

Fallen and Changed: Tracing the Biblical-Mythological Origins of Mikhail
Bulgakov's Azazello and Korov'ev

by

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Abstract

In his analysis of Mikhail Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita*, Elliot Mason explores the biblical and mythological ancestry of two of the novel's most under-studied demonic characters: Azazello and Korov'ev-Fagot. Both characters, it is argued, serve important thematic roles within *The Master and Margarita*, acting as symbols of the oppressed artist, creativity and judgement. Azazello and Korov'ev-Fagot are integral to an eschatological reading of the text, with Korov'ev in particular suggesting new areas of Faustian influence within *The Master and Margarita*.

Azazello's relevance to the novel is discussed in terms of his relationship with another of Bulgakov's characters: the demon Abaddon. Through an examination of the biblical, literary and mythological development of the myth of the Azazel-figure throughout history, Mason argues a thematic, and perhaps even more tangible, connection between the two characters. In the context of Bulgakov's novel, it is argued, Azazello and Abaddon are interrelated, and it is this relationship that sheds new light on the thematic importance of either character to *The Master and Margarita*. An examination of older, non-canonical biblical texts allows the connection between Azazel and Abaddon to be explored and applied to Bulgakov's novel. It is argued that Bulgakov himself, upon reading the texts studied, came to many of the same conclusions, and that these conclusions resulted in the connectedness of Azazello and Abaddon within *The Master and Margarita*.

The second chapter of Mason's study is devoted to tracing the heritage of the character, Kovo'ev-Fagot. A number of references and clues within *The Master and Margarita* are suggestive of the fact that Bulgakov had a particular literary, mythological

or contemporary figure in mind when he created the character. Despite these references, Bulgakovian scholars have so far been unable to identify precisely whom Bulgakov was drawing on as inspiration for Korov'ev. Using the information provided by *The Master and Margarita*, Westenra argues for a reading of Korov'ev-Fagot as the biblical, mythological sea-beast, Leviathan. He further links the character with Mephistopheles, finding a connection between Leviathan and Mephistopheles in a lesser-known version of the Faust legend, which replaces the name of one with the other. An overview of Leviathan's eschatological and thematic functions, as well as his relationship with Egyptian and Norse chaos serpents, is used in order to provide the demonological background of the figure to a potentially non-specialist audience. The themes explored in this section of the argument are then applied to *The Master and Margarita* itself, in order to better understand the intended role of Korov'ev-Fagot to Bulgakov's work.

The identification of Korov'ev-Fagot with Leviathan and Mephistopheles, as well as that of Azazello with Abaddon, serves as a foundation of information, compiled in order that future interpretations may hopefully draw from it.

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Dedication

For Bastet, Smudge, Loki and Grumbles.

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Introduction

Tsvetan Todorov, in his book, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, defines fantasy as “that hesitation experienced by a person who knows only the laws of nature, confronting an apparently supernatural event” (Todorov 25). Applied to the complex demonology of Mikhail Bulgakov’s 1940 novel, *The Master and Margarita*, Todorov’s definition certainly describes the sense of indecision and confusion that arises when presented with Bulgakov’s devils: Voland, Azazello, Korov’ev-Fagot, Behemoth, and Hella. The question of who exactly these figures are, what they represent, and from which literary and religious traditions they spring has long been on the tip of the tongue of Bulgakov’s readers. On one occasion in 1939, Bulgakov’s friends were encouraged by the author to speculate upon the significance of Voland and his troupe of hooligans. As prominent Bulgakovian scholar Andrew Barratt points out, despite the numerous theories presented by each of Bulgakov’s friends, not to mention the assertion by Elena Bulgakova herself that she had correctly identified Voland as Satan, the true answer remains obscure (Barratt 140-41). George Krugovoy sees the novel as a gnostic text, drawing from the idea (rooted in Zoroastrianism) that good and evil are two co-equal forces. For Krugovoy and Barratt, Voland and his fellow devils are no simple creatures of darkness; instead they function as divine representatives, journeying to Earth in order to reveal important truths to the human protagonists (Barratt 171-2; Krugovoy 78). At the same time, Sternbock-Fermor places the emphasis on the Goethean influence, identifying the characters of *The Master and Margarita* with the main players in *Faust*. Undoubtedly, the reality of Bulgakov’s inspiration and symbolism is more complex than any one reading or theory could hope to address. It is the goal of this study, then, to try

and make sense of the tangled kaleidoscope of Bulgakov's demons, taking into consideration the various themes and influences at play within the novel. In particular, my investigation hopes to shed light on two of the *The Master and Margarita's* more enigmatic demonic characters: Azazello and Korov'ev-Fagot. While Bulgakov's devil-in-chief, Voland, has been well-researched and puzzled over, in-depth investigations into the symbolism of, and inspiration for, Azazello and Korov'ev have yet to be attempted. By tracing the mythological and biblical heritage of both of these characters, I will contextualize their presence in *The Master and Margarita*, further cementing their significance within apocalyptic and Faustian readings of the work.

To begin with, it is necessary to define a few of the terms that will prove important to this study, and to establish certain facts concerning Bulgakov and his sources. Since my interpretation of *The Master and Margarita* relies heavily on primary sources outside of the novel itself, a section of each chapter will be devoted to explaining and examining the development of those sources outside of their relationship to Bulgakov's writing. A large portion of these sources are biblical in nature, with the majority of them coming from an apocryphal, apocalyptic tradition.

What do We Mean by Apocalypse?: A Revelation of Revelation

The word *apocalypse* comes from the Greek, *apokalypsis*, which means *revelation* (Collins 3). It is suggestive of the uncovering of something previously hidden or obscured. Apocalyptic literature, then, in its most basic sense, is literature that illuminates or makes clear—literature that tells us something new. Such a broad

definition of the term would arguably encompass all world literature, yet we have a seemingly distinct view, within our culture, of what we consider apocalyptic and what we do not. Within the field of religious studies, a canonical definition of apocalyptic literature remains evasive, but we can discern from the various attempts at constructing one that there are certain features of apocalypses that are universally true (or, at least, likely). In a piece of apocalyptic writing, we can expect the text to follow a narrative story, which involves a human character being exposed to previously unknown or hidden truths. These truths are imparted by a supernatural or spiritual entity of some description and take the form of a revelation of an ultimate salvation that will take place sometime in the future. Throughout the course of the narrative, the human will be taken or led through a world other than our own—a supernatural realm or another plane of existence (in many cases, Heaven, Hell, or both). The emphasis on the workings of the supernatural world and its denizens shifts in each piece of writing; sometimes it is greater, and at others it is supplanted in importance by the historical, temporal revelation of eschatological prophecy (Collins 9-10).

What is important to note, in this case, is not what is present within this definition of apocalyptic literature, but what is strikingly absent. While it remains the case that a revelation of things to come is a part of apocalyptic literature, it is nowhere stated that this needs be the cataclysmic, earth-shattering event that we have come to expect. It is here where it becomes important to distinguish between what is meant by apocalyptic literature and what is meant by that literature's eschatological elements.

Eschatology, as a field, consists of the study of “last things,” or, more popularly put, the end of the world and the last judgement—a kind of meeting with destiny. While

most apocalyptic texts contain eschatological prophecies, not all of them do, and furthermore, those that deal with the end times do not necessarily focus on them. A clear difference exists, then, between what we mean when we say, “the apocalypse is imminent,” and what is signified when we talk about apocalypse as a genre (Collins 10-12)¹.

For the purposes of this study, apocalyptic literature will be taken to mean those works that subscribe to the definition given three paragraphs above. When one or more of these texts is looked at from an eschatological perspective, this will be indicated. Traditionally, and certainly within the realm of religious studies, apocalyptic literature refers to primary sources stemming from one or another religious tradition, and which purport to be based in divine truth. This definition will be extended to include literary works such as *The Master and Margarita*, which contains all of the same themes and ideas present within our current definition of the genre of apocalyptic literature (another well-known example is Dante’s *The Divine Comedy*).

I will argue, in my study, that Bulgakov made use of a number of different apocalyptic texts as inspiration for his characters, themes, and story. Many of these apocalypses are apocryphal, or non-canonical. Although *The Master and Margarita* is littered with references to traditional, Christian and Jewish scriptures, it will become apparent through my investigation that he was also familiar with lesser known texts that exist on the fringes of Judaeo-Christian belief. As Bruce A. Beatie and Phyllis W. Powell point out in their analysis of prominent symbols present in *The Master and Margarita*,

¹ It should be mentioned that, given this distinction, it is possible for a text to fall under the heading of “eschatological literature,” without being considered apocalyptic. The body of literature that contains eschatology as a prominent theme is referred to as the *eschaton*.

Bulgakov's novel makes many references to apocryphal texts, and it is even possible that such writings provided more material for him than did canonical scripture (Beatie 235).

We do not know very much about Bulgakov's specific sources, but there are a few texts that scholars have identified that Bulgakov was definitely familiar with, and which he used in connection with his work on *The Master and Margarita*. Of these, two are particularly relevant to my study of the novel: *The Brockhaus-Efron Encyclopaedia* and M.A. Orlov's *A History of Man's Relationship with the Devil* (Curtis, *Last Decade* 171).² Evidence from these two sources will be used to support my claims as to the origins, meaning and symbolism of Azazello and Korov'ev-Fagot.

² For more on the history of the development of the novel, as well as Bulgakov's notes and sources, see M. Chudakova's article, "The Master and Margarita: The Development of a Novel."

Chapter 1: Out of the Bottomless Pit: Azazello's Biblical-Mythological Origins

Demons, devils and fallen angels have been the subject of countless works of fiction and non-fiction. We know them as possessors from films such as *The Exorcist*, as pitiable and admirable heroes as in the classical world of *Paradise Lost*, and as unexplainable, repulsive monsters like those found in the works of H. P. Lovecraft. This multifaceted pantheon that is the modern demonic was not always so diverse and has developed over the centuries as our views on demons and religion have shifted and broadened. The romantic portrait of Lucifer painted by Milton in his epic poem is hardly in keeping with the medieval concept of Satan, complete with winged backside and forked tongue. Likewise might Milton have found our modern horror film demons trite and grotesque. What, in this case, has caused these changing views? And perhaps more importantly, what do they tell us about our culture as it has developed over time? These questions are not easily answered, and especially when taking into account the differences in folklore and tradition that vary over geographical space and ethnic identity. Rather than seeking to explain the diverse and complicated reasons behind changing views regarding *all* demons over *all* cultures, this chapter seeks to explore the development of one particular demon within the literary traditions of a particular culture, finishing with an investigation into that demon's symbolism within Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita*. Through investigating the appearance of the Semitic demon Azazel in non-canonical Slavic scripture, as well as in Bulgakov's novel, I hope to gain some insight into the relevance that a demonic entity, hero or villain, can have within a nation's literary corpus.

The question of the choice of Azazel, specifically, is an important one, for certainly he is not as well known as Lucifer,³ Samael⁴ or even Beelzebub,⁵ and he is most definitely not the only demon who makes himself known in the works of Russian authors. In fact, it is Azazel's relative obscurity that makes his presence in Russian literature so remarkable and worthy of attention. Though famed within the small world of demonology, the average person on the street is unlikely to recognize his proverbial mugshot amidst a line-up of names, though one would probably not be too surprised if a passerby were to recognize Satan, or one of that demon's other popular aliases. Although Azazel does appear in the literatures of other cultures, nowhere, save for in our contemporary world of horror films, comics and video-games, does he figure as prominently as he does in the Russian literary arts. That his presence in such works is always thematically relevant is further evidence that there is something about this demon in particular that resonates within the Russian literary consciousness. This chapter seeks to examine that thematic relevance, and trace its development through Azazel's varied appearances in Russian works, focusing, of course, on *The Master and Margarita*. To begin with, the figure must needs be placed in context, and so a brief explanation will prelude sections devoted to Azazel's presence within specific literary works. The earliest work to be considered in depth will be 2 Enoch, or The Book of the Secrets of Enoch (fourth century, C.E.), whose survival in Slavonic makes it immediately relevant to any

³ A commonly accepted name for the Devil. It originates from Isaiah 14.12, where it refers to Nebuchadnezzar. Later, Christian thinkers such as St. Jerome and Origen identified Lucifer with Satan. Perhaps most famously, Lucifer is the name given to the Devil in Milton's *Paradise Lost* (Davidson 176).

⁴ In a modern context, the name Samael is often applied to Satan, though the figure's history in literature, legend and scripture is decidedly more complex (Davidson 255).

⁵ The Lord of the Flies. Beelzebub is typically considered a separate entity from Satan, though he is still a powerful demon within Hell's hierarchy. His origins can be traced back to pagan deities such as the Phoenician god, Baal Zebub (Davidson 72; Paine 39).

discussion involving a Russian, or Slavic, tradition concerning Azazel (Barnstone 495; Nickelsburg vii).

So Who is this Azazel Fellow, Anyway?

The earliest reference that we have to Azazel occurs in the Bible itself and can be found in Leviticus 16.7:

He[Aaron] shall take the two goats and set them before the LORD at the entrance of the tent of meeting; and Aaron shall cast lots on the two goats, one lot for the LORD and the other lot for Azazel. Aaron shall present the goat on which the lot fell for the LORD, and offer it as a sin offering; but the Goat on which the lot fell for Azazel shall be presented alive before the LORD to make atonement over it, that it may be sent away into the wilderness to Azazel.

The passage concerns what appears to be a sacrificial ritual, in which two goats are offered to two separate entities: God and someone/thing called Azazel. But why would a monotheistic religion like Judaism or Christianity feel it necessary to make an offering to a demonic being? Is this, in fact, some form of dualism? The ritual is never mentioned again in the Bible, and etymologically the origins of the name Azazel are suggestive of a connection with the words for “rugged and severe,”⁶ which serves merely to further connect him with the desolate, rocky landscape of the wilderness the goat would have been sent into. (Forsyth, *Old Enemy* 178).

The general consensus amongst demonologists and historians is that the passage relates to leftovers from a pagan, Semitic past (Kluger 42; Paine 78-9; Russell, *The Devil* 188). Azazel’s desert abode has led some to connect him with a group of Semitic desert

⁶ Azazel is also sometimes translated as, “God strengthens,” or “God has made.” (Forsyth, *Old Enemy* 177).

demons known as the Se'irim,⁷ while still others postulate that he developed from an ancient Semitic goat deity, who would have presided over the flocks (Langton 44-46). Many other pagan gods were transformed into malicious figures in order for monotheistic religions to explain their previous beliefs. It is not difficult to recognize elements of the goat-god, Pan, in the depictions of horned, cloven hoofed demons that pervaded in the Middle Ages. Such transformations are far from uncommon, and the scattered biblical references to a number of demonic figures, and even angels, invoke memories of a polytheistic past. Indeed, St. Augustine of Hippo explains, in his *City of God*, that pagan gods are really demons disguising themselves in order to lead astray the righteous:

In the five preceding Books, I have, I hope, sufficiently refuted those who think that many gods are to be venerated and worshiped. Such people hold that, in order to gain advantages for this mortal life and men's temporal affairs, the gods are to be served with an adoration which the Greeks call *latreía* and which is due to the true God alone. Christian truth makes clear that these gods are false, that they are useless idols, or unclean spirits, or dangerous demons.... (119).

Such formal refutations of pagan deities, like Mercury, Zeus and Isis, led to the systematic demonization of many entities formerly worshipped as divine, supreme beings. In the Middle Ages, for instance, we see the gradual transformation of the Germanic deity Bilwis from fertility goddess to madness-inducing demon of the moon (Petzoldt 20-1).

⁷ The Se'irim are often described as "he-goats," and tend generally to be associated with a variety of other animals as well. Animistic pagan cultures often lent this aspect of their deities to the demons that supplanted the old pantheon, and so it is quite possible that the Se'irim may also have once been worshipped as semi-benevolent beings. (Langton 39-42).

Returning to the sacrifice passage in Leviticus, what is, perhaps, central to the piece, is the idea of the scapegoat, upon whom the sins of Israel could be heaped and disposed of. Leviticus tells us that “The goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities,” (Lev. 16.22), as though Azazel needed somehow to be placated for all the sin that might have occurred within the tribe since the last offering. There is also the possibility that the Azazel-goat was not merely a sacrifice to the demon, but also a representation *of* him. This argument seems to be strengthened by the fact that it is precisely the scapegoat aspect of the Azazel story that remains consistent throughout the various accounts of the figure.

Perhaps most famously, Azazel (or Asael, as he is named in the text to be discussed), appears in 1 Enoch⁸ as one of many rebel angels who descend to Earth and mate with human females. In this story, Azazel and his fellow angels divulge to mankind a number of divine secrets, for which they are also punished.

1 Enoch was probably composed around the late fourth century B.C.E. It is not simply one text, however, but is instead composed of several works written by different authors but concerning largely similar subject matter and events (Nickelsburg 1). Although other accounts of the story of Azazel’s fall exist (The Book of Jubilees mentions the story, as do many other apocryphal writings), 1 Enoch is the most extensive variant that is available to us.

The text itself is a telling of the Noah flood myth, but with many elements that do not appear in the canonical version of the story from Genesis. In Genesis, God sends a great flood to Earth in order to wash clean the sins of mankind, who have fallen into disorder and corruption. In 1 Enoch, the same basic story applies, only now with the

⁸ Also known as the Ethiopic Book of Enoch.

blame of sinfulness divided between humans and a choir of fallen angels. These fallen angels are known by several names: Grigori, Bene Elim/Bene ha Elohim, or Watchers. The Watcher-angels did just what their name suggests, that is, they were angels whose duty it was to watch over mankind and observe or guide the humans under their care (Forsyth, *Old Enemy* 167). The two leaders of the Watchers were Asael (Azazel) and Shemihazah, and it was under their leadership that all of this went awry, “when the sons of men had multiplied...beautiful and comely daughters were born to them. And the Watchers, the sons of heaven, saw them and desired them” (1 Enoch 6.1-2). As drama demands, the Watchers married the daughters, “and they began to go in to them, and to defile themselves through them” (1 Enoch 7.1). From this union were born monstrous offspring—giants, called Nephilim, which probably derives from the verb *nafal*, ‘to fall’ (Bamberger 20). The nature of these hybrid children is debated, with most accounts describing them as cannibalistic, savage, and cruel, but a few others claiming the Nephilim to have sired, or included, such semi-divine heroes as Gilgamesh and Heracles (Forsyth, *Old Enemy* 194). Some even attribute all the great achievements of mankind to the doings of the descendants of the Nephilim (Rudwin 19). 1 Enoch, unlike some of its fellow apocalyptic texts, is quite clear on just what the children of the Watchers were like:

They were devouring the labor of all the sons of men, and men were not able to supply them. And the giants began to kill men and to devour them and they began to sin against the birds and the beasts and creeping things and the fish, and to devour one another’s flesh. And they drank the blood. Then the earth brought accusation against the lawless ones. (1 Enoch 7.3-6)

Apart from the work shortage and general carnage brought on by the children of the Watchers, the angels caused a series of further problems for the humans when they introduced to them the secrets of divine knowledge. Throughout 1 Enoch are a series of lists, describing just which skills were taught by each angel, and Azazel is no exception.⁹

Asael [Azazel] taught men to make swords of iron . . . and every instrument of war. He showed them metals of the earth and how they should work gold to fashion it suitably, and concerning silver, to fashion it for bracelets and ornaments for women and he showed them . . . antimony and eye paint and all manner of precious stones and dyes.

(1 Enoch 8.1)

The revelation of sacred workings and secrets has a long tradition in the mythic world. Reading 1 Enoch, one cannot help but be reminded of the figure of Prometheus, who, in trying to help mankind by giving to them the divine fire of Olympus, provoked Zeus's wrath. Just as Prometheus was chained to a rock as punishment for his disobedience, Azazel and his fellow angels also faced judgement for their own transgressions against the Almighty (Forsyth, *Old Enemy* 176). Seeing what the Watchers had been up to, some of their fellow angels petitioned God to intervene on behalf of the humans, whose women had been led astray and who were suffering under the abuse of the Nephilim. God then commanded the Watchers to be punished and for Azazel to be, "bound hand and foot, and cast . . . into the darkness," (10.4) which happened to be a pit called Doudael. According to Bernard J. Bamberger, in his study of fallen angels and

⁹ Since most of the individual texts that make up 1 Enoch were written by different people, the lists and names of angels change from section to section. As one of the chiefs of the angels, Azazel's role does not vary too much between accounts.

their origins, Doudael is likely a reference to a cliff called Hadudo, over which sacrifices would have been thrown (Bamberger 20). Once more, Azazel is conceptually tied to the idea of sacrifice, and furthermore, of the scapegoat.¹⁰

Though the prophet Enoch petitioned God to spare the Watchers, they were punished. Their children were killed and became evil spirits that tormented humans, and they themselves were banished from Heaven to remain beneath the Earth. The Watchers were to be bound for eternity (or at least until the end of the world) underground and tormented by fire. Much as the goat encountered in Leviticus, Azazel was heaped with the sins of Israel, or the world. When he instructs Raphael, the archangel, to bind Azazel, God says to him: “And all the earth was made desolate by the deeds of Asael, and over him write all sins” (1 Enoch 10.8). Though Azazel was not the only angel to have sinned, was not even the sole leader of the Watchers, nonetheless he is blamed wholly¹¹ for what has occurred, and so the scapegoat image from Leviticus finds an echo in 1 Enoch as well.

There exists one possible reference to this version of the flood myth in Genesis itself. Here, the name Bene Elohim appears, meaning “sons of God,” or occasionally, “sons of man.” It seems to reiterate the passage in 1 Enoch concerning the beauty of the Hebrew women and the temptation of the Watchers:

When people began to multiply on the face of the ground, and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that they were fair; and they took wives for themselves of all that they chose The Nephilim were on the earth in those

¹⁰ The name also suggests that the origin of the text and story lies somewhere in Palestine, since the name and story contain intertwining traditions of Northern and Southern Palestinian (Bamberger 20).

¹¹ Note that in some texts it is the women who often take much of the blame. Usually this shift appears in later texts, and can be attributed to an increasingly misogynistic view of religion. (Forsyth 212-14)

days—also afterward— when the sons of God went into the daughters of humans, who bore children to them. These were the heroes of old, warriors of renown. (Gen. 6.1-4)

Some theologians and scholars have disagreed with the interpretation that the Sons of God who appear in Genesis, are the fallen angels of 1 Enoch. One alternative suggestion is that the term refers instead to ordinary human men, translating “Bene Elohim” as “Sons of man,” while Rabbi Simeon b. Johai, writing in the second century, denies an angelic translation by reading the term as “Sons of the judges”(Bamberger 91). Another, perhaps more fanciful interpretation, posits that the passage refers to mankind’s extraterrestrial ancestors, who once came to Earth in order to procreate, and who might once again return from the stars (Rudwin fn 19). The Nephilim, then, would simply refer to mankind as they were originally intended: the progeny of half-alien, half-human parents.

Following this peculiar passage, which seems out of place in many ways from the surrounding text, the flood story continues as one would expect. God announces that he will cleanse Earth of mankind’s sin, Noah and his family will be spared, and so on. Never is the sinfulness of mankind connected, however, with the actions of the Sons of God, or with the Nephilim, and the names Azazel/Asael and Shemihazah do not appear anywhere in the following story.

The relationship between the figures of Azazel and Shemihazah is a curious one, for in many parts of the Enoch text the importance of one angel over the other seems to shift. Not only that, but one can see a gradual progression within 1 Enoch itself to eliminate Shemihazah completely, replacing him entirely with Azazel. At first,

Shemihazah is much more important than Azazel, and is listed as first among the leaders of the Watchers: “Shemihazah—this one was their leader . . . Asael, tenth to him” (1 Enoch 6.7). Not only is Shemihazah top dog, but Azazel comes tenth in a very long list of important angels. In contrast, just a few passages later, Azazel is suddenly listed first during the discussion of the skills taught by the angels (quoted earlier in this chapter), and the skills that he imparts are described in far more detail than those ascribed to Shemihazah (Forsyth, *Old Enemy* 175). When the archangels accuse their fellow angels of sinning, they explain to God, “You see what Asael has done, who has taught all iniquity on the earth . . . And what Shemihazah has done to whom you gave authority to rule over them who are with him” (1 Enoch 9.6-7). Although Shemihazah is still described as leader of the Watchers, it is Azazel on whom the blame seems to fall most severely, since *all* the sinfulness has seemingly been taught by him. Also, as in the list of skills, Azazel has now supplanted Shemihazah in terms of the ordering of their names. This pattern continues in much the same way throughout the first part of 1 Enoch, culminating in the aforementioned attribution of all sinfulness to Azazel himself.

Neil Forsyth, in his book *The Old Enemy: Satan and the Combat Myth*, argues that the very nature of the skills Azazel teaches to the humans, is what inevitably leads to his usurpation of Shemihazah’s role as leader. Forsyth makes a connection between Azazel’s knowledge of warfare and weaponry and the aggressive fighting that occurs between the Nephilim. He also notes that Azazel taught women the means of decorating themselves, and that this, in a circular way, makes Azazel responsible for the temptation that brought the Watchers to Earth in the first place. Since lust and violence are two of the most important elements of sinfulness in the story, and since it is Azazel, and not

Shemihazah, who encourages these vices, his importance began to grow over that of his brethren (Forsyth, *Old Enemy* 174-5). In the Apocalypse of Abraham, composed around the second century B.C.E. (Forsyth, *Old Enemy* 222-4), Azazel appears with no reference to Shemihazah. In this work, though the story of the Nephilim and temptation by mortal women is absent, Azazel is told by the angel Jaobel that because he desired to live on Earth, he will be forever incapable of returning to Heaven (Box 52). In this particular text, Azazel seems to be considered equal with God, who tells Abraham that, “As the number of the stars and their power; (so will) I make thy seed a nation and a people, set apart for me in my heritage with Azazel” (Box 65).

Just as the modern reader may feel confused upon reading this acknowledgment on the part of God, so too is Abraham upon hearing it spoken. For Rivkah Kluger, in his examination of the origins of Satan, Azazel is the figure who most closely resembles the prince of darkness within a biblical context (Kluger 42). Azazel, then, in his role as devil-in-chief, can be cast as somewhat of a Catharist¹² Satan, as he is co-equal with God. With passages such as the above-quoted, it would be difficult to argue that he is a lesser demon or angel.

To take the idea further, it seems reasonable to suggest that the Azazel and Shemihazah figures eventually amalgamated into one composite angel. As Davidson notes in his *Dictionary of Angels*, Shemihazah simply translates to, “the name Azza” (Davidson 65). As Davidson also notes, this time under the entry for “Azzael,” another

¹² Catharism was a popular heretical movement that was particularly prevalent in Southern France from the eleventh to the thirteenth century. Cathar priests (called “Perfects”) preached a modified form of Christianity, which centered around a dualist conception of religion. For the Cathars, there existed two, equally powerful gods—one evil and one good (Bell, *Many Mansions* 128-35).

variation on the name Azazel, “while Azza [Shemihazah] and Azrael [Azazel], in some sources [i.e. 1 Enoch], are referred to as 2 distinct, separate angels, they seem to be one and the same in other sources [The Alphabet of Rabbi Akiba, the Midrash Petiret Mosheh]” (Davidson 65). Later, through my examination of Bulgakov’s *The Master and Margarita*, it becomes clear that Bulgakov combines many of the different characteristics of these figures into his version of Azazel.

To conclude this section on the origins of the character, we must now take a deeper look at the nature of the pit into which he was thrown, which connects Azazel with several passages that appear in Revelation, and some lesser known, apocryphal works. As we have already seen, in 1 Enoch, Azazel is cast into the bottomless pit known as Doudael. Traditionally, the concept of Hell was one foreign to Jewish tradition. The term we now recognize most commonly as the Jewish hell, Sheol (though it could be translated as “hell,” “grave,” or “pit”), initially referred to the place where a body was laid to rest. The idea of a physical, afterlife place of punishment was likely one that developed as a result of Babylonian and Persian influence, which may have begun around the third-fourth centuries B.C.E. (Turner 41-2). Doudael, in the case of 1 Enoch, serves the same function that Sheol eventually came to represent, and in this instance is merely a synonym for the more common term. Says 1 Enoch concerning Doudael:

Then they will be led away to the fiery abyss, and to the torture, and to the prison where they will be confined forever. And everyone who is condemned and destroyed henceforth will be bound together with them until the consummation of their generation. And at the time of the judgement, which I shall judge, they will perish for all generations.

(1 Enoch 10.13-4)

Certainly the image that this excerpt evokes in the reader is one close to the fiery conception of hell that haunts modern connotations of the place. Yet another synonym for Hell/Sheol/Doudael (the one that appears in the Book of Revelation), is Abaddon¹³ (Rudwin 58).

The term “Abaddon” means “destroyer” or “destruction” (Turner 41), and appears most famously as the name of a fallen angel in Revelation. Although the name originated as just another term for Hell, it seems that the name gradually came to apply to the name of a demon, or fallen angel, who dwelled therein. In Job, Abaddon is used as another term for Hell, when the eponymous hero says, “The shades below tremble, the waters and their inhabitants. Sheol is naked before God, and Abaddon has no covering” (Job 26.5-6). Showing the development of this concept, in the Thanksgiving Psalms, a selection of poems found amongst the Dead Sea Scrolls, we have a reference to Abaddon that suggests the name belongs to a demon, while its placement along with the term Sheol, echoes its earlier origin as a place (Barnstone 255-6). Says Psalm 6: You [Lord] have released my soul from the pit, from Hell, the Sheol of Abaddon (Thanksgiving Psalms 6.1). The use of the possessive “of” to describe the relationship between Sheol and Abaddon emphasizes the shift from Abaddon *as* Sheol, to its denizen, or even guardian. Certainly, in the Book of Revelation, Abaddon’s appearance is the appearance of a terrifying and warring angel of damnation:

I saw a star¹⁴ that had fallen from heaven to earth, and he was given the key to the bottomless pit; he opened the shaft of the bottomless pit Then from the shaft

¹³ In Greek translations, the word that appears is “Apollyon,” or “Apollion” (Davidson 49).

¹⁴ Stars are often used symbolically to represent angels (Davidson 279).

came locusts on the earth . . . They have as their king over them the angel of the bottomless pit; his name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek he is called Apollyon. (Rev. 9.1-11)

It seems reasonable to suggest, knowing that Azazel was thrown with his rebelling angels into Doudael, that Abaddon and the locusts that pour out from the bottomless pit are the same figures with different names. Forsyth further identifies references to Azazel in a later passage from Revelation:

I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit, and a great chain. He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and threw him into the pit, and locked and sealed it over him, so that he would deceive the nations no more, until the thousand years were ended. (Rev. 20:1-3)

As Forsyth notes in his examination of the text, this particular passage seems to combine past, present and future, containing both prophecy and reference to earlier events. From the references to both the Devil and Satan, it is quite clear that it is not Azazel who is being trapped during this passage, and yet the references to thousand-year bondage and the bottomless pit immediately evoke the story of that fallen angel (Forsyth, *Old Enemy* 256).

Indeed, 1 Enoch all but predicts the re-appearance of Azazel, Shemihazah, and the fallen Watchers, who are bound “for seventy generations in the valleys of the earth *until the day of their judgement...until the everlasting judgement*” (1 Enoch 10.12)¹⁵. Even more of a relationship can be seen when one examines the later passages of Enoch, which

¹⁵ Italics my own.

are apocalyptic, or prophetic, in nature. Keeping in mind that both the terms “shepherds” and “stars” can refer to angels, fallen or otherwise, the following passage bears a striking resemblance to those quoted above from the Christian Book of Revelation:

‘Bring those seventy shepherds to whom I delivered the sheep and who took and killed more than I commanded them.’ And look, I saw all of them bound, and they all stood before him. And judgement was exacted first on the stars, and they were judged and found to be sinners. And they went to the place of judgement, and they threw them into an abyss . . . And those seventy shepherds were judged and found to be sinners, and they were thrown into that fiery abyss. (1 Enoch 90.22-4)

The text continues on with a brief description of the pit, and explains that not only angels, but human sinners as well, will be tossed into the inferno when the day of judgement, or atonement, arrives. Being that this apocalypse has been described following the story of the Watchers, it stands to reason that the author meant one as a reference to the other. Not only that, but its similarities to other end-time texts help to solidify the connection between the Watchers and the day of judgement. Indeed, it is likely no coincidence that the goat-ritual mentioned in Leviticus occurs on the Day of Atonement, already linking Azazel thematically with judgement and payment for sins. Furthermore, in 3 Enoch, it is suggested in the introduction that Azza, who we have already identified at Shemihazah, belongs under the leadership of Metatron as one of several angels of justice, or judgement (Davidson 65).

Keeping in mind that Azazel was punished by being cast into the bottomless pit, and also that Abaddon was originally the name of the pit, and not, in fact, the angel that

emerged from it, it makes sense that Azazel is the angel mentioned in Revelation, and that his name was abandoned in favour of the name of the place he inhabited.

The Early Days: Azazel in the Slavonic Book of Enoch

The Slavonic Book of Enoch (also known as 2 Enoch and The Book of the Secrets of Enoch), is an ancient text that survives to us through several Slavic translations of the work, the earliest of which dates to the thirteenth century.¹⁶ Frustratingly for religious studies scholars, but perhaps fortuitously for those interested in tracing the history of demons through Slavic literature, most (if not all) the mentions of the Devil and Satan appear to have been later editions by the Bulgarian scribes who copied them (Forsyth, *Old Enemy* 242-3). If this is indeed the case, then it marks one of the earliest appearances of the Devil proper in Slavic literature. More relevant to our discussion, the text also contains a number of passages concerning the Watchers.

The translation that has reached modern-day audiences was copied down in Old Church Slavonic, likely by Bogomil heretics (Forsyth, *Old Enemy* 244). The Bogomil movement likely began between 927 and 940 C.E., and is said to have been started by a monk called Bogomil, a Slavic translation of the name Theophilus. The Bogomils were both dualists and docetists,¹⁷ believing that the world was not created by one supreme being, but two equally powerful entities; one good, the other evil. This evil god was said to have created the physical world and everything physical in it (our bodies, the bodies of animals, trees, earth, cake, etc). The Bogomils reasoned, therefore, that if the physical

¹⁶ This date is still debated by a few scholars. Some maintain that the text was probably copied down as late as the fifteenth century (Forsyth, *Old Enemy* 243).

¹⁷ Docetism was a heretical Christian theology that claimed Christ had never been physically present on Earth, but that he was some kind of illusion, similar to the idea of a hologram. According to the docetists, his divine nature had made it impossible for him to exist within an imperfect, physical form, and so an illusory body had been necessary for him to appear as a man (Bell, *Cloud* 92-3).

world had been created by an evil god (who they associated with the god of the Old Testament), then all physical matter must also be evil. Eating, owning property, the Eucharist, procreating, etc, were all connected with vile, physical matter, and had to be avoided, or at least kept to a minimum¹⁸ (Bell, *Many Mansions* 125-30). The good god, on the other hand, was said to have created our souls. What is significant about the dualism of the Bogomils is that it helps us to understand why a thirteenth-century copier might add references to the Devil and Satan to the text he was copying. Perhaps the scribe wanted to emphasize the demonic aspects of the text in order to support the idea of opposing deities of good and evil. The same reasoning might easily apply to a reading of the passages of 2 Enoch that concern the Watchers. Since the sins of the Watchers were heavily connected with the physicality of sin (lustfulness, the creation of weapons, the skill of herbalism, etc), it stands to reason that for a sect who stressed the inherent evil of the material world, the severity of the acts of the Watchers would have seemed even worse, perhaps, than to the Jewish thinkers responsible for the original Enochic apocalypses.

In 2 Enoch, Enoch is brought to Heaven by messenger angels and is shown through the ten layers of God's kingdom one by one. Along the way to the top, Enoch encounters the Watchers on two separate heavenly layers: the second and the fifth.

And [they] showed me darkness, greater than earthly darkness, and there I saw prisoners hanging, guarded, waiting the great and boundless judgement, and these angels were dark-looking, more than earthly darkness, and incessantly weeping.

(Barnstone 496)

¹⁸ This Eastern heresy is more famously known by its Western counterpart, a movement that developed out of Bogomilism: Catharism (Bell, *Many Mansions* 128).

The Watchers (here referred to as the Grigori),¹⁹ explains Enoch's angelic guides, " 'did not obey God's commands, but took counsel with their own will, and turned away with their prince, who also is fastened on the fifth heaven" (Barnstone 496). Enoch experiences great pity toward the Watchers, but does not feel it is his place to appeal to God on behalf of angels, and so he continues on his way through the more pleasant layers of Heaven. At the fifth layer, however, he again meets with the rebel angels who are being held in torment. Here are kept the giants, who Enoch refers to as Grigori, but in whom we see a reflection of the Nephilim from 1 Enoch:

And I saw there [the fifth Heaven] many troops, Grigori, and their appearance was human and their size greater than that of great giants and their faces withered, and the silence of their mouths perpetual. (Barnstone 498)

Enoch questions as to why there is no service on this layer of Heaven, and his guides reply that the Grigori (Watchers), "with their prince, Satanail, rejected the lord of light . . . went down to earth . . . and saw how good are the daughters of men . . . took them as their wives and befouled the earth with their deeds, and in . . . their age were lawless and promiscuous" (Barnstone 498). Like their brethren in the second layer, the Watchers of level five are miserable in their fate, but Enoch sadly explains that he cannot help them.

What is most intriguing, perhaps, about this particular passage is that Azazel (at least in name) does not appear. The blame for the events of 1 Enoch is placed upon Satanail—a name that comes from the more general term, Satan, which we identify chiefly with the Devil himself. It seems likely here that the Bogomil copier may have

¹⁹ "Grigori" and "Watchers" are synonyms (Davidson 126-7, 311-2).

replaced the names Shemihazah and Asael with that of the more prominent, evil deity of the material world. Evidence of this is to be found when the angel guides tell Enoch that, “three of them went down to earth from the Lord’s throne” (Barnstone 498). Who are these mysterious three? In no other account of the Watcher episode do we find a reference to three main leaders. It seems the case that the original two ringleaders, Azazel and Shemihazah, have here been accompanied by the copier’s own addition: Satanail.

Though Enoch feels pity for the fallen angels, his inability to help them (also present in 1 Enoch, though to a slightly lesser degree) reflects the seriousness of their crimes in the eyes of the scholars who wrote the story down. Clearly there is some sympathy felt for their plight, though the gravity of their sin is nowhere called into question. In later texts within the Russian tradition, this trend would shift, though elements of 2 Enoch do appear to have influenced the work of later writers, as I will address in a later section.

The Germano-Russian Milton: Klopstock through Zhukovskii’s Pen

Nineteenth-century Russian poet, Vasilii Andreevich Zhukovskii (1783-1852), was famed not simply for his own writings, but also his translations from other European languages into Russian. His 1812 poem, “Abbadona,”²⁰ is a translation of the last stanza of Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock’s poem, “Messias” (Sokolov 7). Klopstock’s poem was written with John Milton’s epic poem, *Paradise Lost* (1667-74), in mind, though his eighteenth-century take on the romantic devil of Milton was not as well received as the original that he mimicked (Rudwin 13). Regardless of what others may

²⁰ Here, for the first time, we see the Russified form of the biblical name Abaddon. Similar variations on this name should be recognized as representative of the same figure.

have thought of the work, Zhukovskii certainly must have seen some worth in translating its last stanza. The poem, as Zhukovskii's modified title would suggest, concerns Abaddon and his fall from grace. In Zhukovskii, Abaddon was once a seraph (the seraphim are one of the highest choirs of angels according to most angelic hierarchies) (Davidson 267), and in true romantic fashion most of the poem serves as a lament to the loss of the character's divine position. Though Abaddon does not, in this particular interpretation, fall by lust, references are made to the pit in which he dwells, as he is banished, "Отголе на бездны,"²¹ (Zhukovskii 236) where he is tormented, not simply by fire and darkness, but by his distance from God and his fellow angels, especially his friend Abdiil, whom he mourns throughout the poem.

Though one cannot ascribe too much relevance to the appearance of the work within Russian literature (since it is, as was mentioned, a translation), its existence in the Russian translation marks it out as a text available to future Russian authors, such as Mikhail Bulgakov, who may have drawn from it, as Boris Sokolov suggests in his *Bulgakovian Encyclopedia* (Sokolov 7).

The Master Appears: Bulgakov's Contribution

Arguably the most famous and important appearance that Azazel makes in Russian literature is in Mikhail Bulgakov's (1891-1940) novel, *The Master and Margarita*. Bulgakov began brainstorming for the novel during the 1920s, but did not finish writing until just before his death²² (Proffer, *Bulgakov* 525-9). In the novel, Bulgakov tells the story of a troupe of devils, led by Satan himself (though in the novel he travels under the pseudonym, Voland), who appear in Soviet Moscow to see if human

²¹ "Thence to the pit" (translation my own).

²² Even though the novel is finished (with a definite beginning, middle and end) Bulgakov died before he was able to revise the second half, and so a few inconsistencies in the text remain (Proffer, *Bulgakov* 529).

nature really has changed under the influence of Soviet ideals. A number of amusing passages within the text prove that it has not and that human beings are, as they always have been, fundamentally greedy creatures. A second element to the novel is introduced in the form of the title's heroes: The Master and his lover, Margarita. The Master, a writer whose work is suppressed by the Soviet system, and whose troubles mirror Bulgakov's real-life frustrations under Stalin's censorship of the arts (Wright, *Life* 266-7), finds himself unable to publish his novel about Pontius Pilate. The Pilate novel itself makes up a large part of *The Master and Margarita*, and its storyline is interwoven with the conclusion of the Moscow chapters of the work. After the Master disappears (he has been arrested, it turns out, and is actually staying in a mental institution), Margarita attempts to find him, and is eventually approached by Azazello (Bulgakov's version of Azazel), who leads her to Satan's ball, where she must act as queen for the evening. In the end, Margarita is rewarded for her troubles with The Master's return, though Azazello poisons the two of them, and they are led to the afterlife by Voland and his retinue.

If one looks at the frequency with which Azazello appears in *The Master and Margarita*, one may be tempted to suggest that he is, in fact, of very little importance to the story. In her examination of the text, however, Nadine Natov calls him, "the most important of them [Voland's retinue]" (Natov 98). If he appears so (comparatively) little in the text itself, how can such importance be ascribed to him? In order to understand this, we must examine his appearance in several passages from *The Master and Margarita* itself.

Unlike the demons Behemoth and Korov'ev (two of the more prominent members of Voland's troupe), Azazello does not have his own chapters and at first only

appears in order to frighten or cajole humans into doing what Voland wants them to. It is during one of these episodes, in which Azazello and Behemoth are tormenting the theatre manager Varenuhka, that we are given the following physical description of Azazello:

. . . . маленький, но с атлетическими плечами, рыжий как огонь, один глаз с бельмом, рот с клыком. Этот второй, будучи, очевидно, левшой . . .

(Bulgakov 258; ch.10).

. . . he was short and had fiery red hair, the shoulders of an athlete, a walleye, and a fang. This second fellow, apparently a lefty . . . (Burgin 93).

Many of the qualities that Azazello possesses are traditionally associated with demons, and so should come as no surprise. The fang, left-handedness and physical strength are all typical features of literary and folkloric demons. On the other hand, although demons have often been portrayed in the past with frightening or strange-looking eyes, it is likely that Azazello's blind eye is a reference to versions of the Azazel myth in which the character is blinded, or is punished by having one eye forever shut and the other open in order to witness his own damnation, increasing his torment (Davidson 65). The physical strength itself, as well as Azazello's connection with violence in the novel (on several occasions he acts as the muscle, hassling whoever gets in Voland's way), is derived from the demon's associations with war and weaponry. We must not forget that in 1 Enoch, it was Azazel who gave the skills of metallurgy and weapons-crafting to humanity. In this tradition, Azazello often uses a gun, and we are told that he is an excellent shot, for which Margarita cannot help being a little enamoured with him:

Азazelло, который сидел отвернувшись от подушки, вынул из

кармана фрачных брюк черный автоматический пистолет, положил дуло на плечо и, не поворачиваясь к кровати, выстрелил, вызвав веселый испуг в Маргарите. Из-под простреленной подушки вытащили семерку. Намеченное Маргаритой очко было пробито.

-- Не желала бы я встретиться с вами, когда у вас в руках револьвер,--кокотливо поглядывая на Аззелло, сказала Маргарита. У нее была страсть ко всем людям, которые делают что-либо первоклассно.

(Bulgakov 460; ch. 24)

Azazello, who was sitting with his back to the pillow, pulled a black automatic pistol out of the pocket of his dress trousers, laid the muzzle on his shoulder, and fired without turning to face the bed, thereby giving Margarita a jolt of pleasant fear. The card was removed from the bullet-pierced pillow. It had been hit where Margarita had marked it.

'I wouldn't want to run into you when you've got a gun in your hands,' said Margarita, looking coquettishly at Azazello. She had a passion for anyone who could do anything really well. (Burgin 239)

Margarita's coquettishness following the shot echoes the attraction that the skilful Watchers awakened in the women of the Enoch story.

Even more obviously, in an earlier passage, in which Azazello meets with Margarita, giving to her a special cream that will transform her into a broom-wielding witch, the association between Azazel and tempting women is referenced, along with his connection with make-up, business, and jewellery. Azazello has been given the task to

ask Margarita to attend Satan's ball, but complains that he does not understand why the more charming Behemoth could not have done it. The reason, of course, is that Azazello is also in charge of giving to Margarita a magical witch's cream that will allow her to fly. Bulgakov is making a little joke here, since although Azazello may not recognize the connection between himself and women's finery, the author and (given the right reader) audience do. More important at present is the fact that this reference suggests that Bulgakov must have been aware of 1 Enoch, in contrast with Bulgakovian scholar, Lesley Milne's assertions that Bulgakov was drawing primarily from the passage in Leviticus (Milne, *Critical* 246-7). Milne explains in her study that Bulgakov relied heavily on *The Brockhaus-Efron Encyclopaedia* as a reference work for parts of *The Master and Margarita*. In this encyclopaedia, Azazel's importance as a scapegoat is stressed, the author even going so far as to associate him with Christ, as one who suffered for the sins of others. Connecting these ideas with the ideas already present within the story of the Master himself, one comes to see in Azazel, whose skills as a craftsman/intellectual in 1 Enoch were suppressed by a higher authority, a reflection of the caged artist that the Master represents, and whom Bulgakov himself felt a deep kinship with. Certainly it is true that Bulgakov must have been familiar with the Leviticus passage, as Milne suggests, but the symbolic relevance that she gives to Azazello deepens significantly when one takes 1 Enoch into account. The many references to Azazel's role as a tempter of women and a divulger of the secrets of weaponry and female toiletries are more than ample proof that Bulgakov was at least aware of 1 Enoch.

Apart from identifying Azazello with these two aspects of the Azazel myth, however, there is also evidence to suggest that Bulgakov was drawing from sections of

the 2 Enoch text, and therefore an older *Slavic* tradition of the character. This interpretation of Azazello is connected very strongly with the appearance of a second demon, Abaddon, in the novel.

We have already examined the connection between Abaddon, Azazel and the story of the Watchers, positing that Abaddon is actually the same figure as the original fallen angel, only with a name change. There are clues in Bulgakov that suggest the author had come to similar conclusions.

Abaddon appears only thrice in the novel: once at Voland's apartment, when Voland shows to Margarita a globe engulfed in war, and also twice during the ball scene, when he appears accompanied by a group of unnamed youths, and later helps to kill Baron Maigel.

In the apartment scene, a definite connection is made between Abaddon, war and death. Thus, after Voland shows to Margarita a vision of events taking place in a war-torn country, and the death of a woman and her baby, he says, "Работа Абадонны безукоризненна" 'Azazel's work is flawless' (Bulgakov 436; ch.22; Burgin 221). Margarita is frightened by Abaddon, whose very appearance evokes within her a seemingly irrational, animal fear:

-- Я не хотела бы быть на той стороне, против которой этот Абадонна, -- сказала Маргарита, -- на чьей он стороне?

-- Чем дальше я говорю с вами, -- любезно отозвался Воланд, -- тем больше убеждаюсь в том, что вы очень умны. Я успокою вас. Он на редкость беспристрастен и равно сочувствует обеим сражающимся

сторонам. Вследствие этого и результаты для обеих сторон бывают всегда одинаковы. Абадонна, -- негромко позвал Воланд, и тут из стены появилась фигура какого-то худого человека в темных очках. Эти очки почему-то произвели на Маргариту такое сильное впечатление, что она, тихонько вскрикнув, уткнулась лицом в ногу Воланда. -- Да перестаньте, -- крикнул Воланд, -- до чего нервозны современные люди. -- Он с размаху шлепнул Маргариту по спине, так что по ее телу прошел звон. -- Ведь видите же, что он в очках. Кроме того, никогда не было случая, да и не будет, чтобы Абадонна появился перед кем-либо преждевременно. Да и, наконец, я здесь. Вы у меня в гостях! Я просто хотел вам его показать.

Абадонна стоял неподвижно.

-- А можно, чтобы он снял очки на секунду? -- спросила Маргарита, прижимаясь к Воланду и вздрагивая, но уже от любопытства.

-- А вот этого нельзя, -- серьезно сказал Воланд и махнул рукой Абадонне, и того не стало. (Bulgakov 436; ch. 22)

‘I wouldn’t want to be on the wrong side fighting against this Abaddon,’ said Margarita. ‘Whose side is he on?’

‘The more I talk with you,’ Woland replied pleasantly, ‘the more convinced I am that you’re very intelligent. Let me put your mind at ease. He is totally neutral and sympathizes equally with both contending sides. As a result, the outcome is always the same for both of them. Abaddon!’ called Woland in a soft voice, and out of the wall appeared a thin figure in dark glasses. The

glasses made such a strong impression on Margarita that she let out a soft scream and buried her face in Woland's leg. 'Stop that!!' yelled Woland. 'How nervous people are nowadays! He slapped Margarita's back so hard that her whole body reverberated with the sound. 'Can't you see he's got his glasses on? Moreover, he never has appeared, nor will he ever appear, before anyone's time has come. And besides, I'm here. You're my guest! I just wanted to show him to you!'

Abaddon stood motionless.

'Do you think he could take off his glasses for just a second?' asked Margarita, pressing close to Woland and trembling, but only out of curiosity.

'No, that is impossible,' Woland replied in a grave voice, waving his arm at Abaddon, who then disappeared. (Burgin 221)

In this scene, Abaddon is described in brief, and we discover that he must always wear a pair of glasses—yet another reference to damaged eyes (although in this particular case, as we shall later discover, he also wears the glasses to keep from killing any who might accidentally gaze into his eyes). The sudden appearance of Azazello, after Abaddon has been introduced, feels like a sly hint on the part of the author, and it remains the case that whenever Abaddon appears, Azazello also has some part to play.

Sokolov makes the same connection, separately identifying Abaddon and Azazel as angels of death, destruction and war (Sokolov 7-10). Elena N. Mahlow discerns a connection between Abaddon and war, but does not elaborate (Mahlow 137).

In the Baron Maigel death scene, it is not simply Abaddon who aids in his murder:

Барон стал бледнее, чем Абадонна, который был исключительно бледен по своей природе, а затем произошло что-то странное. Абадонна оказался перед бароном и на секунду снял свои очки. В тот же момент что-то сверкнуло в руках Аззелло, что-то негромко хлопнуло как в ладоши, барон стал падать навзничь, алая кровь брызнула у него из груди и залила крахмальную рубашку и жилет.

(Bulgakov 454; ch.23)

The baron became even paler than Abaddon, who was exceptionally pale by nature, and the something strange happened. Abaddon appeared before the Baron and took his glasses off for just a second. At the same moment, something flashed like fire in Azazello's hands, and there was a soft noise, like a hand clap, and the baron started to fall backwards as scarlet blood spurted from his chest and soaked his starched shirt and vest. (Burgin 234)

We learn in the next chapter that Azazello shot Baron Maigel while Abaddon removed his glasses. Here, then, although Abaddon functions as the angel of death, Azazello is the one who administers that death. Later in the novel, for instance, it is Azazello who poisons and kills the Master and Margarita. By now we are already well aware of Azazel's connection with war and weapons. If Abaddon is a representation of war in the novel, then isn't Azazello also one? The roles of the characters seem to be

deeply intertwined, so that one cannot help but interpret them as the same thematic character, or at least different sides of the same coin (for instance, perhaps one of them is meant to represent Azazel and the other Shemihazah).

The most striking evidence to support this idea appears in the same chapter as the Baron Maigel scene, and leads one to believe that Bulgakov not only associated Abaddon with the Watchers, but that he probably used 2 Enoch, which he would have had access to in the Old Church Slavonic, as a reference for parts of his novel. To jog the memory of the reader, in 2 Enoch, when Enoch is led to the second layer of Heaven, the Watchers he sees trapped there are described as, “dark-looking, more than earthly darkness” (Barnstone 496). In *The Master and Margarita*, Margarita spies Voland, who is accompanied by Abaddon, Azazello and several unnamed, black youths:

Тогда Маргарита опять увидела Воланда. Он шел в окружении Абадонны, Азазелло и еще нескольких похожих на Абадонну, черных и молодых.

(Bulgakov 452; ch.23)

Then Margarita again caught sight of Woland. He was walking, surrounded by Abaddon, Azazello, and several others who resembled Abaddon and were young and black. (Burgin 232)

Also, a little earlier:

Рядом с Азазелло --еще трое молодых людей, смутно чем-то напомнивших Маргарите Абадонну. В спину веяло холодом. (Bulgakov 441; ch.23)

Next to Azazello were three young men, who vaguely reminded Margarita of Abaddon.

She felt a chill on her back. (Burgin 225)

It seems that Azazello, Abaddon, and the mysterious black youths are tied together at the hip. Keeping in mind the passage from 2 Enoch, the youths could easily be fallen Watchers, who remain near Azazello and Abaddon because they are their leaders, Azazel and Shemihazah.²³

As has already been mentioned, these figures are not simply present in their capacity as war/death-angels, but rather, as symbols of martyrdom on the part of artists, craftsmen and thinkers. The rebellion of the Watchers of 1 Enoch is a contrast to the violence of the 1917 revolution and the unforeseen oppression that it created, and under which Bulgakov suffered. Whereas the Russian Revolution, for Bulgakov, came to signify the beginning of the end of artistic liberty, the fall of the Watchers was a revolt against god that took place in the *name* of art, science and philosophy. Like the angels themselves, Bulgakov was a rebel in his own right, and his literary rebellion, here taken form in *The Master and Margarita*, mirrors the creative efforts of the Watchers. The same thematic thread can be traced through many of the novel's storylines. The Master, like Azazel, Yeshua and Bulgakov, suffers the rejection of his work by those in power (in his particular case, the literary critics of Soviet Moscow, who dismiss The Master's novel

²³ In a later chapter, Woland muses with Azazello over the nature of Moscow as a city, and Azazello replies that he prefers Rome. Generally it has come to be accepted that this is simply a reference to Moscow's claim of being the Third Rome, but it appears the connection may run deeper, as Azazel is often confused with the demon Samael, the patron angel/demon of the city of Rome. Thus, Azazello becomes a composite figure in a second, less expected way, and his preference for the city takes on a further nuance of meaning (Forsyth 378, Bamberger 139).

due to its theological content). Along these lines, Lesley Milne states in her analysis of the character:

The Christian framework is thus variegated with an antique pagan motif which is closely connected with the figure of the artist and which at the same time bears a clear

figural relationship to the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ. Woland's associate, Azazello, is thus linked at various levels with the Master, Pilate and Yeshua. The figures in the kaleidoscope of *The Master and Margarita* move into a pattern of intricate and awesome complexity. (Milne, *Comedy* 32)

Milne also points out a connection between Azazello and the themes of forgiveness and the remission of guilt, since his name first appears in earlier drafts of the novel at around the same time that these two ideas are coming to the fore (Milne, *Critical* 246). Certainly, the notion of paying one's dues is just as tightly woven into the fabric of the novel as the idea of the wrongfully punished artist. In *The Master and Margarita*, The Master's novel about Pontius Pilate adds yet another layer to the already multi-faceted text. Despite Pilate's crimes against Yeshua (Jesus), however, at the end of Bulgakov's work he is at last forgiven and allowed to be reunited with his beloved dog, Banga. If one reads Yeshua's death as analogous with Christ's morbid redemption of mankind, then he, too, serves as a symbol of forgiveness, as well as the redemptive scapegoat. Like the literal goat of Leviticus, Yeshua is metaphorically sent out into the desert wilderness, with the sins of the tribe of Israel heaped upon his back.

In an apocalyptic, eschatological reading of the novel, Azazello's connection with the Abaddon of Revelation can also be felt, and this identification serves as further fuel for interpretations of the novel that would claim *The Master and Margarita's* ending as an elaborate parody of the end times. In Edward E. Ericson's apocalyptic reading of the novel, he sees the Moscow of *The Master and Margarita's* pages as a cousin of Babylon the great, whose destruction is heralded in Revelation. Moscow, Ericson argues, has become rife with demons, just as Babylon is said to be, and the corruption ascribed to the ancient city is more than matched by the corruption displayed by Bulgakov's cast of Soviet officials, literary critics and restaurant managers (Ericson, *Apocalyptic* 162). The devils that Ericson identifies are the literal ones: Voland, Behemoth, Korov'ev, Azazello, and Hella. I would add to this line-up the more villainous *human* characters of Bulgakov's work, who often demonstrate more morally dubious tendencies than the devils themselves.

The four horsemen of the apocalypse, as Ericson argues it, are Voland, Behemoth, Korov'ev and Azazello, who all appear in chapters 31 and 32 as men on horseback, and lead the Master and Margarita out of Moscow and into the afterlife. The riders travel not on land, but through the sky, and create some small havoc on the Earth below through the use of their demonic powers. It is during this ride that the demons are revealed to Margarita in their true aspects. Ericson writes concerning the novel's most explicitly eschatological scene:

This is the most readily identified element of Revelation to appear in the final section

of *The Master and Margarita*. The Horsemen ‘are among the more widely recognized symbols of the book of Revelation.’ They appear in Revelation riding horses which are, respectively, white, red, black and pale However, since in *The Master and Margarita* the horses are seen only by the dim light of the moon, even coloured horses might well appear black. In fact, at one point they are seen in silhouette (p.373). But, of course, we have learned to expect inexact correspondences from Bulgakov. The four riders are Woland, Azazello, Korov’ev, and Behemoth—Hella being conveniently omitted from the entourage.²⁴ (Ericson, *Apocalyptic* 163).

Abaddon is missing from this quartet of riders—an odd omission considering the blatant reference to him in the Book of Revelation. With the relationship between Abaddon and Azazel(lo) established, however, Bulgakov’s decision to leave him out begins to make more sense. If Azazello and Abaddon are thematically and biblically linked to one another, it is only really necessary for Bulgakov to choose one of the two for his miniature apocalypse. Furthermore, Abaddon’s appearance in the preceding

²⁴ Ericson offers several reasons for Hella’s absence during this scene, suggesting that Bulgakov left her out simply because he only required four horsemen to complete his apocalyptic parody. He also reiterates a theory belonging to Laura D. Weeks, who suggests that Hella ‘s ancestry can be found in Lilith, Adam’s first wife. Lilith, being mortal, has no place riding amongst the immortal demons.

chapters (when he is first introduced to Margarita by Voland, and during his assassination of Baron Maigal), seems to herald the coming of the end. As in David Bethea's apocalyptic reading of *The Master and Margarita*, everything comes full circle (Bethea 228), and the death, destruction and war that Abaddon and Azazello represent give way to a symbolic rebirth. Thus, despite the fact that Azazello is responsible for the deaths of both the Master and Margarita, he remains a part of the company that shepherds them on to the next life. The sins of the guilty, including the Master and Margarita's own transgressions, are forgiven, and so the cycle begins again, in the same way that life continues following the sacrifice of the scapegoat into the wilderness.

Chapter 2: A Modern Moby-Dick: Hunting the Leviathan

The literary criticism that exists concerning Korov'ev-Fagot is extremely minimal. One could argue that this is due to the fact that the character is not a *main* protagonist like The Master, Margarita or Volland. One might add that he merely represents the comic relief in a novel that deals with very serious, complex, metaphysical themes, and that time would be wasted examining the origins of such a clownish figure. Certainly, attempting to identify Bulgakov's inspiration for Korov'ev is a daunting task, and one might be quick to dismiss the endeavour in favour of a character whose heritage is more obviously displayed.²⁵

To my mind, upon first reading the novel, the question of Korov'ev's symbolism seemed a conundrum waiting to be picked apart and fiddled with—the Robin Hood of Bulgakovian studies—a character one could spend a lifetime chasing down, in an effort to establish definitively who he is, what he means, and from which obscure and mysterious tradition Bulgakov was drawing when he envisioned our chequered, curiously bespectacled jester. As the analogy with Robin Hood suggests, Korov'ev represented a character one could research for an entire career and nevertheless turn one's metaphorical pockets inside out to find only play-money hidden there within, slipping through one's aged, scholarly fingers. Despite this fact, or perhaps because of it, I was intrigued by the puzzle posed by Korov'ev-Fagot. Surely, as one of the two most visually recognizable characters from the novel,²⁶ Korov'ev was worthy of *some* attention. Bulgakov himself,

²⁵ Take, for example, Behemoth, whose very name associates him with the biblical earth beast of Judaeo-Christian mythology. (Davidson 72-3).

²⁶ I would argue that Behemoth and Korov'ev, together, serve almost as mascots for the novel. Certainly, I cannot recall a cover to the work that did not feature, in some capacity, Korov'ev's notoriously corpulent

often described as a bit of a joker (Milne, *Critical* 4), clearly understood the importance of humour, and how, through laughter, one can express and elicit a whole range of emotions, thoughts, ideas and symbols. Says Milne of the comedic aspect of *The Master and Margarita*:

There are many references throughout *The Master and Margarita* linking the contemporary political and the fantastic planes: the sudden mysterious disappearances and transportations, for example, which were a grim and terrifying feature of Stalin's Russia, are here turned into a comedy that transcends the horror of contemporary reality and thereby achieves spiritual liberation from it. This aspect of laughter as a liberating force which can overcome fear is examined by Bakhtin in his analysis of carnival laughter.... (Milne, *Comedy* 13).

In large part, the contribution that both Korov'ev and Behemoth make to the novel is interpreted in terms of its satirical, parodic and comic merit (Bethea 393; Ericson, *Apocalyptic* 50-53, 158-9; Krugovoy 66, 72). While the satiric aspect of the *Korovian* chapters cannot be denied, it is not the only purpose that the two characters serve, since both individually, and as a duo, Korov'ev and Behemoth maintain their symbolic importance in metaphysical and religio-philosophical readings of the text as well. The joke, then, is not as simple as it seems, and in a Bulgakovian context, it would appear that the author is using these comedic characters to hint at more sombre themes. The problem one has to deal with when analyzing Korov'ev's symbolic relevance is that, to some

feline companion, and during all of the dramatizations I have seen online and live, Korov'ev and Behemoth always seem to receive the most attention from the audience.

degree at least, the symbol itself is a blurred, distorted image. As with each of Bulgakov's characters, understanding their stories, development and inspiration is not as straightforward as it first appears. Though Bulgakov makes several comments throughout *The Master and Margarita* that would indicate that he intends Korov'ev-Fagot as a reference to a particular figure, we are reading those references through the filter of Bulgakov, who inevitably injects aspects of a variety of texts, thoughts and life experiences into each of his characters. Through associating the character specifically with the demon/monster Leviathan, I hope to focus the lens, to gain a clearer image, not only of the character, but of *The Master and Margarita* as a whole. Through identifying who, precisely, Korov'ev is meant to be, I hope to shed new light on the novel and the rich body of literary criticism that already surrounds it. More specifically, my thesis deals with the way in which Bulgakov uses the tools of mythology (and in particular, demonic mythology) to create a pseudo-revelatory, multi-layered, eschatological text.

Past Contributions

Nearly every study of *The Master and Margarita* begins with a disclaimer that the novel can be read on such a variety of levels, and is so profoundly complex, that any single approach to the work is destined to seem incomplete in some capacity. As David Bethea puts it, "there is no single interpretation, no single blade, capable of severing the Gordian knot of *The Master and Margarita*" (Bethea 193). I humbly reiterate this sentiment, while also subscribing to the view that, while no easy task, an attempt at a unifying, critical interpretation of the novel is nevertheless rewarding and worthwhile. From this perspective it seems sensible to begin with an attempt to solve the riddle of

Korov'ev, which has remained in my thoughts since that first reading of the novel eight years ago. Rather than simply being mere whim, however, my research is founded on the principle that Korov'ev-Fagot's demonic origins have the potential to shed further light on a richly complicated novel, and the themes contained therein. In particular, an identification of Korov'ev with Leviathan adds new evidence to suggest the importance of apocalyptic, Faustian and Goethean themes within *The Master and Margarita*. The lack of understanding with regard to Korov'ev's symbolic purpose and background represents a hole in current Bulgakovian scholarship—one that, once filled, can be applied to both previous and future studies in order to better piece together the puzzle that is the novel.

Much of the existing literary criticism on Korov'ev exists as a by-product of discussions of one or another of the novel's other characters. It is whilst elaborating on the role played by Voland, for instance, that Edward E. Ericson writes:

Throughout Christian tradition many characteristics have accrued to the Devil. He deceives; he tempts; he punishes; he plays tricks upon the innocent; he plays the buffoon; he engages in riotous living; he suffers because of his sin. It is interesting and important to note which of these characteristics Bulgakov includes and which he does not. First, there is none of the comic buffoon in Woland. Second, he does not go around playing tricks on people. These two roles he leaves for two of his underlings, Koroviev and Behemoth.²⁷ (Ericson 45)

²⁷ It should be noted here that not everyone agrees that Voland is completely free of a certain clownishness (Krugovoy 72).

Ericson refers here to Korov'ev's most obvious role: the trickster demon. Likewise, Lesley Milne describes Korov'ev and Behemoth in terms of their roles as clowns:

Fagot-Koroviev's role in the Torgsin . . . is that of the 'white-faced clown', foil to the 'red-haired clown,' whose part in this classic double act is played by Begemot. The comedy is circus-ring slapstick, with people falling backwards into marinade barrels and hitting each other over the head with trays Its generating force . . . is the age-old laughter of the clown, subversive of all human order, from socio-political structures to pyramid-displays of merchandise.

(Milne, *Critical* 246)

Milne hints at the satire at play in the scene at the Torgsin store,²⁸ suggesting that although Korov'ev-Fagot's purpose in the novel may be sombre, it is his role as jester that represents the true method by which Bulgakov hopes to convey his message, and so it is from the perspective of humour that the character must be approached. Bulgakov's character does indeed seem capable of existing as both grave message and comic messenger, as is witnessed in Chapter thirty-two of the novel, "Absolution and Eternal Refuge:"

Вряд ли теперь узнали бы Коровьева-Фагота, самозванного переводчика при таинственном и не нуждающемся ни в каких переводах консультанте, в том, кто теперь летел непосредственно рядом с Воландом по правую руку подруги мастера. На месте того, кто в драной цирковой

²⁸ In this scene, Korov'ev and Behemoth terrorize a department store that caters to rich foreigners.

одежде покинул Воробьевы горы под именем Коровьева-Фагота, теперь скакал, тихо звеня золотой цепью повода, темно-фиолетовый рыцарь с мрачнейшим и никогда не улыбающимся лицом. Он уперся подбородком в грудь, он не глядел на луну, он не интересовался землею под собою, он думал о чем-то своем, летя рядом с Воландом.

-- Почему он так изменился?²⁹ -- спросила тихо Маргарита под свист ветра у Воланда.

-- Рыцарь этот когда-то неудачно пошутил, -- ответил Воланд, поворачивая к Маргарите свое лицо с тихо горящим глазом, -- его каламбур, который он сочинил, разговаривая о свете и тьме, был не совсем хорош. И рыцарю пришлось после этого проштутить немного больше и дольше, нежели он предполагал. Но сегодня такая ночь, когда сводятся счета. Рыцарь свой счет оплатил и закрыл!

(Bulgakov 581; ch.32)

Korovyov-Fagot, the self-titled interpreter for the mysterious consultant who never required any interpretation, was hardly recognizable now in the figure who was flying beside Wolund, to the right of the Master's beloved. In place of the fellow who had left Sparrow Hills in a torn circus outfit under the name Korovyov-Fagot, there now galloped, his gold reins clinking softly, a dark-violet knight with an extremely somber face that never smiled. He flew along beside

²⁹ This is a reference to the famous line from Milton's *Paradise Lost*: ". . . O how fallen! How changed . . ." (84).

Wolund with his chin on his chest, not looking at the moon and taking no interest in the earth below, but, rather, completely immersed in his own thoughts.

“Why is he so changed?” Margarita softly asked Wolund to the whistling of the wind.

“That knight once made a joke that fell flat,” replied Wolund, turning his quietly smoldering eye toward Margarita. “While conversing about darkness and light he made up a pun that was not entirely satisfactory. And after that, he was forced to work a bit longer and harder at making his jokes than he imagined. But tonight is the kind of night when accounts are settled. The knight has paid his bill and closed his account. (Burgin 321-2)

Here Voland and Margarita formally acknowledge the significance of Korov'ev-Fagot's humorous antics, recognizing his eternal calling as entertainer, while at the same time peering past the comedic mask to address the story lying behind it. Arguably, more than any other passage concerning Korov'ev, this section of the text has teased literary critics with its seeming specificity. Indeed, it does appear here that Voland (and through him, Bulgakov) is making a particular reference to a particular joke, figure or literary source. Due to this fact, and perhaps rightly so, the little investigation that exists into Korov'ev-Fagot's origins typically uses this passage as a starting point to discovering his identity. Part of the problem that exists in this case is that it is not entirely clear what Bulgakov means when he writes, “pun.” Is the author using the word in its traditional sense?³⁰ Is he using it to understate a larger work such as a novel, play or poem? Would the casual reader, or even researcher, immediately recognize the pun as a joke, or is the

³⁰ From the Oxford English Dictionary definition of the term: “A joke playing on the different meanings of a word or exploiting the fact that there are words of the same sound and different meanings” (OED).

term being used more abstractly to refer to an overly-simplistic claim? The clue itself becomes as much of a puzzle as the mystery one hopes it will help solve.

In her discussion of Korov'ev-Fagot's transformation, Milne makes note of the fact that "knight" is Bulgakovian code for "writer," and so Korov'ev becomes another thematic representation of the literary scapegoat, a theme already discussed with regard to Azazello (Milne, *Critical* 247-8). One must ask, with this connection in mind, if Korov'ev could potentially be Bulgakov himself. Korov'ev-Fagot is consistently seen wearing a cracked pince-nez, reminiscent of the monocle Bulgakov was known to have worn in real life. Could it be that the aforementioned pun is, in fact, the novel itself? Are *The Master and Margarita* and its Goethean epigraph the insufficient explanation of the nature of good and evil for which Korov'ev-Fagot is being punished? The theme of light/darkness within the novel has been examined many times in the past, and is certainly an integral part of the work as a whole. Taking this into account, Voland's dismissal of the novel and its ideas is akin to an author's apology of his work and its perceived shortcomings.

Along similar lines, Milne addresses the notion that perhaps Korov'ev-Fagot is really Goethe. "Fagot," she argues, contains the first two letters of both "Faust" and "Goethe" (Milne, *Comedy* 29). It is possible that the pun is *Faust* itself, including the famous line that Bulgakov quotes as the epigraph to *The Master and Margarita*. While both of these explanations present equally plausible theories, I would be inclined to suggest that if Korov'ev is a representation of Bulgakov, it is only in part. So many of the novel's characters contain elements of the author and his life that to suggest one or another character is a complete transfer of Bulgakov threatens to exclude the all-

important Bulgakovian features of The Master, Yeshua, Bezdomny et al. While many of the novel's protagonists and antagonists demonstrate a resemblance to their creator, none of them, I would argue, is entirely Bulgakov.³¹ Nor does Milne's suggestion of Goethe feel wholly convincing. Why Goethe over any other author? Bulgakov makes clear references to *Faust* throughout *The Master and Margarita*, it is true, yet Goethe was not the first or last to play with the legend and its themes. The novel contains references to many other versions of the tale, including Briusov's *The Fiery Angel* (1908), Gounod's opera, *Faust* (1859)³² and Il'ia Erenburg's *The Extraordinary Adventures of Khuleo Khurenito* (1922) (Pittman 28-31; Krugovoy 76, 92). As Milne herself points out, without further evidence to support the claim, her basis for connecting Korov'ev and Faust is quite weak (Milne, *Comedy* 29). Furthermore, the name Korov'ev, literally translated as "son of a cow," appears to be a second clue as to the character's identity, yet has nothing, seemingly, to do with the German playwright.

Lesley Milne is not the only scholar to have suggested a more human ancestry for Korov'ev-Fagot. A.C. Wright separates Korov'ev-Fagot from his demonic cohorts, making the suggestion that Korov'ev is Voland's human mediator: a true interpreter between the supernatural and natural worlds (Wright, *Satan* 1167). This would tend to support either of the above interpretations, yet one is left wondering why, if Korov'ev is one of the novel's human characters, the fact is not stressed more openly throughout the novel. He shows no more sympathy toward the novel's human characters than do Behemoth or Voland, and interacts barely at all with The Master, Bezdomny or Berlioz

³¹ For more on references to Bulgakov's own life within the novel, see Barratt, 77-87.

³² In 1912, Bulgakov saw Gounod's *Faust* ten times (Curtis, *Manuscripts* 4) and his sister claims that in his youth he saw it no less than forty-one. Indeed, it has been suggested that Gounod's operatic version of the Faust legend influenced *The Master and Margarita* far more than Goethe's play (Lowe 279).

(his supposed fellow writers). While it is true that Korov'ev-Fagot's speeches at the Griboyedov house and Torgsin store would suggest that he has an opinion on the contemporary state of literature and politics in Moscow, there is more of a Mephistophelean air to his words than a mortal one (Krugovoy 66).

The Faustian connection is a deep and an obvious one, yet the details of this link are still hotly debated within the field (Barratt 270). As previously mentioned, despite the novel's epigraph, not all of the references to Faust concern Goethe's play but, in some cases, lesser known works and older traditions. Many readers are quick to see a correlation between the Master's story and the tale of Faust's bargain with the Devil.³³ Certainly, the Master and Faust can both be viewed as representations of the artist and his plight, and both interact with, and are aided by, demonic forces. Some scholars, however, reject such an easy interpretation (Barratt 273; Stenbock-Fermor 311). It is not, for instance, the Master who actively makes a deal with the Devil, but his lover, Margarita. Furthermore, the Master, some would argue, gives no active resistance to the system that suppresses his work, depending instead upon Margarita for vengeance and validation. Taking this into account, Margarita emerges as more of a Faust-like character than does her oppressed beau (Ericson 110-13; Haber 392-3). Elisabeth Stenbock-Fermor takes a different approach in her comparison of Goethe's *Faust* and *The Master and Margarita*. In her article, "Bulgakov's The Master and Margarita and Goethe's Faust," Stenbock-Fermor proposes instead that, while the character of Faust is partly present in the novel's

³³ To go along with this schema, it is usually suggested that the Master is Faust, Voland is Mephistopheles and Margarita is Gretchen (Ericson 112).

chief protagonists, it is Korov'ev-Fagot who corresponds most directly to Faust.³⁴ For Stenbock-Fermor:

Korov'ev-Fagot [is] a reincarnation of Faust, but of a Faust who instead of being the devil's master is now his servant and is doing penance for the pun which offended the devil, as Volund explains at the end of Chapter 32 For his impertinent jest, Faust had to become a jester . . . ordered about by Mephistopheles, whom he treated with scorn at their first meeting Faust's pun was, "You call yourself a part, yet stand whole in front of me" (*F*, 1345). This pun was a refutation of the words by which the devil had introduced himself and which form the epigraph to the novel. (Stenbock-Fermor 312)

Continuing her argument, Stenbock-Fermor considers Korov'ev-Fagot's magical abilities and pranks to be evidence of his origin as Faust, whose alchemical knowledge marks him out as a magician. Her theory also claims to shed light on Bulgakov's possible reasoning behind naming Berlioz (the head of MASSOLIT) after the French composer. According to Stenbock-Fermor, Bulgakov was unable to forgive Hector Berlioz, composer of *The Damnation of Faust*, for punishing Faust in his version of the tale. The transformation of Korov'ev into his true form, along with his subsequent release from torment, are to be taken as a reversal of the epilogue from Berlioz's opera, in which Faust rides to Hell in exchange for the release of Margaret from jail. In naming MASSOLIT's leader Berlioz, Bulgakov punishes the composer, by proxy, for having damned Faust; an artist and scientist whose rejection from Heaven is echoed in the rejection of the Master's

³⁴ Ellendea Proffer is in agreement with Stenbock-Fermor's proposition, though she also supports Gasparov's claim that Korov'ev may owe some of his ancestry to E.T.A. Hoffmann's Kapelmeister Kreisler (Proffer 643).

novel by the Moscow literary critics, including Berlioz himself (Stenbock-Fermor 313-15). To add to Stenbock-Fermor's analysis, one could further suggest that Korov'ev's mysterious first appearance to Berlioz in Patriarch's Ponds may very well represent Faust bearing witness to the long-awaited comeuppance of the composer who forced him into Voland's service.

A number of scholars have criticized Stenbock-Fermor's identification of Korov'ev-Fagot as Faust; amongst them are Beatie and Powell, who reject her theory based on the fact that the Faustian references were markedly clear in an earlier version of the novel (Beatie and Powell 247). Indeed, in these earlier drafts, the character that corresponds most clearly to the Master is a demonologist and historian who is variously called Faust and Fesya (Curtis 130-1). I would likewise argue that, although this allows other characters the possibility of evolving Faustian characteristics (Margarita being one of the strongest examples), it does steer one away from the notion that any other character could *specifically* and *wholly* be viewed as Faust. The references to Korov'ev's identity being as specific as they are, it appears unlikely that Faust is, in fact, Korov'ev in a former life. Lesley Milne further criticizes the Faust-Korov'ev identification, pointing out that the "pun" to which Stenbock-Fermor refers does not actually have much to do with either light or darkness (Milne, *Comedy* 28), and I would be inclined to support this observation. It is in place of the Faust theory that Milne offers two alternatives: Korov'ev is Goethe (see above), or Korov'ev is Mephistopheles. Milne accurately points out that, although Faust's line contains no pun on the subject of light and darkness, the lines that precede it certainly do:

FAUST. All right—who are you, then?

MEPHISTOPHELES: Part of that force which would do ever evil, and does ever good.

FAUST: And that conundrum of a phrase implies? (1335-37)

Tellingly, perhaps, this section of text provides the epigraph for *The Master and Margarita*. The suggestion finds further proof in the fact that Faust then calls Mephistopheles's response a conundrum. A few lines later, when Mephistopheles is doing his best to degrade the concept of light in Faust's mind, he makes the following claim:

MEPHISTOPHELES. I am but a part of the part that was whole at first, part of the dark which bore itself the light, that supercilious light which lately durst dispute her ancient rank and realm to Mother Night; and yet to no avail, for strive as it may, it cleaves to bondage to corporeal clay. It streams from bodies, bodies it lends sheen, a body can impede its thrust, and so it should not be too long, I trust, before with bodies it departs the scene. (1349-1358)

Here, Mephistopheles mocks the light for its inability to exist without physical beings/objects to reflect off. Light, he argues, is inferior to darkness, since it is born out of it. Indeed, every time Mephistopheles opens his mouth to speak during the scene, he seems to be making some statement concerning the nature of light and darkness, and often in a way that one might interpret as pun-like.

In David Lowe's comparison of *The Master and Margarita* with Gounod's *Faust*, the author suggest that Bulgakov is drawing more from the opera than from Goethe.

Lowe offers as evidence the fact that in Gounod's opera, during the Walpurgis Night scene, the Devil (Mephistopheles) is responsible for hosting the festivities, in much the same way that a devil acts as master of ceremonies during the corresponding chapter from *The Master and Margarita*, "Satan's Grand Ball." In Goethe's play, during the Walpurgisnacht scene, Mephistopheles does *not* act in the same capacity (Lowe 284). Lowe's only mistake is that he identifies Voland as the equivalent character in "Satan's Grand Ball," when actually, it is Korov'ev-Fagot who acts as host and chief organizer, further identifying him with Mephistopheles. In a lesser known version of Faust, written by the German author, Friedrich Maximilian Klinger, Mephistopheles is renamed Leviathan, and in this version of the story, once again, the Mephistophelean figure is responsible for organizing and hosting a demonic gathering/celebration.

This is, of course, not the only proof to suggest that Milne's ideas are running along the right track, and it is through my own research into Korov'ev-Fagot's relationship with Leviathan that I have gathered further information to support her claim. Before delving into my explanation of the trinity that is Mephistopheles/Leviathan/Korov'ev (as well as the connection that is to be made between Mephistopheles and Leviathan, who are, traditionally, two separate figures), however, it is first necessary to briefly recount the mythology that exists concerning Leviathan and his mythological cousins,³⁵ in order that the reader can become familiar with the background information that influenced the present argument and identification.

³⁵ It should be noted that not all of the existing interpretations of *The Master and Margarita* paint Korov'ev-Fagot as a Faustian character. It has been suggested by critics that Bulgakov could have meant the character as a reference to one or more of the works of Dostoevskii, or to Cervantes's *Don Quixote*. (Sokolov 377-80). Korov'ev-Fagot has also been identified as one of the three musketeers, with Behemoth and Azazello serving as the remaining two (Kaganskaia 72-3).

The World Serpent

Not unlike the multifaceted mythology of *The Master and Margarita* itself, the Leviathan legend is a complicated one. In Hebrew, the word means, “that which gathers itself together in folds”³⁶ (Davidson 173), and most famously refers to an enormous biblical sea-serpent, which originally inhabited the watery abyss known as Tehom³⁷ (Goldstein 21; Langton 209). Some variations of the story claim Leviathan to be a female monster and a counterpart to the male land beast, Behemoth (Davidson 173). This version of the myth tends to be subordinate to the more commonly accepted idea that there were, once upon a time, two Leviathans: a male and a female. According to Jewish lore, God slew the female in order to stop the two monsters from procreating, as they were so large that they and their offspring would have destroyed the world (Unterman 119; Whitney 37).

Although Leviathan itself is a Hebrew, Judaeo-Christian image, a number of scholars point to a relationship between Leviathan and the pagan, Canaanite “Lotan.” The two names appear etymologically related, are associated with water, and both figures are variously called serpents or dragons (Forsyth, *Old Enemy* 62). Likewise, connections can be drawn between the Babylonian chaos dragon, Tiamat, and the biblical Leviathan,³⁸ as

³⁶ Daniel Cohen prefers, “tortuous snake” (67), while Kluger suggests “wound,” along with the idea that the word may in fact be of Egyptian origin, relating to the term, “ltn”. An Egyptian connection would not be too farfetched, since it is suspected that Behemoth, Leviathan’s biblical companion, is of Egyptian ancestry and refers to a hippopotamus (water buffalo) (Kluger 43). Egyptian serpent symbolism will be addressed in more detail in a later section.

³⁷ There is also some suggestion that Leviathan is based on the Nile crocodile or a whale (Cohen 68-9; Davidson 173).

³⁸ If one considers the version of the story wherein Leviathan is a female monster, then both take on the role of primordial, female, chaos gods who are slain by a chief male deity. Furthermore, the name “Tiamat” means “sea”, related to the idea that Leviathan is the great sea-beast (Beal 14-22; Joines 10).

well as figures as varied as Yamm and Tannin (Babylonian-Canaanite-Hebraic), Rahab³⁹ (Hebraic) and Ahriman (Zoroastrian) (Bamberger 175; Beal 49; Russell, J.B., *Devil* 216; Wakeman 7-42).

Throughout the bible, apocrypha and Judaeo-Christian myth, Leviathan is referred to by any and all of these names. As Timothy K. Beal explains:

Clearly the bible is not in agreement with itself over what to do with its monsters. As a result it canonizes their ambiguity. The amalgamation of mutually incompatible meanings embodied even in one monstrous name, such as Leviathan, is beyond sorting out or resolving in a way that takes account of all the different texts in which it appears: Leviathan is part of creation; Leviathan is outside creation and a threat to it; Leviathan is the enemy nation; God crushed Leviathan's heads⁴⁰ and killed it long ago; God will pierce Leviathan and kill it in the future; God plays with Leviathan; God sings Leviathan's praises. (57)

Textually, Leviathan appears in both the Old and New Testaments (Genesis,⁴¹ Isaiah, Job, Psalms and Revelation), as well as in apocryphal writings, such as The Apocalypse of Baruch (first century, C.E.), The Apocalypse of Abraham (second century, B.C.E.)⁴² and the Enochic apocalypses (fourth century, B.C.E.) (Barnstone 506; Forsyth, *Old Enemy* 222-4; Nickelsburg vii).

Perhaps in accordance with its potentially chaotic ancestry, Leviathan is called a nature-monster by some (Kluger 51).

³⁹ The meaning of this word seems to be, "to be tempestuous," and could also have Babylonian roots (Kluger 43).

⁴⁰ In some myths, Leviathan has multiple heads, typically seven (Wakeman 65).

⁴¹ The reference to Leviathan in Genesis is non-specific, but when compared with accounts of creation from apocryphal documents it would appear that it does hint at Leviathan's creation (Forsyth, *Old Enemy* 218).

⁴² This date was arrived at based upon historical references within the text, but because it survived only in a later, Slavonic translation, we cannot be certain about its precise time of origin. Previous scholars have dated the work slightly later, as having originated sometime around the first century C.E. (Box xv-vi).

The Apocalypse of Baruch and the Book of Job posit that Leviathan and Behemoth were created together on the fifth day of creation—beings formed from the primordial soup of chaos, animalistic, but separate from the animals themselves, who were created on the sixth day (Whitney 37; Forsyth, *Old Enemy* 218). Job 41.1-34 gives a lengthy description of Leviathan’s might, which God appears to hold in high esteem:

“Can you draw out Leviathan with a fishhook, or press down its tongue with a cord? . . . Lay hands on it; think of the battle; you will not do it again! . . . were not even the Gods overwhelmed at the sight of it? No one is so fierce as to dare to stir it up . . . I will not stay silent concerning its limbs, or its mighty strength, or its splendid frame . . . There is terror all around its teeth. Its back is made of shields in rows, shut up closely as with a seal . . . Its sneezes flash forth light, and its eyes are like the eyelids of the dawn. From its mouth go flaming torches; sparks of fire leap out. Out of its nostrils comes smoke, as from a burning pot and boiling rushes. Its breath kindles coals, and a flame comes out of its mouth. Its heart is as hard as stone, as hard as a lower millstone...It makes the deep boil like a pot . . . It leaves a shining wake behind it; one would think the deep to be white-haired. On earth it has no equal,⁴³ a creature without fear. It surveys everything that is lofty; it is king over all that are proud.”

Here, Leviathan is a neutral beast, much in the same way that Satan was originally a neutral and loyal servant to God.⁴⁴ Created by Yahweh, Leviathan is no more a threat to him than is a human warrior to Leviathan. In Isaiah, the tone changes drastically, and we

⁴³ It would appear, then, that Behemoth is held in somewhat lesser regard, since God seems to suggest that even the land-beast of Job 40.15-24 cannot possibly withstand Leviathan’s awesome strength.

⁴⁴ By neutrality, I refer to a neutral stance between good and evil. Since originally God was considered to be responsible for both forces, any loyal servant of His must needs have demonstrated the same ambiguity.

see a Leviathan of a more demonic persuasion—a monster who God must one day kill.

Leviathan is presented as a malicious, devious figure:

On that day the Lord with his cruel and great and strong sword will punish
Leviathan the fleeing serpent, Leviathan the twisting serpent, and he will kill the
dragon that is in the sea. (27.1)

This passage evokes connotations with the Devil, and connections can be made
here between the Leviathan of Isaiah and the dragon of Revelation:

Then another portent appeared in heaven: a great red dragon, with seven heads
and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. His tail swept down a third of the
stars of heaven and threw them to the Earth. (Rev. 12.3-4)

This section of the text can be read as an account of the Devil's fall from heaven,
stars, once again, representing angels who fell along with him. It is, however, strikingly
reminiscent of Leviathan, with his many heads. A little later we meet Leviathan proper,
though he is not named as such in the text:

Then the dragon took his stand on the sand of the seashore. And I saw a beast
rising out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads; and on its horns were
ten diadems, and on its heads were blasphemous names. (Rev.13.1-2)

Behemoth is quick to join in, arising out of the earth the way Leviathan arose out
of the ocean (Rev.13.11). In the context of Revelation, these two monsters are not,
however, necessarily what they appear, as the text is usually read as a metaphor for real
events, whether past, contemporary with the text, or functioning as predictions for the

future. As one of many possible examples, Neil Forsyth suggests that, since one beast derives power from the other, the two monsters are actually the Roman emperor (in this case Nero, or possibly Domitian) and Rome itself (*Old Enemy* 255).

The eschatological function of Leviathan is also mentioned in Enoch, Abraham and Baruch. In 1 Enoch, Leviathan is referred to as the female beast, and counterpart to the male Behemoth. The two monsters are entangled with the fate of mankind—prophesized to devour the sacrilegious during the End Times, or to be devoured *by* them:

And on that day two monsters were separated—the female monster whose name is Leviathan, to dwell in the depths of the ocean, above the fountains of the waters. But the name of the male is Behemoth, who occupies with his breast the trackless desert named Dundayn⁴⁵ east of the garden And I asked another angel to show me the might of those monsters, how they were separated in one day and were thrown the one into the depth of the sea, and other into the dry land of the desert And the angel of peace who was with me said, “These two monsters, prepared according to the greatness of the Lord, will feed so that the punishment of the Lord of Spirits rests upon them, in order that the punishment of the Lord of Spirits does not go forth in vain. And the children will be killed with their mothers and . . . with their fathers. When the punishment of the Lord of Spirits rests upon them, afterwards will be the judgement according to his mercy and longsuffering. (1 Enoch 60.7-25)

A missing fragment of the text makes it unclear whether or not the angel is describing the judgement of Leviathan and Behemoth along *with* humanity, or if he is

⁴⁵ “Dundayn” refers to Dudael, the bottomless pit into which the Watchers were thrown, which was discussed in Chapter 1 (Nickelsburg 76).

referring to how Leviathan and Behemoth will be used in order to punish the guilty. Since traditions exist that claim God will kill the two monsters in order to feed His people, as well as ones that say the two beasts are meant to feed upon the unrighteous (Unterman 119), it is difficult to determine which version has been recorded in Enoch. Regardless of these ambiguities, Leviathan and Behemoth both appear in 1 Enoch within an eschatological context. As with many apocalypses, the revelation includes a description of past events (in this case, creation) as well as future times. A clearer reference to the eating of Leviathan and Behemoth appears in Baruch 29.4:

And Behemoth will reveal itself from its place, and Leviathan will come from the sea, the two great monsters which I created on the fifth day of creation and which I shall have kept until that time. And they will be nourishment for all who are left.

(qtd. in Whitney 38)

Like Enoch, Baruch contains both a description of past events and a prediction of things to come. Leviathan and Behemoth, in this instance, appear to have been created/cultivated for the specific purpose of feeding/rewarding the just during the End Times. The notion that God is in control of these monsters is not universal, and in other texts it appears that outside forces are needed to subdue the beasts.

In The Apocalypse of Abraham, the angel Jaoul⁴⁶ claims that he is, “ordained to restrain the Leviathan, for unto [him] are subject the attack and menace of every single reptile” (Box 49). Here, Leviathan appears to need controlling, with the implication that he may be beyond God’s influence. In Psalms, God again demonstrates more power, having apparently suppressed Leviathan himself once:

⁴⁶ In some versions of the legend, it is Michael or Gabriel who is prophesized to slay Leviathan (Box 49).

You divided the sea by your might; you broke the heads of the dragons in the waters. You crushed the heads of Leviathan; you gave him as a food for the creatures of the wilderness. (Ps. 74.13-4)

A second passage from Psalms refers to Leviathan, but this time with a certain lightheartedness:

Yonder is the sea, great and wide, creeping things innumerable are there, living things both small and great. There go the ships, and Leviathan that you formed to sport in it. (Ps. 104.25-6)

In this particular passage, Leviathan could refer either to a specific creature, or to some species of marine wildlife. Whales, especially, tend to be associated with Leviathan (Mundkur 310), although the evidence against this is generally greater than that supporting the idea. For one, in Jewish legend, Leviathan is said to have nearly eaten the whale that swallowed Jonah (Unterman 105), and for another, Leviathan's characteristics (his means of boiling the sea in order to feed, etc) are hardly in keeping with the culinary habits of whales, sharks, or other known animals. Recall, for instance, the reference to Leviathan as, "the twisting serpent," (Isaiah 27.1). It is difficult to imagine that the serpentine description of Leviathan that is found in Isaiah could refer to a whale. Likewise, whales are not generally known to possess more than one head. Though it is possible, even likely, that real animals influenced the development of Leviathan's mythology, it appears as though no one species can be considered to be the "real"

Leviathan, who demonstrates characteristics of numerous living and imaginary animals, such as whales, crocodiles, dragons, sea serpents, and snakes.

In Genesis, the creation of Leviathan is referenced through the mention that God, “created the great sea monsters.” This seems to echo the previously mentioned notion that God was responsible for the existence of Leviathan and Behemoth, in contrast to the belief that either or both of these entities existed alongside God, before creation.

Less obviously in Genesis, Karen Randolph Joines sees a connection between Leviathan the chaos monster and the serpent who tempts Eve to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Since the serpent cannot be Satan himself,⁴⁷ it follows that the concept of the serpent symbol as something disruptive must herald from an older tradition. According to Joines:

The serpent in Genesis 3 stands also for chaos and evil. It represents, as it were, the return of the chaos of [darkness] . . . the Hebrew adaptation of the Babylonian Tiamat, the sea-serpent. This is a bit of the chaotic sea *redivivus* even in the garden of perfect harmony and bliss. As the most subtle of the created animals, the serpent of Genesis 3 sows seeds of distrust and disruption to a unified and peaceful existence. Before the serpent appears there is perfect fellowship between God and man, and complete acceptance between man and woman; afterwards there is a breach in the human-divine relationship and embarrassment between the man and his wife. The serpent is neither the incarnation of, nor under the direction of, a superhuman and demonic power in opposition to man and God It is not a demon, but a natural creature of God . .

⁴⁷ Genesis is dated earlier than Satan’s first appearance, which does not occur until after the Babylonian exile (Joines 27).

. to be distinguished from the other animals by its method of locomotion and its craftiness; it is not a mythical monster which invades the garden, but a creature which belongs anywhere and everywhere in the good creation of God. At the same time, the deceitful attitude of the serpent is alien to the spirit of the garden of Eden. The Yahwist has used the serpent to *objectify* chaos, but *not to personify it*. (26)

These two serpentine passages in Genesis (the one referring to the creation of sea-serpents, and the other being the legend of original sin), both demonstrate a trend towards associating Leviathan specifically with snakes and great serpents. When he is a dragon, he is a serpentine dragon of the ocean, occasionally demonstrating piscine characteristics, yet remaining, nonetheless, a snake-monster. The idea of the primordial, chaos-serpent can be found in many mythologies outside of the Bible, most notably in Egyptian and Norse mythology. Despite distance over space and time, these seemingly dissimilar religious traditions contain many of the same motifs and symbols, with serpent imagery no less an example.

Looking at Leviathan and Rahab as synonyms,⁴⁸ as they are typically considered (Davidson 239), a connection develops between Leviathan, Behemoth and Egypt. In the mythology of the Old Testament the Bible does not claim that no other deities exist concurrently with Yahweh, but rather, that Yahweh is superior to them. There are also suggestions that the pantheons of foreign nations are, in fact, angels/demons, who are

⁴⁸ Behemoth is sometimes also considered synonymous with Leviathan, although this idea is much less widespread, since Behemoth and Leviathan often appear in the same text together as two distinct entities. Furthermore, although Leviathan and Rahab are both associated with the ocean, Behemoth is very clearly a land-dwelling creature. While in some versions of the story, Behemoth, like Leviathan, originated from water/the ocean, ultimately he becomes a creature of the earth (Whitney 37-8).

directly answerable to Yahweh. Thus it arose that conflicts between Canaan, the Hebrew people, and other nations, came to be thought of as punishments from God. Surely, it was suggested, if God controls the guardian spirits of these nations who are attacking us, then he must be using them in order to reprimand us for some failure brought on by our people?⁴⁹ It followed that specific countries and peoples were ruled over, and represented by, particular fallen angels and demonic entities. We have already seen this with regard to Azazel, who, as previously mentioned, is identified with Rome in *The Master and Margarita*, taking on a role traditionally held by Samael, with whom he was often confused (Bamberger 139). Returning once more to Isaiah, Rahab, prince of the primordial sea, is identified closely with Egypt:

Was it not you who cut Rahab in pieces, who pierced the dragon? Was it not you who dried up the sea, the waters of the great deep; who made the depths of the sea a way for the redeemed to cross over? (51.9-10)

Egyptian mythology is itself filled with serpent symbolism, as well as Ophiolatrea, or serpent worship (Mundkur 1-39), and there are many connections made between Egypt the place and ophidian deities. In particular, Wadjiat, a goddess associated with serpents, was considered a patron of Egypt as a nation. In some of the earliest deific depictions we have available to us today, Wadjiat the serpent goddess, along with a second goddess called Nekhbet, is considered a symbol of Upper and Lower Egypt (Budge 376-7; Pinch 7). Like Leviathan, she is a serpent of the primordial deep.⁵⁰ In some versions of her story, she existed before the creator God came to be (Pinch 71),

⁴⁹ For a more in-depth study of the social factors behind the development of Satan and demonology see Elaine Pagels's book, *The Origin of Satan*.

⁵⁰ A male counterpart to Wadjiat is found in Nehebkau, an ophidian deity who is also considered to be of the primordial ocean, Nun (Pinch 169, 181).

while in others she was said to be Ra-Atum's⁵¹ eye, which he sent off into the waters of chaos to retrieve his lost children. According to the legend, when Wadjyat returned to Ra to find that he had replaced her with a new eye, she became enraged, and Ra transformed her into a serpent (Pinch 199). Likewise, in Egyptian cosmology,⁵² the universe began with eight deities representing the female and male of each element (water, eternity, darkness and air). The female of these primordial, elemental deities were all serpent goddesses and the males frogs (Ions 35-7). The primordial sea itself was often also anthropomorphised, with a human body and the head of a serpent. This ancient god was called Nun, and he was responsible for keeping at bay the chaotic forces that existed at the beginning of time, which were likewise depicted as serpentine beings (Ions 39). Atum, too, originated as a serpent God, but when he gradually became associated with Ra, whose nemesis was Apophis the snake, this association fell away (Ions 40). Apophis himself was, like Leviathan, a symbol of the destructive side of creation, and a villainous counterpart to the protective snake-deity of the primordial sea. Apophis was thought to be the son of the cow-goddess, Nut, whose body stretched the expanse of the heavens. Much as in the Hebrew tradition of Leviathan, Apophis was depicted both as a snake and as a crocodile, and every part of his body seems to have been considered dangerous (Pinch 106-7). In a more benign form and because of the fact that it could be seen shedding its skin, the serpent was a symbol of youth, fertility, time and eternity (Joines 18). Most famously, these qualities are to be found in the Egyptian Ouroboros, which depicts a serpent eating its own tail—an image that would transcend Egyptian mythology and

⁵¹ The chief deity throughout most of Egyptian mythology. He symbolised the sun and its life-giving properties. Although he was one of the most important of Egyptian Gods, he was not the first, being himself a son of the sky-goddess (Pinch 182-4).

⁵² This, according to Hermopolitan version of creation. There existed several different versions of creation within Egypt (Ions 24, 35).

make its way to other parts of the world and into modern times, including some descriptions and pictures of Leviathan (Goldstein 117; Pinch 200).

In a slightly more mundane use, serpents could be seen to decorate the crowns of Egyptian royalty, as well as gods and goddesses. These “standing” serpents were known as Uraei (Budge 2: 377). Uraei were particularly common as decorations and details on statues of the cow-headed goddess, Hathor, as a symbol of creative wisdom (Joines 46). These statues and artefacts seem to have had an enormous effect on biblical representations of serpents, and Karen Randolph Joines posits that it was by Egyptian mythology and iconography that many of the biblical references to serpents were inspired.⁵³

In the Cabalistic tradition, there are four versions of Leviathan: a clean and an unclean spirit in both the material and spiritual worlds. The unclean Leviathan, who seems to parallel the Egyptian Apophis (counterpart of the benevolent snake-god, Nun), was considered to be the cupbearer and groomsman to Samael⁵⁴ and Lilith,⁵⁵ and would be slain during the end times, in accordance with the aforementioned eschatological texts that we have examined (Bamberger 175) .

The Norse equivalent of the Semitic Leviathan and the Egyptian serpent deities (both good and evil), is Jormungand, the Midgard serpent. Like Leviathan, the Midgard serpent is so massive that it coils about all lands from within its home in the ocean, and

⁵³ Twenty-five percent of biblical serpents appear in Isaiah (Joines 11), including references to Leviathan and Rahab. These are not the only borrowings we see coming from Egyptian myth and entering the Hebrew canon. It appears as though many choirs of angels can be traced back to minor Egyptian elemental gods (Budge 1: 1-8). Likewise, through the writings of Origen and other Christian scholars, Egyptian demonology entered the world of Gnosticism, as well as Christianity (Kelly 107).

⁵⁴ Samael is used here as a synonym for Satan (Bamberger 94).

⁵⁵ Lilith was the first wife of Adam, and is said to have spawned all of the demons who inhabit the Earth. Originally, Lilith was likely a protective goddess of childbirth and fertility, but as the Hebrews shifted from a polytheistic religion she was transformed into a malevolent figure who was associated with vampires, succubae and the death and kidnapping of children (Rudwin 94-104; Unterman 120).

like the symbol of Ouroboros it holds its own tail between its teeth (Lindow 230). In Norse mythology, it was the destiny of the Midgard serpent to battle to the death with the thunder-god, Thor. Despite that Odin is at the head of the Norse pantheon, in some versions of the Ragnarök⁵⁶ myth, the struggle between Jormungand and Thor is considered the central conflict (Martin 78). Thor is also said to have previously dragged the Midgard serpent out of the sea in order to throw his magical hammer at it. With the world conceptualized as a flattened disc, Jormundgand was believed to encircle its circumference—as distant from the mortal realm as was Hel’s domain below the earth (Lindow 230). A second serpent-dragon exists in Nidhögg, who was the giant chaos snake chewing at the roots of the world tree (Yggdrasil). In some versions of the story, it is Nidhögg’s appearance that ushers in Ragnarök when he abandons his home beneath the tree in order to fly across the sky (Lindow 239).

As in Egyptian mythology, there exists a primordial cow-goddess within the Norse tradition. This figure is known as Audhumla, and she was responsible for the nourishment of both the Aesir and giants at the dawn of creation (Lindow 63). It would be tempting here to suggest that Nidhögg, like Apophis to Nut, is the direct offspring of Audhumla. No mention is made of the serpent’s origins, however, and since there is only one surviving written account of Audhumla herself, we are left in the dark as to any possible connections between the two.

Other mythic, cosmic serpents exist in Quetzalcoatl (Aztec), Koshchei (Slavic), Koshi (Japanese) and Ahriman (Zoroastrian) (Conway 117-8, 127-8). Sometimes these gods and monsters are representative of admirable qualities, while at others they are

⁵⁶ Ragnarök is the equivalent of the Judaeo-Christian end times. During Ragnarök, most of the Gods and Goddesses are said to perish, though there is promise of a new era of rebirth for the tribes of men (Lindow 254).

symbols of destructive chaos (in many instances, these traits are not mutually exclusive). With this very brief examination of the mythic, demonic and biblical history of Leviathan and the world serpent in mind, let us turn now to *The Master and Margarita*, Korov'ev, and that character's place within Bulgakovian demonology.

The Proofs

The first clue that Korovy'ev-Fagot was intended to represent Leviathan occurred to me during my first reading of the novel. Upon finishing *The Master and Margarita*, with its eschatological imagery and clear references to the Four Horseman of Revelation (Bethea 218-9), I was struck by the absence of Leviathan amidst the figures of Satan (Volland), the angel of the bottomless pit (Azazello/Abaddon) and especially Behemoth, with whom Leviathan was nearly always paired in the biblical tradition. Furthermore, this trio of demonic characters hardly fulfilled the eschatological requirement for a quartet of riders. It was clear from his presence in the final scenes, as well as his jockey's cap, that Korov'ev was the final horseman. If Leviathan was missing, therefore, and if Korov'ev was an as yet unidentified horseman/demon, then it stood to reason that Korov'ev was himself the world serpent. My suspicions were further supported by the fact that Korov'ev was almost always spotted with Behemoth at his side. Indeed, the two have come to be seen as an inseparable comic duo.

Korov'ev-Fagot's identification as Leviathan would fit in well with David Bethea's identification of the circular motif that runs throughout the novel, and which is

related to the novel's eschatological elements. For Bethea, the circle, hippodrome, horse and rider are all symbols of time within a Russian context. He explains that:

As in the other novels we have been investigating, the horse and rider surfaces continually, almost as if it were an "Ursymbol" for Russian history at an epic crossroads, where chaos, suffering, revolution, and death gather under the forces of a dark cavalier. Bulgakov was clearly aware of these various connotations and builds them into his works. They culminate in *The Master and Margarita*. (193)

Leviathan's identity as a chaos monster is well documented, and Korov'ev's antics within *The Master and Margarita* could certainly be interpreted as chaotic. It is necessary to Bethea's interpretation that the demonic horsemen all demonstrate this association with disorder and rebellion, since it is so important to his historical-apocalyptic reading of the novel. A connection here could be made between Korov'ev, Behemoth and Azazello, since Azazello is himself a rebel angel, and consequently is associated with things revolutionary.

Bethea spends a great deal of time examining the use of circular words and terms within *The Master and Margarita*, and how they relate to the notion of a final end (Bethea 216, 218), ultimately suggesting that Bulgakov's novel acts as a series of opening and closing circles that are representative of the cycles of life and death. The characters, he claims, run the race of this series of cycles, dying and being reborn (Bethea 228). Leviathan's presence within the novel would fit well into this interpretation, since his function as the world serpent, Ouroboros, marks him out as one of the most widely

recognized symbols of eternity and the cyclical nature of time. The serpent, as has been previously noted, has long been associated with rebirth, reincarnation, youth and also death. Likewise, the association of the Egyptian Uraei of the cow-goddess, Hathor, with creative wisdom, is in keeping with Bulgakov's theme of the role of the writer within society (Joines 46) .

Turning away from the thematic for a moment, more solid evidence to suggest a link between Korov'ev and Leviathan exists in the way Korov'ev's powers manifest themselves within the novel. The first such instance is during the scene when Korov'ev first appears. Berlioz sees the figure floating transparently in the air, before finally disappearing, or becoming invisible:

И тут знойный воздух сгустился перед ним, и соткался из этого воздуха прозрачный гражданин престранного вида. На маленькой головке жокейский картузик, клетчатый кургузый воздушный же пиджачок⁵⁷ . . .
Гражданин ростом в сажень, но в плечах узок, худ неимоверно, и физиономия, прошу заметить, глумливая.

Жизнь Берлиоза складывалась так, что к необыкновенным явлениям он не привык. Еще более побледнев, он вытаращил глаза и в смятении подумал: 'Этого не может быть!..'

Но это, увы, было, и длинный, сквозь которого видно, гражданин, не касаясь земли, качался перед ним и влево, и вправо.

⁵⁷ Korov'ev's checked jacket is likely a reference to the checkered dress of the devil from *The Brothers Karamzov*. In an earlier version of the novel, it appears that Voland himself was to wear checkered trousers, suggesting that Bulgakov had always intended one of his characters to make a small reference to that demon (Chudakova 183). It also suggests that, rather than being a human character, as some have posited, Korov'ev is indeed demonic and superhuman.

Тут ужас до того овладел Берлиозом, что он закрыл глаза. А когда он их открыл, увидел, что все кончилось, марево растворилось, клетчатый исчез, а заодно и тупая игла выскочила из сердца.

(Bulgakov 131; ch.1)

And then the hot air congealed in front of him, and out of it materialized a transparent man of most bizarre appearance. A small head with a jockey cap, a skimpy little checked jacket that was made out of air...The man was seven feet tall, but very narrow in the shoulders, incredibly thin, and his face, please note, had a jeering look about it.

Berlioz's life was so arranged that he was unaccustomed to unusual happenings. He turned even paler, opened his eyes wide, and in a state of confusion thought, "This can't be!..."

But alas, it was, and the tall transparent man swayed from left to right in front of him, without touching the ground.

At this point Berlioz was so overcome with terror that he shut his eyes. And when he opened them, he saw that it was all over, the mirage had evaporated, the man in checks had vanished, and the blunt needle had dislodged itself from his heart. (Burgin 4)

In this passage from the novel, we see how Korov'ev has the ability to appear invisible, transparent, and to disappear at will. While these are all abilities that have been attributed to a variety of devils throughout history, they are also reminiscent of the Jewish legend that claims the skin of the Leviathan can grant invisibility (Goldstein 48). In

Egyptian lore, the primordial serpent is thought of as an invisible being, since it was created before the sun (Joines 19). In combination with Korov'ev's other Leviathan-like characteristics, his power of invisibility becomes a more probable indicator of his origins. Korov'ev's height and skinniness contrast him rather blatantly (as well as comically) with the short, stout Behemoth. They could also be interpreted as anthropomorphized expressions of Leviathan's massive length, the same way the biblical Behemoth's enormous girth manifests through the cat-Behemoth's weight. One of the most convincing of the Leviathan-like attributes given to Korov'ev comes to the fore when we first meet him in his role as horseman:

Тут он вдруг вытянулся вверх, как будто был резиновый, из пальцев правой руки устроил какую-то хитрую фигуру, завился, как винт, и затем, внезапно раскрутившись, свистнул. Этого свиста Маргарита не услышала, но она его увидела в то время, как ее вместе с горячим конем бросило саженой на десять в сторону. Рядом с нею с корнем вырвало дубовое дерево, и земля покрылась трещинами до самой реки. Огромный пласт берега, вместе с пристанью и рестораном, высадило в реку. Вода в ней вскипела, взметнулась, и на противоположный берег, зеленый и низменный, выплеснуло целый речной трамвай с совершенно невредимыми пассажирами. К ногам храпящего коня Маргариты швырнуло убитую свистом Фагота галку.

Мастера испугнул этот свист. Он ухватился за голову и побежал обратно к группе дожидавшихся его спутников. (Bulgakov 579; ch.31)

Whereupon he stretched as if he were made of rubber, twirled the fingers of his right hand in an ingenious way, twisted himself up like a corkscrew, and then, after suddenly unwinding, let out a whistle. Margarita did not hear the whistle, but she saw its effects when she and her fiery steed were thrown more than twenty yards to the side. An oak tree next to her was torn up by the roots, and fissures spread over the ground to the river. A huge chunk of riverbank, together with the landing and the restaurant, was uprooted into the river. The water bubbled and heaved, and an entire riverboat was thrown up on the green, low-lying opposite shore, the passengers completely unharmed. A jackdaw killed by Fagot's whistle landed at the feet of Margarita's neighing horse. The whistle scared the Master away. He grabbed his head and ran back to join his waiting companions. (Burgin 319-20)

Here, Korov'ev's twisting and unwinding are again rather serpentine, and indeed, may even reference the definition of Leviathan as "twister" (Forsyth, *Old Enemy* 62). The most striking feature of Korov'ev, however, is his whistle, which causes small earthquakes and makes the water bubble and heave, both of which are abilities specifically attributed to Apophis and Leviathan within Egyptian and Judaeo-Christian mythology (Box 67; Pinch 107). In an earlier version of the whistling scene, Korov'ev and Behemoth appear to have existed as one composite character, or at least with interchangeable characteristics/lines (Chudakova 185). In this early draft Korov'ev and Behemoth probably represented the combined Leviathan-Behemoth, since in mythology,

the two figures were occasionally confused or amalgamated in the same way⁵⁸ (Davidson 239). Also mentioned in this same early text is the sound of jackal-like laughter as the whistle travels down the phone line. Etymologically, there is some confusion with regard to the words “tanninim,” which is considered to refer to the plural of Leviathan (Beal 26), “tannin,” referring either to Leviathan, Behemoth, or an entirely different (but related) chaos dragon (Gunkel 76), and “tannim,” which denotes a jackal(s) (Wakeman 75-7). Thus, jackals, too are associated with Leviathan and Behemoth, at the same time strengthening the already powerful connection between these two monsters and the nation of Egypt.⁵⁹

In the Cabalah, it has been mentioned, Leviathan is Satan’s cupbearer and groomsman, and at Satan’s Ball in *The Master and Margarita*, Korov’ev fulfills just that same function. After Azazello has shot and killed Baron Maigel, Korov’ev stands with a goblet in order to catch the baron’s blood:

Коровьев подставил чашу под бьющуюся струю и передал
наполнившуюся чашу Воланду. Безжизненное тело барона в это время уже
было на полу.

-- Я пью ваше здоровье, господа, -- негромко сказал

Воланд и, подняв чашу, прикоснулся к ней губами. (Bulgakov 454; ch.23)

Korovyov held the goblet under the pulsing stream, and when it was

⁵⁸ A leftover of this can be found in the second half of *The Master and Margarita*, which was left only partly edited, since Bulgakov died before he could completely finish it. In the ball scene, Behemoth tells Margarita to think of him as a fish, rather than a cat (Bulgakov 446; ch.23). I would argue that it is precisely its unfinished nature that allowed this reference to remain.

⁵⁹ Jackals were particularly sacred to the Egyptians (Wakeman 76). It should also be mentioned that the possibility of Bulgakov having had access to, and being familiar with, Egyptian mythology and culture were quite great, since the Ancient Egyptian world had long retained an aura of respect, mysticism and curiosity within Russia. For more on the cultural and philosophical influence of Ancient Egypt on Russia, see Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal’s, *The Occult in Russian and Soviet Culture*.

full, he gave it to Woland. By that time the baron's lifeless body was already on the floor.

'Ladies and gentlemen, I drink to your health,' said Woland softly, and raising the goblet, he touched it to his lips. (Burgin 234)

With Margarita serving as Voland's queen for the night, she enters into the role of bride of Satan, and it is left to Korov'ev and Behemoth to take care of her, dress her, introduce her to the guests and school her on how to behave. Thus, Korov'ev fulfills Leviathan's role as groomsman. In the same chapter, it may be worthwhile noting, Korov'ev introduces Margarita to several figures who are guilty of poisonings. Likewise, in the chapter just prior, Korov'ev is heard to speak in a, "venomous voice" ("ядовитым голосом"; Bulgakov 432; ch.22).⁶⁰

This is not, however, Korov'ev-Fagot's sole purpose in the novel, since he also appears under the title of "ex-choirmaster" on several occasions. I believe that Ericson is correct in identifying this as a reference to the fact that Korov'ev is a fallen angel (former leader of a choir of angels) (Ericson 51). This is in keeping with the argument that Korov'ev is Leviathan, since Leviathan is also occasionally referred to as a fallen angel, and not simply a monster (Davidson 173, 238-9; Orlov 247). Ericson posits that because Bulgakov uses the term *choirmaster*, Korov'ev must be an archangel. I would suggest that, rather than an archangel (since in many angelic hierarchies archangels are not actually very high up in the schema), Korov'ev is meant to be a Seraph. According to most hierarchies, the Seraphim are the highest choir of angels, with Lucifer himself having been associated with them. The word "seraphim," means "fiery serpents," and it is

⁶⁰ Translation my own.

believed that this particular type of angel is a borrowing from Egyptian serpent-lore (Davidson 267; Joines 42). In M. A. Orlov's study of demons and witchcraft (a book that, if you will recall, Bulgakov is known to have used for his research into demonology), Leviathan is described as follows: "происходившій из чина Серафимовъ" (" . . . descending from the rank of the Seraphim"; Orlov 247). Orlov lists Leviathan as one of seven demons who is said to have possessed a French nun during the Middle Ages (Orlov 246). Leviathan is the fourth demon listed, followed directly after by Behemoth:

Онъ [Левіафанъ] изображался стоящимъ на большой морской раковинѣ посреди воды. У него была громадная голова какой-то чудовищной рыбы, съ широко раскрытою пастью, большими рыбьими глазами, вся утыканная острыми рыбьими остями; по бокамъ головы высились два тонкихъ *бычачьихъ* рога. Одѣтъ онъ былъ въ какой-то странный костюмъ, напоминающій старинный адмиральскій мундиръ. Съ лѣваго бока у него болталась шпага, а въ лѣвой рукѣ онъ держалъ Нептуновъ трезубецъ. Левіафанъ обозначилъ свою квартиру въ тѣлѣ одержимой: Онъ сидѣлъ у ней во лбу и, выступая изъ нея, оставилъ на самой срединѣ лба слѣдъ своего выхода въ видѣ кроваваго креста.

Пятый бѣсъ былъ Бегемотъ, происходившій изъ чина Престоловъ. Пребываніе его было во чревѣ игуменни, а въ знакъ своего выхода изъ нея онъ долженъ былъ подбросить ее на аршинъ вверхъ. Этотъ бѣсъ изображался въ видѣ чудовища со слоновой головой, съ хоботомъ и

клыками. Руки у него были человеческого фасона, а громаднѣйшій животъ, коротенькій хвостикъ и толстыя заднія лапы, какъ у Бегемота, напоминали о носимомъ имъ имени. (Orlov 247, italics my own)

He [Leviathan] was represented standing on a large seashell in the middle of the water. He had the enormous head of some kind of monstrous fish, with *a widely opened jaw*, great piscine eyes, all studded with sharp, fishy barbs. On either side of his heads rose two thin, *bovine* horns. He was clothed in some kind of strange suit, reminiscent of an ancient admiral's uniform. At his left flank dangled a sword, and in his left hand he held Neptune's trident. Leviathan marked his apartment in the possessed body: he rested on her forehead, and acting through her, left in the middle of her forehead a trace of his exit in the form of a bloody cross.

The fifth demon was Behemoth, descending from the order of Thrones. His residence was in the belly of the abbess, and as a token of his exit from her he had to thrust it out an *arshin*. This demon appeared in the guise of a chimera with an elephant's head, trunk and tusks. He had hands in the manner of a human, a great stomach, a very short tail and stout hairy legs like a hippopotamus, reminding one why he bears his name (translation and italics my own).

It is possible that this description of Leviathan and Behemoth is where Bulgakov first came across them. Notably, we have references here to several characteristics belonging to Korov'ev. Like the version of Leviathan that Orlov describes,

Korov'ev-Fagot has associations with cows or cattle and he is also a former *choirmaster*, suggesting that he was once a Seraph.

His role as ex-choirmaster could also serve to explain Korov'ev's second name, Fagot, which translates as bassoon (Ericson 51). I would extend this interpretation to suggest that "bassoon" also refers to Korov'ev's powerful whistle—a parody of the divine trumpets that are sounded during the end times of Revelation. Another of Korov'ev's roles (his job as Voland's interpreter) can be traced back to the fact that Leviathan was also known as a patron of diplomats (Rudwin 83).

The meaning of Korov'ev's first-given pseudonym,⁶¹ as has been previously mentioned, is "son of a cow," or "of a cow." In world-serpent myths the cosmic serpent is often born of a primordial cow or bull, as we have already witnessed to great extent in Egyptian mythology. The Egyptian goddess, Hathor, in particular, was associated jointly with cows and with serpents, and she was often considered interchangeable with Wadjiat and Nut (mother of the chaos-serpent, Apophis) (Pinch 125). In religious imagery, Hathor was often seen adorned with serpents (Joines 65-6) and was the divine cow of the heavens and the milky way (Pinch 125). Hathor's home was in a cave high in the mountains to the West, and it was considered to be the land of the dead (Bleeker 30-1). Returning once more to the early draft of Korov'ev's whistle, a part of his call is a cry, proclaiming his desire to return to the black cliffs (Chudakova 185). Could this be reference to his birth place, where his mother, the cow-goddess birthed him? In Aztec mythology, which we know Bulgakov was aware of due to his reference to Huitzilopochtli in the first chapter of *The Master and Margarita* (Bulgakov 133; ch.1),

⁶¹ We know that neither "Korov'ev" nor "Fagot" is his real name, since he appears to create them on the spot (Bulgakov 237; ch.9).

Quetzalcoatl is a powerful feathered snake-god;⁶² one of four creator deities, and son of the god of the milky way, Mixcoatl (Bingham 74). The milky way itself was considered to be a heavenly serpent, as well as a road leading to the underworld (Bingham 73). Thus, there is a strong connection between Korov'ev as the world serpent, primordial chaos, creation and cow-imagery/parentage. Bulgakov decides not to give Korov'ev-Fagot's real name away, but instead hints at the character's origins through two carefully chosen nicknames.

The most telling of all proofs to Korov'ev-Fagot's identity is not found in mythology itself, however, but in the literature that developed out of that mythology. In the first section of this chapter, I discussed Lesley Milne's theory that Korov'ev was Mephistopheles. I am inclined to agree with Milne, whose Mephistophelean version of the character fits well as the father of lies.⁶³ Mephistopheles's name comes either from the Greek, meaning "he who does not love light," or the Hebrew words for "destroyer" and "liar" (O'Grady 72, 74). Although it is uncertain whether there is anything to the connection, one finds a certain humor attached to the fact that Mephistopheles's very name is, perhaps, a pun on light and darkness. Mephistopheles is also listed as a former archangel (Davidson 190). A leftover of Goethe's version of the character is found in Korov'ev's red shoes (Bulgakov 238; ch.9), which echo the red waist-coat and tights of Goethe's devil (Rudwin 49). Indeed, Korov'ev's true form (that of the violet knight) seems to echo Goethe's version of the character. Says Mephistopheles of his attire:

⁶² Recall here, Korov'ev's feathery moustache (Bulgakov 177; ch. 3), which may also be a reference to the fact that, in both Goethe and Gounod's versions of *Faust*, Mephistopheles wears a feather in his hat (Lowe 281).

⁶³ An epithet commonly given to Mephistopheles. Note that, during the magic show at the Variety Theatre, it is Korov'ev who compliments Bengal'skii on his lies (Bulgakov 269; ch.12).

MEPHISTOPHELES: I'm here as a young nobleman for you, in scarlet suit
with gold brocading, cock-feather perched on beret brim, a rapier long
and pointed nicely. (1535-9)

As Walter Arndt points out in his footnote to his translation, Mephistopheles's costume is that of a Spanish cavalier—an image that is reflected in Korov'ev's knighthood, as well as the fact that he is presented in *The Master and Margarita* as one of the four horsemen of Revelation (Goethe 42).

Furthermore, like the Leviathan of legend, Mephistopheles and Korov'ev are both capable of opening their jaws wide to swallow waiters and packs of cards (Krugovoy 92; Orlov 247).

The Mephistopheles/Leviathan connection occurs in a version of Faust by the German writer, Friedrich Maximilian Klinger. *Faustus: His Life, Death and Doom: A Romance in Prose* was published in 1791 in St. Petersburg and had been written while the author was traveling in Russia (Gilman xxvii). It would have been available to Bulgakov in a Russian edition that existed during Bulgakov's lifetime.

Put simply, in Klinger's version of the Faust story, the character of Mephistopheles is replaced by a demon called Leviathan. In terms of his characterization and role, Klinger's Leviathan is essentially the same figure as Goethe's Mephistopheles, but with a few references to his more oceanic origins. For instance, following Leviathan's miraculous disappearance after Faustus has first captured him, the following cacophony is heard:

Then the murmur changed to a loud tumult, which resembled the rolling

of thunder or the dash of a breaker against the coral reef, or its howl and bellow in the caves of the ocean. (Klinger 51).

Like Korov'ev's true form in *The Master and Margarita*, Leviathan is described as having a dark countenance, which obscures the light that would have once surrounded him before his fall. This "gloomy veil" (Klinger 42), marks him out as Leviathan the fallen angel, in keeping with Korov'ev's identity as ex-choirmaster (fallen Seraph). Leviathan appears to Faustus under a mask, since his true aspect would be too great for a mortal to withstand. He does describe himself to Faust, however, claiming amongst his ornaments a shield and sword, bringing to mind the fact that Korov'ev is dressed as a knight when his true self is revealed. Leviathan is also responsible for arranging the banquet of the devil proper at the start of *Faustus* (Klinger 34), much as Korov'ev takes on most of the responsibility for Satan's Ball in *The Master and Margarita*. Later on, Leviathan puts on a puppet show, which he uses to tempt a beautiful woman into falling in lust with Faustus (Klinger 171). This scene finds its echo in the magic show at the variety theatre, in which Korov'ev and Behemoth are the chief participants (Bulgakov 264-81; ch. 12).

The plot and themes of Klinger's novel are similar to Goethe's play, without being entirely parallel. There is no Gretchen in *Faustus*, but rather, several smaller Gretchens, whom Leviathan helps Faustus to seduce. The bulk of the novel could be considered a travelogue of sin. The devil has sent Leviathan to tempt Faustus into debauchery and despair because Faustus is considered one of the few truly good human beings left on Earth (or, at least, one of the best). For most of the novel Faustus maintains

his optimism toward mankind in the face of all the sin that Leviathan brings to his attention. Eventually, however, when Faustus realizes that many of his good intentions have been the cause of great misfortunes for others, he falls victim to Leviathan's assertion that mankind is fundamentally evil and rejects his innate goodness in favor of criminality, eventually being torn to pieces by Leviathan before having his soul brought down to Hell. Throughout this, Leviathan is just as ambiguous a figure as are Bulgakov's devils. On the one hand, it is Leviathan's goal to prove Faust's faith in humanity wrong, but on the other, he does occasionally warn Faust that his actions may not have their intended results. Like Korov'ev, Leviathan is a sombre trickster, who uses his sharp wit to punish those guilty of greed, lust, murder and oppression (Klinger 77). He is also guilty, however, of acting maliciously toward some who do not necessarily deserve it, a feature shared by Korov'ev, whose punishments tend to be rather harsh. As Krugovoy points out, the employees of the Soviet, bureaucratic system are mostly innocents who are not able to deviate from their prescribed duties, yet nevertheless Korov'ev is responsible for playing his cruel pranks on them (Krugovoy 96).

Also like Bulgakov's demons, Leviathan seems to consider himself an important part of creation. Says Leviathan to Faustus:

How disgusting to be forced to listen to a man who reproaches the Devil
because he is a devil, and does not boast of that shadow, Virtue, like you!

(Klinger 53)

Leviathan's fault here is that, unlike Volland, who realizes that darkness and light are both integral forces at the heart of creation, he suggests that righteousness is somehow inferior and that it blemishes the surface of an otherwise darkened soul. Like

Mephistopheles, then, Leviathan makes a fatal pun as to the nature of light and darkness, and so merits punishment, unlike Korov'ev's master, Voland, who understands the balance that must exist between the two forces (Wright 1163).

My suggestion would be, then, given the evidence, that Korov'ev is indeed Mephistopheles, but a Mephistopheles of a slightly different origin. With the knowledge that Bulgakov would have had access to Klinger's novel, which features Leviathan in Mephistopheles's place, as well as Orlov's book on demonology, which may have been the starting point for Bulgakov's own investigation into the character, one may suggest that the key to Korov'ev's true identity is to be found in precisely the connection between Mephistopheles and Leviathan. The clues contained in the *The Master and Margarita*, along with the information found in Bulgakov's sources, seem to point toward Leviathan the world serpent as the source myth for Bulgakov's character, suggesting that Korov'ev is capable of being both figures at the same time. Milne's identification of Mephistopheles is a strong one, but lacking the missing piece of the puzzle it could not hope to fit exactly right with the rest of the information available. Keeping Leviathan's history in mind as the background for the character, the Mephistopheles theory fits cozily into the available set of clues that Bulgakov laid out to challenge his readers. It would be impossible to say for sure whether Bulgakov hit upon the Leviathan myth first, or if he was led to it through an investigation into Mephistopheles, the Faust legend, and Klinger's novel. Regardless of his specific methodology, I believe that this interpretation takes into account Bulgakov's love of literary references, as well as his extensive knowledge of mythology and biblical lore, and successfully pinpoints the traditions with which Bulgakov was working most closely as he fleshed out his characters and novel.

Conclusion

The demons of Mikhail Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita*, much like the novel's other characters, serve a symbolic literary purpose beyond an obvious reading of them as messengers of evil or harbingers of destruction. Though Azazello, Abaddon, Korov'ev, Behemoth and their fellows are still linked with the traditionally demonic, their individual importance reaches far beyond that, as they come to represent a variety of themes and influences within the novel as a whole. The themes of the literary scapegoat, of forgiveness, the nature of light and darkness, punishment and retribution, are themes that Bulgakov associates not with one specific character but which he spreads out, threading subtle nuances of meaning into the stories of *each* character. In this way it is possible for Azazello, Abaddon, Yeshua, the Master, Margarita, Voland, and Korov'ev all to represent the fate of the oppressed author, while still remaining vastly different in terms of their origins and overall characterization. Considering *The Master and Margarita* in this way, it becomes doubly important to look at each of the novel's protagonists and antagonists in order to better gain a clearer, wider view of the whole canvas of Bulgakov's work. Without the identification of Azazello and Abaddon with each other, or with apocryphal tradition, the characters lose much of the depth and significance that I believe Bulgakov intended them to have. Likewise, Korov'ev-Fagot's relationship with Leviathan and Mephistopheles draws new comparisons with the biblical and literary tradition. Through Korov'ev, many of the novel's apocalyptic and Faustian borrowings become ever more intrinsic to a reading of *The Master and Margarita*, but the door is also opened to new interpretations and connections, which link the novel with

Klinger's version of Faust, and with variations of the Leviathan legend from mythologies as varied as the Egyptian and Aztec pantheons. Given the wealth of evidence within the *The Master and Margarita*, as well as Bulgakov's sources for the novel, I am confident that these connections can form a strong argument that can stand firm against critique. The undeniable complexity of *The Master and Margarita* does, however, beg for further interpretation and elucidation. It remains the case, as was stated previously, that it is impossible to achieve a complete understanding of the characters and ideas at play in Bulgakov's novel by applying any one theory or concept to the work. Though Azazello is the scapegoat and the murderer demon of the waterless desert, he is, like Korov'ev, Behemoth and the others, also used for comedic effect, and could be interpreted as allegory, satire, or from a philosophical angle. The work I have done here essentially serves as a collection of information on the origins of two of the novel's more obscure and mysterious characters. Though I give some thematic interpretation of my own, the chief goal of the present study, through tracing back the inspiration for Bulgakov's characters, was to help to better orient problematic aspects of the text in order that ongoing discussions on the Faustian and apocalyptic undertones of the work would have some fresh and relevant material from which to draw. Through applying my own knowledge of demonology, mythology and religion to Azazello and Korov'ev-Fagot, I have attempted to shed light on areas of interest within *The Master and Margarita* that have so far been left unexplored, or that have proven elusive to previous researchers seeking to make sense of them. Hopefully, the two gaps that this study has attempted to fill will serve as a base on which to build new avenues of investigation, for those likewise enamoured with *The Master and Margarita*. It is my belief that, because Bulgakov's own

sources and interests were so varied, scholars with a background in a number of different fields would be necessary to ever offer an absolute and complete interpretation as to the meaning behind *The Master and Margarita*.

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