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Four Methods of Analyzing the Novel “The Master and Margarita” Of M. Bulgakov

Abstract

Literary Criticism is important to be incorporated into the way we concept and organize an open lecture in the field of Literary Studies. It is very beneficent for the students to get different approaches to the literary in the same analyze. This way they can understand how several schools help to see literature differently and they altogether have the same mission: make the literature open for different readers, even if they are controversial with each-other.

The novel “The Master and Margarita” in our study has been analyzed in four different methods, which are: 1. Literature and Biography, 2. Literature and Psychology, 3. Literature and Society, 4. Literature and the Ideas. As an important novel for the study of the novel as a genre and at the same time, as an important work for the society of the time, this masterpiece of Bulgakov has been interpreted from different schools and methods. The four methods we are using are very important specifically for this novel, for the conditions of the time when it is written and for the innovations to the novel genre.

The Albanian Student will be open minded after reading this study, which can be used even as e lecture, because it shows us practically the importance of different perspectives to study and to teach literature.

Keywords: *Methods; Perspectives; Biography; Society; Psychology; Ideas*

1- Introduction

The novel “The Master and Margarita” in our study has been analyzed in four different methods, which are: 1. Literature and Biography, 2. Literature and Psychology, 3. Literature and Society, 4. Literature and the Ideas. As an important work for the study of the novel as a genre and at the same time, as an important work for the society of the time, this masterpiece of Bulgakov has been interpreted from different schools and methods. The four methods we are using are very important specifically for this novel, for the conditions of the time when it is written and for the innovation to the novel genre. All these methods already exist and are considered successful in studying Literature, but we have put them apart from each other and at the same time in one paper, to make visible the different perspectives to understand literature.

This is a model of studying that can be very useful to the scholars and teachers of literature, because it represents different approaches to the literary work. All these perspectives make the idea of the whole literary work and the studies upon it.

2- Body: “Master and Margarita” according to the Biographic, Psychological and Interpretative Methods

The first method: Literature and Biography

The novel “Master and Margarita” was first published in Moscow in 1967. However, Bulgakov wrote it in isolation until his death, from 1928 until 1940. The events in the novel take place in the contemporary Russia where Bulgakov himself lived. Bulgakov’s life is esthetically included in the novel. We can notice his life in the character of The Master, an Alter Ego of the writer. Master is a character built on the Bulgakov’s prototype. According to Wellek and Warren’s Theory of Literature (Wellek & Warren, 2007) “Even when a work of art which includes indisputable biographical elements; they are subject to a restructuring and transformation work”. In our study we aim to simply notice some associations between the character and the author.

In the XIII Chapter we are introduced to the Master, a 38 - year old character, the same age that Bulgakov had in 1929, the year in which he began to write “The Master and Margarita”. Criticism against the Master reflects the same criticism against Bulgakov, especially for the novels: “Fatal Eggs”, “The White Guards” and the drama “Flight”. Just like Master, Bulgakov, has been persecuted for a long time by the press. All the time he wrote dramas that were never meant to put on the stage, nor to be published. Just like with the Master the critics were too harsh against Bulgakov’s literature. In his Letters to Stalin he notes: The critic of the While criticism against him was too harsh, so just as Master. In his letter to Stalin, titled: “Do I have a place here?”, Bulgakov mentions some of the adjectives that the critics put on his pamphlet, “The Ember Island”, which he himself thought was one of the most wise and intellectual things he wrote.

“All the criticism of the USSR, without exception, stated that this drama was mediocre, weak, with no value at all. [...] The Great Inquisitor’s shadow that represses the artistic creativity emerges to make the artist a servile slave, pretending to be called artist, even without the personality and the talent required” (Bulgakov, 2005).

Bulgakov had no other choice but sending a letter to the USSR’s Bureau and later to the Stalin himself, in which he begs to let him leave Russia, because as he states his life there was impossible. He requires only to be left free to leave, nothing more. In Russia he could find no kind of a job, for his name seemed like a monster’s name to everyone because of the propaganda. His phrases are only begging, he writes like a hopeless man would write.

“I am destroyed!” he writes in the beginning of a paragraph, but he still believes in the leader and hopes he will do something for him.

“I hope that the Soviet Leadership does something with me, whatever it is, but to do something, because for me, the playwright of five dramas widely known in Europe and USSR, is left nothing but misery, excommunication and death” (Bulgakov, 2005).

All his sufferings, depression and the loss of every hope are materialized into the alter ego character of the Master. However, we become part of the Wellek and Warren’s thought that the Literature cannot be only the materialization of a historical context: “The whole way of thinking that Art is utterly an embodiment of the author’s life and personal feelings, is wrong. Even in those works that have strong connections between the biography and the life of the character, we cannot say that the work is a correct copy of the first” (Wellek & Warren, 2007).

The modern methods and schools of studying literature, such as The Russian Formalism, The New Criticism, The Theory of the Interpretation, Structuralism, made strong opponents with the biographic studies from the Positivist Period. Roland Barthes stated “it is the language that writes, not the author”.

The second method: Literature and Psychology

From all the ways of studying Literature, the psychological approach is the most interesting one, because it incorporates the author as a subject to be studied, a subject who is not aware sometimes when he sublimates his own problems into his work. “The Psychological Method estimates the importance of the author’s inner life in understanding the literary work” (Dado, 2009).

We shall observe something more than this because the psychologist approach will be combined somehow with the biographic approach. We are going to be interested in some characters that show deviances and interesting alienations in their personality.

The Master is a very interesting character from the XX century, a Muscovite who writes a novel about Pilate and Yeshua; a novel that as we see afterwards is just the same with the original telling of the Woland (the devil). We understand this fact

because of the narration given in the fifth chapter of the novel, when the Woland tells the story happened into the Pilate's garden, where he testimonies that was himself. In the novel we see that the same story telling, including the style is narrated in the novel of the Master. The appearance of the Master as a character comes much more lately and includes a scene that makes clear that Woland was unaware of the existence of the Master. Moreover, we read that Woland had been in the Irod palace and had seen all what happened; the secret actions of Pilate there he had even met Kayfas personally.

So, how the Master who lived in the contemporaneous Moscow could have knowledge about an event that occurred in the beginning of our era in Jerusalem? This is a priori knowledge because it does not come from the perception nor from any kind of reading as far as we can see this "version" of the Gospel is very different from the ones we know. The only way of understanding how Master possessed such forbidden information is by analyzing his personality.

The first appearance of Master in the novel is in the Doctor Stravikski's insane asylum and he is having a difficult conversation with Ivan the new come in the asylum. Master is almost thirty-eight year old and the only specific things you can notice in him are his anxious eyes.

"From the balcony of the room he saw a man about 38 years old, clean and shaved, dark-haired man, with a spire nose, with anxious eyes and a tuft of hair that hung in the face" (Bulgakov, 2005).

In this passage we learn something about his life. Everything is being told in chaos, he keeps telling fragments of things and keeps repeating that he can't remember that this and that fact of his life. The way he expresses himself with little logic in it is the clearest sign of madness, because he cannot give meanings to his words. But in fact when we see the whole dialogue we understand a lot about the character, only we have to be intelligent to understand that this person is not a common mad, but a very special person and as he admits he has forgotten most of the things about his life, just because he had denied most of the life's important things.

"I don't have a name, - the weird guest responded with a profound disdain, - and I never want to hear it again. I have denied most of life's things" (Bulgakov, 2005). We have come across the fact that shamans denied most of the things that were common for everyone else in order to have greater results with their mind. Sometimes he turned out to look like a beast and didn't speak for a long time. They were considered like saints in the ancient societies because according to the belief only they possessed the truth. In the arctic places this phenomenon is widely known.

"He becomes a rambling man; the devouring desire to set aside alone, the appearance of the prophetic visions, in a lot of cases they lost their feelings. Denying the things of this world is definitely a kind of madness" (Eliade, 2004). Obviously Master doesn't have such disorders, in the contrary his ways of thinking

are very profound and that's why he seems to have denied the things of this world, because he has knowledge in things that are prohibited for the people of this world. This is how the contempt of life can be explained.

"All the following topics are sacred for the mystics: madness by renunciation from the world, madness by surrendering to God's darkest will, madness by searching the unlimited knowledge" (Eliade, 2004). His madness isn't visible only because for his exclusion from the society, but even in other topics he talks about. He lets himself to be a toy in the hand of fate, or to another power that rules the world and no longer cares for himself, he doesn't work or make plans about his future. The search of the supernatural makes him forget this world, he is disturbed for the fate of Pontius Pilate, his hero and a true person at the same time and the great gig between the two times, is so big that only through Woland the Master would have to finish his novel in a timeless place beyond our world. Since the moment Master meets with Woland all his thoughts remain his greatest misfortune in order to be his good fate.

The Master is, of course a weird character, because his behavior is far away from the normal one, he himself admits that is not interested in what is important to other people. He shows openly disdain for the things of this life, because his interest is in greater things. We can understand this even in the fact that he has written a novel about Pontius Pilate. Master is a polyglot, his profession was historian and before the asylum he worked at the museum and he knew besides his mother's language, five other languages, English, French, German, Latin and Greek. He decided to leave his job when he won a lottery of ten thousand rubles to be isolated in his new apartment in Arbatskaja Street, so he could write the novel about Pontius Pilate. Pilate had no person close to, any relatives and walked alone even in his walks on the promenade every afternoon. We find him always alone. After his meeting with an unknown woman he begins a secret relation with her. As he confesses to Ivan before of that woman, nobody came into his garden and after she came in, it seemed that all the citizens were struggling to come in his garden. His life in this period was sweet and happy, his writing and love where two passions that melted with each other. But everything finished only because of that cursed book he wrote. "- And as soon as I came out of that house with the manuscript in my hands, my life was finished, Master mumbled with his head down in shame." (Bulgakov, 2005) His efforts to publish the book destroyed him totally. The editor asks some questions that seem to the Master, irrational and without any kind of connection with the novel. Questions like who was the Master, had she published anything before and a certain question that only an idiot could ask about the person who made him to write the novel. Of course, they didn't accept the novel to be published.

However, critics slowly began to destroy his life and the life of his girlfriend. First the Master was indifferent and silent to all the critics they made to him and his work, but later another frightening stage began, the stage of the mental illness. He began to fear everything; it seemed that octopus tentacles were reaching his heart. One of these nights, his foots lead him to the doctor Stravinsky's clinic, where he finally found tranquility, and has no desire to leave. When Ivan notices that he plays with

the clinic's keys in his hands and asks him why the hell he doesn't leave that place, he answers:

"No-, said the guest, I am not staying here because I don't have a way out, but because I have nowhere to go" (Bulgakov, 2005). Can we call him a mentally ill person when he has the conscience of it and admits this fact? Isn't the rejection of the illness an indication of being mentally ill? If we notice signs that the character has mental disorders we shall functionalize this in the matter we are concerned. Why do we need to know the signs of the madness if we don't classify the kind of it? The kind of madness that the Master reflects is the one we can see in every character that has relations with transcendental knowledge, we can see this from the Bible to nowadays. The relation of the folly with the lore is reciprocal. Folly can be a reason of knowledge or a consequence of being told what is forbidden for the human perception.

The Master has connections with the supernatural lore because he himself is not a part of the normal humanity; he is an exception from the others as he has knowledge beyond the empiric and material one. Even Ivan becomes insane because he has knowledge over supernatural things that he has really seen but that cannot be understood from the average human mind. (He proclaims that has seen the devil and tells some weird situations that occurred before his eyes.) The process is mutual, because both folly and genius have in common the misunderstanding with the general concepts of society.

At the other hand folly creates correlations with the concept of exclusion from the society. The person who is considered to be insane; same if this is geniality or stupidity is considered an outsider; his mind and actions cannot be understood from the society. In Medieval times the insane persons were expelled from the populated areas, cities or villages. The mad ones were expelled with a kind of ceremony with chopsticks by the people; they were followed with fury because they were considered to be outsiders from the society and God's grace. "The person cannot have another prison but his mind, he is located in the outside part of the inner world and conversely" (Foucault, 2006).

In the XV century the madness had been integrated in the moral area of the exclusion. This is the same how the madness of the Master can be explained in the XX century. The madness is due to his knowledge that goes beyond what is allowed to the people. After his persecution because of his novel, it is normal for the Master to hate his own novel. The novel turned out to be not the success of the writer, but the cause of his persecution.

However, what remains most important for this part of our study is that the human relationships have to be sacrificed sometimes in the name of the transcendental knowledge. The tribute that the forbidden knowledge seeks from us is the insanity, madness and exclusion. Since this kind of knowledge is a condition which differs from the ordinary way of thinking.

“Reason cannot be separated from the madness, but it recognizes itself as the older, even if it is transformed in different ways. The Classicism considers madness a necessary condition for the existence of the reason, but sometimes, when dark times came, madness became light in the road to freedom.” (Foucault, 2006)

The third method: Literature and Society

The relations between the Literature and the Society have been noticed since the Antiquity; Aristotle named a specific term for this, the mimesis. Literature is an imitation (mimesis) of the reality, but not just a faithful reflection of the reality, but more a kind of recreation. The Abstractionist painter, Wassily Kandinsky states that Art and Reality are two completely different things and that the aim of Art is not to photograph the reality, otherwise where is the originality of it? Even in the some Literary Periods such as Realism and Naturalism the fiction is not excluded from the Method. Nevertheless, the representation of the reality in Literature is not something we can leave behind. We operate with concepts of thinking that come from the archetypical models as well as with parts of things we percept from the empirical world. In his “Book of Imaginary Beings”, Borges summarizes and describes the imaginary beings from mythology, epos, literature created by the imagination of the humanity from the early times. As he described these imaginary creatures, he made a conclusion, which is very helpful for us, that all this beings are created with parts of the animals or nature that already exists is just the combination of them that provides the imaginary. This is logical because we cannot imagine something we have not percept before, something totally unreal, even if we could try to do it, we wouldn't be able to imagine it.

In the novel “The Master and Margarita” the society of the time described with all the problems, reflected in details some particular social types of characters. The society of the time is so vicious that when the devil comes, to preserve the balance between the good and the evil necessary for this world to exist, begins to punish the evil, indirectly he ends up doing good acts. We are going to have a detailed analysis below. There are several reasons that Woland chooses Moscow to come with his escort

There are several reasons for choosing exactly which Wolandi Moscow to go along with his company, and the main reason is the society. Devil doesn't just travel for pleasure, but he has a mission he is going to make a massive and public performance in the Theatre, to observe how the soul of the citizens has changed. We are going to mention an interesting detail that Yeshua appears in the 1st century, while Woland in the 20th century context.

It is obvious that Bulgakov demonstrates us that the good and the evil exist beyond time and that people live through their laws for millenniums. The earth from the Genesis is conceived as an intermediate world between the Paradise and the Hell, but if the inhabitants are going to destroy this equilibrium then the Paradise or the Hell will devour this world and its existence will stop, to serve to the one world that the people's acts serve with their actions. As far as we can see the Woland's visit in Moscow has one mission, to reclaim the harmony between the good and the

evil that in this city are not in balance because of the dominance of the evil. Even the devil himself is a little surprised to see how humanity could embrace the evil so willingly. He hears from the citizens that the God doesn't exist and that the world is in the hands of man. It is the, ironically the devil's duty to persuade to them that the God exists with certain arguments, such as how can a person who doesn't even know the day that he is going to die make plans for the whole universe? The Woland and his escort turn out to be ruthless punishers to set justice in this society. The devil reverses his nature; he is alienated because he isn't acting in favor of the evil anymore, because Moscow is full with envy, materialism, fraud, ignorance, subservience, infidelity and arrogance. It is a society without conscience, a society that does not believe in God or any kind of supernatural faith; he has no conscience anymore which materializes the Ivan Karamazow's saying "Everything is allowed". Without conscience nothing is moral or unmoral anymore.

This society makes a deep contrast with the 1st century Jerusalem even the style of writing differs too much. The narration about the contemporary Moscow is propane, ironical, paradoxal and sarcastic; while the narration about Jerusalem is sacred, majestic, mysterious and very profound. That's why Woland is present in the first context and Yeshua in the second one.

In the "Critique of Practical Reason" E. Kant reflects upon the moral's nature and he comes to the conclusion that the ethic is a priori; the moral cannot be explained. "The moral value, Kant tells us, is experienced directly as if it was a priori, and does not come from experience. According to him, moral values do not depend on an external result that deserves to be achieved, as determined by several circumstances: it is valuable in itself " (Hersch, 2000).

If we make a simple induction we see that in a society without a priori lore and believes only in the empirical perception cannot concept the evil and the bad. Most of the characters in the contemporaneous Moscow are representation of the typical social models of the reality and for some of them the biographers are certain that refer to real people of the time. The first character we come across when we begin the novel is Berlioz an atheist that tries to describe to Ivan how not to portrait the Christ as a negative character in his socialist novel, but to narrate the gossip about the Christ's existence. Rimski, headquarter of the Theatre a drinker and a fraud with no scruple. Contrast is provided with Levi Matheu of the Jerusalem time, who sacrifices his life for his Master and his inner concerns; in the Muscovite society the spiritual is invisible, dried of atheism and materialism. It is this absence of the spiritual that concerns Woland more than the negativity; he is totally out of his mind when he hears that people in Moscow don't believe not only in God but even in the demons.

"- This is such an interesting fact, - the professor proclaimed, but you don't have anything, whatever I ask you, you will respond negatively. He became wild and screamed: - You're saying me that you don't have demons?" (Bulgakov, 2005) Even if Woland and his escort only punishes and jokes with the people it is interesting how we don't feel any kind of compassion. Not only that but the readers

thirsted for justice comes materialized due to the perfect work of the demons that condemn the evil. These ruthless actions make catharsis to the citizens and to the reader himself. We have to react to deceit, injustice, exploitation, fraud, and so on. Otherwise we do not truly respect one another.

The fourth method: Literature and Ideas

When literature or any literary work is seen in relation to the ideas and messages that give to us, it is more related to philosophy. Literature cannot be understood without its universal message, trying to find order in the confusion of the world, to discover universal monocacy in human order and life. Although there are opinions against, ultimately, what makes more sense to the ordinary reader is exactly the idea of the art pieces. I support Wellek and Warren's opinion: "The philosophy and ideology content in the relevant context raise their artistic value, because they reinforce the sense the importance of values; just like the complexity and coherence are synchronized in a work of art" (Wellek & Warren, 2007).

Some of the messages conveyed by Bulgakov's works are: - Eternity can serve as punishment, when the man's conscience is not clean. – For some people life is nothing but suffering and only the afterlife is the human's repose. – Magnificent loves live in eternity. - Genius is destined not to be understood, and by this fatally comes his tragedy. These messages appear especially in the last chapter.

"Reconciliation and eternal repose", this is how the last chapter of the novel is named. We have borrowed this label, because we will talk exactly about this issue and we couldn't define it better than the author himself. In the novel Pilate has been left from the 1st century to the 20th one condemned with eternity and with eternal remorse of the conscience. In fact this was the only thing that Pilate hated most and that is why it is given to such a sentence. Pilate, several times during his life has a feeling of the eternity, which caused him a real horror. If the reader is careful, he notices this prolepsis, and when he will come across to this character in the 20th century to would not be surprised. During the conversation with Yeshua; when Pilate had already read the charges against him and realized that there would be no salvation for Yeshua; he experiences a very painful vision, which comes because of a brief thought of eternity.

After Yeshua's condemn Pilate suffers and his conscience cannot be quiet, he is always concerned. Pilate could not forgive himself having convicted an innocent man. We understand this by his wakefulness. He develops two Pilates in him, two personalities, which are controversial. The first Pilate is the Procurator, the soldier, who fought in the Valley of the Virgins; this is Pilate says that Yeshua had committed a crime against Caesar and had no reason to sacrifice his career for him. The second Pilate has a conscience that tells him the truth and the righteousness is the most important thing.

"-Yes, you had to sacrifice your career. In the morning, he could not sacrifice, but now, in the night he is sure of the opposite. He would take into consideration all the consequences, only to save the mad philosopher from his execution, because he

was absolutely innocent” (Bulgakov, 2005).

For this unjust sentence Pilate is doomed to suffer spiritually for an immeasurable time: forever. At the first meeting with Yeshua, we can notice a prolepsis in the text, as Pilate is terrified for a moment just because of the idea of the eternity. “At this moment he had a vision of immortality, which infuriated and weakened him a lot.” (Bulgakov, 2005) Such a moment will be repeated even more painfully:

“Immortality ... the immortality came ... Whose was this immortality, which had come? The procurator could not understand this. Reflection on the mystery of immortality made the Procurator tremble “ (Bulgakov, 2005). The scene with his dog in the bed next to the procurator, whom is suffering from moonlight, will be retaken from the narrator in the end of the subject: in another world. We find Pilate in the same condition, unforgiven, because the right person to give him freedom from his suffering, Master, is not shown yet. His conviction to suffer under the full moon links us with mysteries and symbolism in medieval times. Moon is the most significant symbol in the novel. But the moon is not turned into a symbol by Bulgakov, it has existed as a symbol since pagan times, and appears in almost all the cultures, but it is the full moon that contains more occult meanings. On full moon nights all wizards were gathered the witches had the time of their practices. There are still groups that collect on the full moon ritual. Their core course is pagan, and mainly is worshiped the female goddesses. In Bulgakov’s novel the light of the moon refers as a celestial eye that sees everything from above, which nothing escapes from him. Thus is explained the torment of Pontius Pilate by moonlight. That’s why even beyond life the moonlight continues to torture Pilate even in the afterlife. “He repeats the same thing, - Woland’s voice was heard. – He says that even in the moonlight he doesn’t feel calm and that he has a bad duty.” (Bulgakov, 2005) The same thing happens when the eternal moonlight touches the characters of the Woland’s suite. The moon’s ability to penetrate the human soul reveals the real demons behind the masked characters.

In the last chapter, during the last flight for the hereafter, Woland’s suite and the Master and Margarita, found Pilate located in a country full of mountains and abysses. They approached to Pilate, but he couldn’t understand anything, because he could understand nothing but his worries. Perhaps the man was deaf, as he dived deep into his thoughts. Pilate is stuck in time, only Master; his “creator” could release him from the eternal life. The Master finished his novel with a phrase: “He is free! Free! He is waiting for you! (Yeshua) – Then the mountains transformed Master’s voice into thunder, and the same thunder destroyed the mountains” (Bulgakov, 2005). Master has the demiurge role, as every writer does with his creation but even he could not be free from his character, until this moment. The incarnation of real Pilate is another issue to be discussed. But in the whole story, what’s important is that beyond the characters of supernatural power, characters of biblical and non biblical models, there is one character who escapes his model, by representing the real man, the man of this world where the good and the evil meet and mix together. Bulgakov exemplified this in a biblical character.

3- Conclusions

From all our analyses we come to the conclusion that the literary work has been analyzed better when it is studied from different points of view. The poetics of the Literature itself warrants this: "Every method of analyzing the literature has a real concept of the existence of the work. We cannot exclude any of the readings that literature generates, because every method enriches the meanings and functions of the Literature. Not only had the Methods but every critic had to be encouraged to have his original thinking about a certain work" (Dado, 2009).

Through the biographical method we understand the connections between the author and his work and characters; through the psychological method we understand how the process of the sublimation of the inner problems moves into the literature and makes his narrator dismiss his frustration and privations; the connection between the society of the time analyzes the work as a process that is not unconnected with the real time and place that refers to because literature cannot be divided from the reality, even in the most fantastic story telling; ideas are important because they make the reader change his opinions about things and life, that's why when we study how useful a literary work is for our life, ethics, moral and spirituality we refer to the ideas.

Those methods are different approaches to the novel and this is a model accepted by the Literary Theory and Criticism, but what we claim is done in this study is the materializations of this theoretical readings in a specific novel. This model can be used in many other studies about Literature and further, just we have to keep in mind that the deduction is the main logical operation we make in this kind of studies; we begin from the theory to approach to the literary work.

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