

The Philosophical And Psychological Structure Of M. A. Bulgakov's Novel «The Master And Margarita»

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Abstract: This article explores the philosophical and psychological structure of M. A. Bulgakov's novel «The Master and Margarita» with a focus on the interaction between metaphysical ideas and the inner world of the characters. The study examines how ethical conflict, existential choice, and psychological tension shape the artistic integrity of the novel. Particular attention is paid to the figures of Pontius Pilate and Margarita, whose inner transformations reveal different models of moral responsibility and personal freedom. The analysis demonstrates that Bulgakov constructs a complex philosophical system in which psychological reality becomes a key mechanism for revealing the author's vision of good and evil, guilt and redemption. The novel is interpreted as a holistic philosophical narrative where inner experience and ethical decision-making play a decisive role in the formation of meaning.

Keywords: Philosophical structure; psychological reality; existential conflict; moral choice; artistic consciousness; character transformation; M. A. Bulgakov; The Master and Margarita.

Introduction: In contemporary literary criticism, the category of space has long since transcended its descriptive and aesthetic functions and is understood as one of the key forms of artistic modeling of the world. A special place in this system is occupied by metaphysical topography – a concept that unites the philosophical, cultural, and poetic understanding of space as a bearer of ontological, axiological, and existential meanings. Within the framework of theoretical discourse, metaphysical topography is understood not as a collection of geographically localized places [1], but as a hierarchically organized system of «spaces of meaning», reflecting the author's ideas about being, good and evil, freedom and predestination, life and death.

The ontological understanding of binary oppositions considers them as a fundamental structure of being and thought, organizing reality through pairs of

opposing concepts (light/darkness, life/death, culture/nature). In a literary text, such oppositions are spatially expressed, forming a system of meanings in which space becomes a means of philosophically ordering the world [3].

The problem of artistic space as a special form of reflecting reality was fundamentally posed in the works of M. M. Bakhtin, primarily in his concept of the chronotope. According to Bakhtin, space in literature is always laden with values and «absorbs time, condenses it, and makes it visible» [2]. Thus, space loses its status as a neutral scene of action and begins to function as an independent semantic component of artistic structure. Although Bakhtin does not use the term «metaphysical topography», his theory of the chronotope creates a methodological basis for further understanding of spatial models as carriers of philosophical content.

These propositions are developed within the structuralist tradition. Yu. M. Lotman, analyzing the semiotics of artistic space, emphasized that any artistic space is structured binary and hierarchically, contrasting «one's own» and «someone else's», «top» and «bottom», «center» and «periphery» [3]. According to Lotman, a character's transition from one space to another is almost always accompanied by a change in their ontological status, which is especially significant for works with pronounced metaphysical themes.

METHODOLOGY

The methodological basis of the study is an integrated approach that combines literary, philosophical, and cultural analysis. The work utilizes the tenets of M.M. Bakhtin's chronotope theory, Yu. M. Lotman's semiotic concept of artistic space, as well as philosophical interpretations of space developed in the works of M. Heidegger, M. Eliade, and G. Bachelard.

This study conceptualizes space as a form of representation of ontological and existential meanings, and simultaneously as a means of revealing the psychological reality of characters. Particular attention is paid to the analysis of liminal spaces—thresholds, bridges, stairs, and roads—which are interpreted as zones of transition and transformation [7; 8]. The principle of the hierarchical nature of artistic space is methodologically significant, allowing us to identify the relationships between the novel's various spatial levels and their philosophical interconnections. This approach allows us to consider *The Master and Margarita* as a holistic artistic and philosophical model of the world. This study provides a novel integrated analysis of spatial and psychological dimensions in Bulgakov's novel, connecting metaphysical topography with the inner transformations of the characters.

RESULTS

These theoretical propositions find consistent artistic expression in M.A. Bulgakov's novel *The Master and Margarita*. Most researchers agree that the novel's spatial organization is one of the key mechanisms for its meaning-making. At the compositional level, the text presents a fundamentally multi-layered space: the Moscow space of the 1930s, the Jerusalem world of the Gospel story, and the mystical and fantastical space of Woland form a complex system of mutual reflections and transitions.

The Moscow space of the novel represents a system of loci, each of which performs a specific philosophical and psychological function: an exploration of human nature and social pressure. «Patriarch's Ponds», «Bad Apartment No. 50», «Griboyedov's House», and «Doctor Stravinsky's Clinic» form a unique map of

«profane» reality, within which the presence of another, transcendental dimension gradually becomes apparent. As B.V. Sokolov notes, Bulgakov's Moscow is not so much a historically specific city as a «metaphysical space of testing» that reveals the true essence of man [9].

The Yershalmay layer of the novel functions as a sacred space and, at the same time, is viewed as a space of internal psychological conflict. It is presented not as a reconstruction of historical reality, but as a metaphysical guide to moral choice. Pontius Pilate exists in a space of internal rupture, where the physical environment—the heat, the confines of the palace, the feeling of height and isolation—projects his psychological state. Standing. In Bulgakov, Yershalmay becomes a form of representation of the hero's psychological reality, in which fear, guilt, and responsibility are spatially expressed and anchored in the structure of the artistic world. According to A. Zerkalov, it is the Yershalmay chapters that form the «ontological core» of the novel [10].

The mystical-fantastical space associated with the image of Woland forms a special level of metaphysical reality, in which the principle of cosmic balance and moral justice is realized. In M. Bulgakov, the infernal is not directly opposed to the sacred, but is incorporated into the dialectical structure of the universe [11]. For the character of Margarita, the transition to the infernal-cosmic space becomes a form of actualization of her psychological reality: external mystical action reflects the internal process of liberation from fear, social pressure, and existential unfreedom. Woland's space of night flight and ball simulates not so much a fantastical situation as the heroine's inner state, in which choice, sacrifice, and love acquire ontological meaning.

DISCUSSION

The conducted analysis and the obtained results allow us to assert that the spatial organization of the novel «*The Master and Margarita*» goes beyond a compositional device and takes on the character of an analytical tool for philosophical and psychological understanding of the text, providing a dialogue between external reality and the characters' inner worlds, acting as a holistic philosophical and psychological system. All spatial levels are interconnected and subordinated to a single logic of moral responsibility and freedom of choice.

Liminal spaces play a special role in the novel's structure, as it is in them that the characters encounter extreme situations requiring a moral decision. The phenomenon of liminality and binary oppositions create a dynamic plot, in which the characters undergo

tests of character, confront moral dilemmas, and expand their understanding of existence [7; 8]. Thus, M. Bulgakov's artistic space functions as a form of objectification of the characters' psychological reality, and the transition between different spatial levels correlates with changes in their internal state, moral position, and existential choice.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis, we can conclude that the metaphysical topography of M.A. Bulgakov's novel «The Master and Margarita» represents a complex, multi-level system of spaces organized according to the principle of ontological hierarchy. Each spatial layer (Moscow, Jerusalem, and the infernal-cosmic) fulfills not only a plot-related but also a philosophical and psychological function, participating in the formation of the author's conception of existence.

The novel's spatial structures serve as carriers of the metaphysical ideas of freedom, responsibility, and justice, as well as a crucial means of revealing the characters' psychological reality. An analysis of the metaphysical topography allows us to consider the novel as a holistic philosophical and artistic model of the world and creates a theoretical basis for further exploration of the characters' inner worlds. The psychological reality of the characters—primarily Margarita and Pontius Pilate—is embedded in this spatial hierarchy, where external loci reflect deep processes of inner choice, fear, guilt, and spiritual liberation. This analysis may serve as a basis for further studies of metaphysical and psychological dimensions in 20th-century Russian literature.

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