# The Master and Margarita

## Mikhail Bulgakov

Translated from Russian by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky, 1997 <https://libcom.org/files/eben002_mastermargarita_pevear.pdf>

### BOOK ONE

...who are you, then?' 'I am part of that power which eternally wills evil and eternally works good.' Goethe, Faust

CHAPTER 1. Never Talk with Strangers

At the hour of the hot spring sunset two citizens appeared at the Patriarch's Ponds. One of them, approximately forty years old, dressed in a grey summer suit, was short, dark-haired, plump, bald, and carried his respectable fedora hat in his hand. His neatly shaven face was adorned with black horn-rimmed glasses of a supernatural size. The other, a broad-shouldered young man with tousled reddish hair, his checkered cap cocked back on his head, was wearing a cowboy shirt, wrinkled white trousers and black sneakers. The first was none other than Mikhail Alexandrovich Berlioz, [2] editor of a fat literary journal and chairman of the board of one of the major Moscow literary associations, called Massolit [3] for short, and his young companion was the poet Ivan Nikolayevich Ponyrev, who wrote under the pseudonym of Homeless. [4] Once in the shade of the barely greening lindens, the writers dashed first thing to a brightly painted stand with the sign: `Beer and Soft Drinks.' Ah, yes, note must be made of the first oddity of this dreadful May evening. There was not a single person to be seen, not only by the stand, but also along the whole walk parallel to Malaya Bronnaya Street. At that hour when it seemed no longer possible to breathe, when the sun, having scorched Moscow, was collapsing in a dry haze somewhere beyond Sadovoye Ring, no one came under the lindens, no one sat on a bench, the walk was empty. 'Give us seltzer,' Berlioz asked. 'There is no seltzer,' the woman in the stand said, and for some reason became offended. 'Is there beer?' Homeless inquired in a rasping voice. `Beer'll be delivered towards evening,' the woman replied. 'Then what is there?' asked Berlioz. 'Apricot soda, only warm,' said the woman. 'Well, let's have it, let's have it! ...' The soda produced an abundance of yellow foam, and the air began to smell of a barber-shop. Having finished drinking, the writers immediately started to hiccup, paid, and sat down on a bench face to the pond and back to Bronnaya. Here the second oddity occurred, touching Berlioz alone. He suddenly stopped hiccupping, his heart gave a thump and dropped away somewhere for an instant, then came back, but with a blunt needle lodged in it. Besides that, Berlioz was gripped by fear, groundless, yet so strong that he wanted to flee the Ponds at once without looking back. Berlioz looked around in anguish, not understanding what had frightened him. He paled, wiped his forehead with a handkerchief, thought: "What's the matter with me? This has never happened before. My heart's acting up... I'm overworked... Maybe it's time to send it all to the devil and go to Kislovodsk...'[5] And here the sweltering air thickened before him, and a transparent citizen of the strangest appearance wove himself out of it. A peaked jockey's cap on his little head, a short checkered jacket also made of air. ... A citizen seven feet tall, but narrow in the shoulders, unbelievably thin, and, kindly note, with a jeering physiognomy. The life of Berlioz had taken such a course that he was unaccustomed to extraordinary phenomena. Turning paler still, he goggled his eyes and thought in consternation: 'This can't be! ...' But, alas, it was, and the long, see-through citizen was swaying before him to the left and to

the right without touching the ground. Here terror took such possession of Berlioz that he shut his eyes. When he opened them again, he saw that it was all over, the phantasm had dissolved, the checkered one had vanished, and with that the blunt needle had popped out of his heart. 'Pah, the devil!' exclaimed the editor. 'You know, Ivan, I nearly had heat stroke just now! There was even something like a hallucination...' He attempted to smile, but alarm still jumped in his eyes and his hands trembled. However, he gradually calmed down, fanned himself with his handkerchief and, having said rather cheerfully: 'Well, and so...' went on with the conversation interrupted by their soda-drinking. This conversation, as was learned afterwards, was about Jesus Christ. The thing was that the editor had commissioned from the poet a long anti-religious poem for the next issue of his journal. Ivan Nikolaevich had written this poem, and in a very short time, but unfortunately the editor was not at all satisfied with it. Homeless had portrayed the main character of his poem - that is, Jesus - in very dark colours, but nevertheless the whole poem, in the editor's opinion, had to be written over again. And so the editor was now giving the poet something of a lecture on Jesus, with the aim of underscoring the poet's essential error. It is hard to say what precisely had let Ivan Nikolaevich down - the descriptive powers of his talent or a total unfamiliarity with the question he was writing about - but his Jesus came out, well, completely alive, the once-existing Jesus, though, true, a Jesus furnished with all negative features. Now, Berlioz wanted to prove to the poet that the main thing was not how Jesus was, good or bad, but that this same Jesus, as a person, simply never existed in the world, and all the stories about him were mere fiction, the most ordinary mythology. It must be noted that the editor was a well-read man and in his conversation very skillfully pointed to ancient historians - for instance, the famous Philo of Alexandria [6] and the brilliantly educated Flavius Josephus [7] - who never said a word about the existence of Jesus. Displaying a solid erudition, Mikhail Alexandrovich also informed the poet, among other things, that the passage in the fifteenth book of Tacitus's famous Annals [8], the forty-fourth chapter, where mention is made of the execution of Jesus, was nothing but a later spurious interpolation. The poet, for whom everything the editor was telling him was new, listened attentively to Mikhail Alexandrovich, fixing his pert green eyes on him, and merely hiccupped from time to time, cursing the apricot soda under his breath. There's not a single Eastern religion,' Berlioz was saying, 'in which, as a rule, an immaculate virgin did not give birth to a god. And in just the same way, without inventing anything new, the Christians created their Jesus, who in fact never lived. It's on this that the main emphasis should be placed...' Berlioz's high tenor rang out in the deserted walk, and as Mikhail Alexandrovich went deeper into the maze, which only a highly educated man can go into without risking a broken neck, the poet learned more and more interesting and useful things about the Egyptian Osiris, [9] a benevolent god and the son of Heaven and Earth, and about the Phoenician god Tammoz, [10] and about Marduk, [11] and even about a lesser known, terrible god, Vitzliputzli,'[12] once greatly venerated by the Aztecs in Mexico. And just at the moment when Mikhail Alexandrovich was telling the poet how the Aztecs used to fashion figurines of Vitzli-putzli out of dough - the first man appeared in the walk. Afterwards, when, frankly speaking, it was already too late, various institutions presented reports describing this man. A comparison of them cannot but cause amazement. Thus, the first of them said that the man was short, had gold teeth, and limped on his right leg. The second, that the man was enormously tall, had platinum crowns, and limped on his left leg. The third laconically averred that the man had no distinguishing marks. It must be acknowledged that none of these reports is of any value. First of all, the man described did not limp on any leg, and was neither short nor enormous, but simply tall. As for his teeth, he had platinum crowns on the left side and gold on the right. He was wearing an expensive grey suit and imported shoes of a matching colour. His grey beret was cocked rakishly over one ear; under his arm he carried a stick with a black knob shaped like a poodle's head. [13] He looked to be a little over forty. Mouth somehow twisted. Clean-shaven. Dark-haired. Right eye black, left - for some reason - green. Dark eyebrows, but one higher than the other. In short, a foreigner. [14] Having passed by the bench on which the editor and the poet were placed, the foreigner gave them a sidelong look, stopped, and suddenly sat down on the next bench, two steps away from the friends. `A German...' thought Berlioz. `An Englishman...' thought Homeless. 'My, he must be hot in those gloves.' And the foreigner gazed around at the tall buildings that rectangularly framed the pond, making it obvious that he was seeing the place for the first time and that it interested him. He rested his glance on the upper floors, where the glass dazzlingly reflected the broken-up sun which was for ever departing from Mikhail Alexandrovich, then shifted it lower down to where the windows were beginning to darken before evening, smiled condescendingly at something, narrowed his eves, put his hands on the knob and his chin on his hands. 'For instance, Ivan,' Berlioz was saying, `you portrayed the birth of Jesus, the son of God, very well and satirically, but the gist of it is that a whole series of sons of God were born before Jesus, like, say, the Phoenician Adonis, [15] the Phrygian Atris, [16] the Persian Mithras. [17] And, to put it briefly, not one of them was born or ever existed, Jesus included, and what's necessary is that, instead of portraying his birth or, suppose, the coming of the Magi,'[18] you portray the absurd rumours of their coming. Otherwise it follows from your story that he really was born! ...' Here Homeless made an attempt to stop his painful hiccupping by holding his breath, which caused him to hiccup more painfully and loudly, and at that same moment Berlioz interrupted his speech, because the foreigner suddenly got up and walked towards the writers. They looked at him in surprise. 'Excuse me, please,' the approaching man began speaking, with a foreign accent but without distorting the words, 'if, not being your acquaintance, I allow myself... but the subject of your learned conversation is so interesting that...' Here he politely took off his beret and the friends had nothing left but to stand up and make their bows. 'No, rather a Frenchman ....' thought Berlioz. 'A Pole? ...' thought Homeless. It must be added that from his first words the foreigner made a repellent impression on the poet, but Berlioz rather liked him - that is, not liked but ... how to put it ... was interested, or whatever. 'May I sit down?' the foreigner asked politely, and the friends somehow involuntarily moved apart; the foreigner adroitly sat down between them and at once entered into the conversation: 'Unless I heard wrong, you were pleased to say that Jesus never existed?' the foreigner asked, turning his green left eye to Berlioz. 'No, you did not hear wrong,' Berlioz replied courteously, 'that is precisely what I was saying.' 'Ah, how interesting!' exclaimed the foreigner. 'What the devil does he want?' thought Homeless, frowning. 'And you were agreeing with your interlocutor?' inquired the stranger, turning to Homeless on his right. 'A hundred per cent!' confirmed the man, who was fond of whimsical and figurative expressions. 'Amazing!' exclaimed the uninvited interlocutor and, casting a thievish glance around and muffling his low voice for some reason, he said: 'Forgive my importunity, but, as I understand, along with everything else, you also do not believe in God?' he made frightened eyes and added: 'I swear I won't tell anyone!' 'No, we don't believe in God,' Berlioz replied, smiling slightly at the foreign tourist's fright, but we can speak of it quite freely.' The foreigner sat back on the bench and asked, even with a slight shriek of curiosity: 'You are - atheists?!' Yes, we're atheists,' Berlioz smilingly replied, and Homeless thought, getting angry: 'Latched on to us, the foreign goose!' 'Oh, how lovely!' the astonishing foreigner cried out and began swiveling his head, looking from one writer to the other. 'In our country atheism does not surprise anyone,' Berlioz said with diplomatic politeness. 'The majority of our population consciously and long ago ceased believing in the fairytales about God.' Here the foreigner pulled the following stunt: he got up and shook the amazed editor's hand, accompanying it with these words: 'Allow me to thank you with all my heart!' 'What are you thanking him for?' Homeless inquired, blinking. 'For some very important information, which is of great interest to me as a traveler,' the outlandish fellow explained, raising his finger significantly. The important information apparendy had indeed produced a strong impression on the traveler, because he passed his frightened glance over the buildings, as if afraid of seeing an atheist in every window. 'No, he's not an Englishman ...' thought Berlioz, and Homeless thought: 'Where'd he pick up his Russian, that's the interesting thing!' and frowned again. 'But, allow me to ask you,' the foreign visitor spoke after some anxious reflection, 'what, then, about the proofs of God's existence, of which, as is known, there are exactly five?' 'Alas!' Berlioz said with regret. 'Not one of these proofs is worth anything, and mankind shelved them long ago. You must agree that in the realm of reason there can be no proof of God's existence.' 'Bravo!' cried the foreigner. 'Bravo! You have perfectly repeated restless old Immanuel's [19] thought in this regard. But here's the hitch: he roundly demolished all five proofs, and then, as if mocking himself, constructed a sixth of his own.' 'Kant's proof,' the learned editor objected with a subtle smile, 'is equally unconvincing. Not for nothing did Schiller say that the Kantian reasoning on this question can satisfy only slaves and Strauss simply laughed at this proof.' Berlioz spoke, thinking all the while: 'But, anyhow, who is he? And why does he speak Russian so well?' They ought to take this Kant and give him a three-year stretch in Solovki [22] for such proofs!' Ivan Nikolaevich plumped quite unexpectedly. 'Ivan!' Berlioz whispered, embarrassed. But the suggestion of sending Kant to Solovki not only did not shock the foreigner, but even sent him into raptures. 'Precisely, precisely,' he cried, and his green left eye, turned to Berlioz, flashed. 'Just the place for him! Didn't I tell him that time at breakfast? "As you will, Professor, but what you've thought up doesn't hang together. It's clever, maybe, but mighty unclear. You'll be laughed at."' Berlioz goggled his eyes. 'At breakfast... to Kant? ... What is this drivel?' he thought. 'But,' the outlander went on, unembarrassed by Berlioz's amazement and addressing the poet, 'sending him to Solovki is unfeasible, for the simple reason that he has been abiding for over a hundred years now in places considerably more remote than Solovki, and to extract him from there is in no way possible, I assure you.' 'Too bad!' the feisty poet responded. 'Yes, too bad!' the stranger agreed, his eye flashing, and went on: 'But here is a question that is troubling me: if there is no God, then, one may ask, who governs human life and, in general, the whole order of things on earth?' 'Man governs it himself,' Homeless angrily hastened to reply to this admittedly none-too-clear question. `Pardon me,' the stranger responded gently, 'but in order to govern, one needs, after all, to have a precise plan for certain, at least somewhat decent, length of time. Allow me to ask you, then, how man can govern, if he is not only deprived of the opportunity of making a plan for at least some ridiculously short period - well, say, a thousand years - but cannot even vouch for his own tomorrow? `And in fact,' here the stranger turned to Berlioz, 'imagine that you, for instance, start governing, giving orders to others and yourself, generally, so to speak, acquire a taste for it, and suddenly you get ...hem... hem ... lung cancer...' - here the foreigner smiled sweetly, and if the thought of lung cancer gave him pleasure - 'yes, cancer' - narrowing his eyes like a cat, he repeated the sonorous word - 'and so your governing is over! 'You are no longer interested in anyone's fate but your own. Your family starts lying to you. Feeling that something is wrong, you rush to learned doctors, then to quacks, and sometimes to fortune-tellers as well. Like the first, so the second and third are completely senseless, as you understand. And it all ends tragically: a man who still recently thought he was governing something, suddenly winds up lying motionless in a wooden box, and the people around him, seeing that the man lying there is no longer good for anything, burn him in an oven. 'And sometimes it's worse still: the man has just decided to go to Kislovodsk' - here the foreigner squinted at Berlioz - 'a trifling matter, it seems, but even this he cannot accomplish, because suddenly, no one knows why, he slips and falls under a tram-car! Are you going to say it was he who governed himself that way? Would it not be more correct to think that he was governed by someone else entirely?' And here the unknown man burst into a strange little laugh. Berlioz listened with great attention to the unpleasant story about the cancer and the tram-car, and certain alarming thoughts began to torment him. 'He's not a foreigner... He's not a foreigner...' he thought, 'he's a most peculiar specimen ... but, excuse me, who is he then? ...' You'd like to smoke, I see?' the stranger addressed Homeless unexpectedly. "Which kind do you prefer?' 'What, have you got several?' the poet, who had run out of cigarettes, asked glumly. 'Which do you prefer?' the stranger repeated. 'Okay - Our Brand,' Homeless replied spitefully. The unknown man immediately took a cigarette case from his pocket and offered it to Homeless: 'Our Brand...' Editor and poet were both struck, not so much by Our Brand precisely turning up in the cigarette case, as by the cigarette case itself. It was of huge size, made of pure gold, and, as it was opened, a diamond triangle flashed white and blue fire on its lid. Here the writers thought differently. Berlioz: 'No, a foreigner!', and Homeless: 'Well, devil take him, eh! ...' The poet and the owner of the cigarette case lit up, but the non-smoker Berlioz declined. 'I must counter him like this,' Berlioz decided, 'yes, man is mortal, no one disputes that. But the thing is...' However, before he managed to utter these words, the foreigner spoke: 'Yes, man is mortal, but that would be only half the trouble. The worst of it is that he's sometimes unexpectedly mortal - there's the trick! And generally he's unable to say what he's going to do this same evening.' `What an absurd way of putting the question ...' Berlioz thought and objected: 'Well, there's some exaggeration here. About this same evening I do know more or less certainly. It goes without saying, if a brick should fall on my head on Bronnaya. . ' 'No brick,' the stranger interrupted imposingly, `will ever fall on anyone's head just out of the blue. In this particular case, I assure you, you are not in danger of that at all. You will die a different death.' 'Maybe you know what kind precisely?' Berlioz inquired with perfectly natural irony, getting drawn into an utterly absurd conversation. 'And will tell me?' 'Willingly,' the unknown man responded. He looked Berlioz up and down as if he were going to make him a suit, muttered through his teeth something like: 'One, two ... Mercury in the second house ... moon gone ... six - disaster... evening - seven...' then announced loudly and joyfully: 'Your head will be cut off!' Homeless goggled his eyes wildly and spitefully at the insouciant stranger, and Berlioz asked, grinning crookedly: 'By whom precisely? Enemies? Interventionists?'[23] 'No,' replied his interlocutor, 'by a Russian woman, a Komsomol [24] girl.' `Hm...' Berlioz mumbled, vexed at the stranger's little joke, `well, excuse me, but that's not very likely.' 'And I beg you to excuse me,' the foreigner replied, 'but it's so. Ah, yes, I wanted to ask you, what are you going to do tonight, if it's not a secret?' `It's not a secret. Right now I'll stop by my place on Sadovaya, and then at ten this evening there will be a meeting at Massolit, and I will chair it.' 'No, that simply cannot be,' the foreigner objected firmly. 'Why not?' `Because,' the foreigner replied and, narrowing his eyes, looked into the sky, where, anticipating the cool of the evening, black birds were tracing noiselessly, 'Annushka has already bought the sunflower oil, and has not only bought it, but has already spilled it. So the meeting will not take place.' Here, quite understandably, silence fell under the lindens. `Forgive me,' Berlioz spoke after a pause, glancing at the drivel-spouting foreigner, 'but what has sunflower oil got to do with it ... and which Annushka?' 'Sunflower oil has got this to do with it,' Homeless suddenly spoke, obviously deciding to declare war on the uninvited interlocutor. 'Have you ever happened, citizen, to be in a hospital for the mentally ill?' 'Ivan! ...' Mikhail Alexandrovich exclaimed quietly. But the foreigner was not a bit offended and burst into the merriest laughter. 'I have, I have, and more than once!' he cried out, laughing, but without taking his unlaughing eye off the poet. 'Where haven't I been! Only it's too bad I didn't get around to asking the professor what schizophrenia is. So you will have to find that out from him yourself, Ivan Nikolaevich!' 'How do you know my name?' 'Gracious, Ivan Nikolaevich, who doesn't know you?' Here the foreigner took out of his pocket the previous day's issue of the Literary Gazette, and Ivan Nikolaevich saw his own picture on the very first page and under it his very own verses. But the proof of fame and popularity, which yesterday had delighted the poet, this time did not delight him a bit. 'Excuse me,' he said, and his face darkened, 'could you wait one little moment? I want to say a couple of words to my friend.' 'Oh, with pleasure!' exclaimed the stranger. 'It's so nice here under the lindens, and, by the way, I'm not in any hurry.' 'Listen here, Misha,' the poet whispered, drawing Berlioz aside, 'he's no foreign tourist, he's a spy. A Russian emigre [25] who has crossed back over. Ask for his papers before he gets away...' 'YOU think so?' Berlioz whispered worriedly, and thought: 'Why, he's right...' 'Believe me,' the poet rasped into his ear, `he's pretending to be a fool in order to find out something or other. Just hear how he speaks Russian.' As he spoke, the poet kept glancing sideways, to make sure the stranger did not escape. 'Let's go and detain him, or he'll get away…' And the poet pulled Berlioz back to the bench by the arm. The unknown man was not sitting, but was standing near it, holding in his hands some booklet in a dark-grey binding, a sturdy envelope made of good paper, and a visiting card. `Excuse me for having forgotten, in the heat of our dispute, to introduce myself. Here is my card, my passport, and an invitation to come to Moscow for a consultation,' the stranger said weightily, giving both writers a penetrating glance. They were embarrassed. 'The devil, he heard everything...' Berlioz thought, and with a polite gesture indicated that there was no need to show papers. While the foreigner was pushing them at the editor, the poet managed to make out the word `Professor' printed in foreign type on the card, and the initial letter of the last name - a double 'V' - 'W'. `My pleasure,' the editor meanwhile muttered in embarrassment, and the foreigner put the papers back in his pocket. Relations were thus restored, and all three sat down on the bench again. 'You've been invited here as a consultant, Professor?' asked Berlioz. 'Yes, as a consultant.' "You're German?' Homeless inquired. 'I? ...' the professor repeated and suddenly fell to thinking. 'Yes, perhaps I am German ...' he said. 'YOU speak real good Russian,' Homeless observed. 'Oh, I'm generally a polyglot and know a great number of languages,' the professor replied. 'And what is your field?' Berlioz inquired. 'I am a specialist in black magic.' There he goes!...' struck in Mikhail Alexandrovich's head. 'And ... and you've been invited here in that capacity?' he asked, stammering. 'Yes, in that capacity,' the professor confirmed, and explained: 'In a state library here some original manuscripts of the tenth-century necromancer Gerbert of Aurillac [26] have been found. So it is necessary for me to sort them out. I am the only specialist in the world.' 'Aha! You're a historian?' Berlioz asked with great relief and respect. 'I am a historian,' the scholar confirmed, and added with no rhyme or reason: This evening there will be an interesting story at the Ponds!' Once again editor and poet were extremely surprised, but the professor beckoned them both to him, and when they leaned towards him, whispered: 'Bear in mind that Jesus did exist.' `You see. Professor,' Berlioz responded with a forced smile, `we respect your great learning, but on this question we hold to a different point of view.' `There's no need for any points of view,' the strange professor replied, 'he simply existed, that's all.' 'But there's need for some proof...' Berlioz began. "There's no need for any proofs,' replied the professor, and he began to speak softly, while his accent for some reason disappeared: 'It's all very simple: In a white cloak with blood-red lining, with the shuffling gait of a cavalryman, early in the morning of the fourteenth day of the spring month of Nissan…’[27]



Bulgakov in 1928

# Image

First edition

### Works inspired by The Master and Margarita

| Artist | Title | Category | Date |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| The Rolling Stones | Sympathy for the Devil | Music | 1968 |
| Aleksandar Petrović | The Master and Margaret | Film | 1972 |
| Andrzej Wajda | Pilate and Others | Film | 1972 |
| Salman Rushdie | The Satanic Verses | Novel | 1988 |
| Maciej Wojtyszko | The Master and Margarita | Film | 1988 |
| Yuri Kara | The Master and Margarita | Film | 1994 |
| Pearl Jam | Pilate | Music | 1998 |
| Kamal Tabrizi | Sometimes Look at the Sky | Film | 2003 |
| Vladimir Bortko | The Master and Margarita | Television | 2005 |
| Askold Akishine | The Master and Margarita | Graphic Novel | 2005 |
| Ibolya Fekete | Mester és Margarita | Film | 200 |
| Giovanni Brancale | Il Maestro e Margherita | Film | 2008 |
| Stephen Lalor | Master & Margarita Suite | Concert Music | 2011 |
| John Hodge | Collaborators | Play | 2011 |
| Complicite | The Master and Margarita | Play | 2012 |
| Franz Ferdinand | Love and Destroy | Music | 2013 |
| Lucy Catherine | The Master and Margarita | Radio Play | 2015 |
| Janek Savolainen | Meister ja Margarita | Dance | 2015 |
| Charlotte Waligòra | Le maître et Marguerite | Film | 2015 |

References from Wikipedia 2020 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mikhail\_Bulgakov

# NOTES

### Chapter1: Never Talk with Strangers

The Patriarch's Ponds: Bulgakov uses the old name for what in 1918 was rechristened 'Pioneer Ponds'. Originally these were three ponds, only one of which remains, on the place where Philaret, eighteenth-century patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church, had his residence.

Berlioz: Bulgakov names several of his characters after composers. In addition to Berlioz, there will be the financial director Rimsky and the psychiatrist Stravinsky. The efforts of critics to find some meaning behind this fact seem rather strained.

Massolit: An invented but plausible contraction parodying the many contractions introduced in post-revolutionary Russia. There will be others further on - Dramlit House (House for Dramatists and Literary Workers), findirector (financial director), and so on.

Homeless: In early versions of the novel, Bulgakov called his poet Bezrodny (Tastless' or 'Familyless'). Many `proletarian' writers adopted such pen-names, the most famous being Alexei Peshkov, who called himself Maxim Gorky (gorky meaning 'bitter'). Others called themselves Golodny ('Hungry'), Besposhchadny ('Merciless'), Pribludny ('Stray'). Worthy of special note here is the poet Efim Pridvorov, who called himself Demian Bedny ('Poor'), author of violent anti-religious poems. It may have been the reading of Bedny that originally sparked Bulgakov's impulse to write The Master and Margarita. In his Journal of 1925 (the so-called 'Confiscated Journal' which turned up in the files of the KGB and was published in 1990), Bulgakov noted: 'Jesus Christ is presented as a scoundrel and swindler... There is no name for this crime.'

Kislovodsk: Literally `acid waters', a popular resort in the northern Caucasus, famous for its mineral springs.

Philo of Alexandria: (20 BC-AD 54), Greek philosopher of Jewish origin, a biblical exegete and theologian, influenced both the Neo-Platonists and early Christian thinkers.

Flavius Josephus: (AD 57-100), Jewish general and historian, born in Jerusalem, the author of The Jewish War and Antiquities of the Jews. Incidentally, Berlioz is mistaken: Christ is mentioned in the latter work.

Tacitus's [famous] Annals: A work, covering the years AD 14-66, by Roman historian Cornelius Tacitus (AD 55-120). He also wrote a History of the years AD 69-70, among other works. Modern scholarship rejects the opinion that the passage Berlioz refers to here is a later interpolation.

Osiris: Ancient Egyptian protector of the dead, brother and husband of Isis, and father of the hawk-headed Horus, a 'corn god', annually killed and resurrected.

Tammuz: A Syro-Phoenician demi-god, like Osiris a spirit of annual vegetation.

Marduk: Babylonian sun-god, leader of a revolt against the old deities and institutor of a new order.

Vitzliputzli: Also known as Huitzilopochdi, the Aztec god of war, to whom human sacrifices were offered.

A poodle's head: In Goethe's Faust, Mephistopheles first gets to Faust by taking the form of a black poodle.

A foreigner: Foreigners aroused both curiosity and suspicion in Soviet Russia, representing both the glamour of 'abroad' and the possibility of espionage.

Adonis: Greek version of the Syro-Phoenician demi-god Tammuz.

Attis: Phrygian god, companion to Cybele. He was castrated and bled to death.

Mithras: God of light in ancient Persian Mazdaism.

Magi: The three wise men from the east (a magus was a member of the Persian priestly caste) who visited the newborn Jesus (Matt. 2:1--12).

Restless old Immanuel: Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), German idealist philosopher, thought that the moral law innate in man implied freedom, immortality and the existence of God.

Schiller: Friedrich Schiller (1759-1805), German poet and playwright, a liberal idealist.

Strauss: David Strauss (1808-74), German theologian, author of a Life of Jesus,considered the Gospel story as belonging to the category of myth.

Solovki: A casual name for the 'Solovetsky Special Purpose Camps' located on the site of a former monastery on the Solovetsky Islands in the White Sea. They were of especially terrible renown during the thirties. The last prisoners were loaded on a barge and drowned in the White Sea in 1959.

Enemies? Interventionists?: There was constant talk in the early Soviet period of 'enemies of the revolution' and 'foreign interventionists' seeking to subvert the new workers' state.

Komsomol: Contraction of the Union of Communist Youth, which all good Soviet young people were expected to join.

A Russian emigre: Many Russians opposed to the revolution emigrated abroad, forming important 'colonies' in various capitals - Berlin, Paris, Prague, Harbin, Shanghai - where they remained potential spies and interventionists.

Gerbert of Aurillac: (958-1005), theologian and mathematician, popularly taken to be a magician and alchemist. He became pope in 999 under the name of Sylvester II.

Nisan: The seventh month of the Jewish lunar calendar, twenty-nine days in length. The fifteenth day of Nisan (beginning at sundown on the fourteenth) is the start of the feast of Passover, commemorating the exodus of the Jews from Egypt.