicates the shift of Bulgakov's world view. In Adam and Eve, Bulgakov expresses literary skepticism towards dogma in the depiction of stubborn ideologues face to face with a pacifist. Eve shows a transition from one to the other.

Over the course of Bulgakov's first cycle of plays one may denote distinct changes in the playwright's attitudes. His mood generally shifts from bitter skepticism towards the new regime, as shown in his tragedies, to biting satire which can be detected in Zoika's Apartment and The Crimson Island, to what seems to be a synthesis in pacifism, which is shown

in Adam and Eve. Underlying these three clearly discernible moods is Bulgakov's strong feeling of ambivalence towards the new situation. As has been shown, the realistic and sensitive depiction of female characters has, in part, contributed to expressing the negative feelings of the author.

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