

CHAOS AND *UIUT* IN BULGAKOV'S *BELAIA GWARDIIA*

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Вот оно, налетело страшное времечко. . . . Огонь на полу танцует. Ведь вот же были мирные времена и прекрасные страны.¹

One of Mikhail Bulgakov's outstanding creations, the novel *Belaia gvardiia* (*The White Guard*, 1924) has been overshadowed through much of its reception history – by its 1926 stage adaptation *Dni Turbinykh* (*Days of the Turbins*), and in more recent decades by the author's masterpiece *Master i Margarita* (*The Master and Margarita*). Bulgakov's novel about the adventures of the Turbin family in Civil War-era Kiev initially lost its limelight when the literary journal *Rossiia* shut down in 1925 after publishing only the first two parts of the book. Meanwhile, its author accepted an invitation from the Moscow Art Theatre to write a dramatisation, which went on to spark “one of the greatest controversies in the history of the Soviet theater,”² and become the best known of Bulgakov's works to appear in his lifetime. Until *Belaia gvardiia* finally reemerged before the Soviet reading public in 1966 (in a still-incomplete posthumous edition), critics dismissed the novel as merely a rough draft for the play, a “test of the pen and talent” of Bulgakov.³ And in 1966, as it turned out, readers who

¹Mikhail Bulgakov, *Belaia gvardiia* (Moskva: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1973), 145. Further references will be given in the text by page number.

²Ellendea Proffer, *Bulgakov: Life and Work* (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1984), 112.

³Konstantin Rudnitsky, cited in Evgeny Dobrenko, introduction to *The White Guard*, trans. Marian Schwarz (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 2008), xix. In contrast, a more recent critical consensus is represented by Andrew Barratt's verdict on *Dni Turbinykh* as “powerful” yet “infinitely more limited” than *Belaia gvardiia*.

might have been prepared to render a more favourable judgment had their attention diverted by the first Soviet publication – only a few months later – of a censored version of *Master i Margarita*. The impact of the latter novel was such that, a decade after the appearance of both works, the translator Max Hayward could write:

If Bulgakov had been known only by his earlier works he would rate as no more than a gifted satirist, a Soviet imitator of Gogol, but the publication of *The Master and Margarita* revealed him as a great Russian writer who at first sight seems out of place in the shallows of Soviet prose.⁴

The second part of this proposition is true; but the first is untenable, unless one forgets *Belaia gvardiia* and considers only *Zoikina kvartira* (*Zoya's Apartment*, 1926) and Bulgakov's other satires. Although Hayward's statement may be extreme, it is illustrative of a general critical trend, bemoaned in 1985 by Andrew Barratt, who wonders at the persistence of *Belaia gvardiia*'s double eclipse.⁵

A quarter century later, now that Bulgakov has been firmly ensconced in the twentieth-century Russian literary pantheon (or even, as one scholar has recently pronounced, “Bulgakov segodnia ne ostro aktualen i ne moden, khotia ego klassichnost' priznana”⁶), it is perhaps inappropriate to complain about any aspect of his *oeuvre* being underexposed. Nevertheless, for devotees of *Belaia gvardiia*, there remains a nagging sense of injustice at the fact that, for example, an online search of the MLA International Bibliography yields

(Andrew Barratt, “Apocalypse or Revelation? Man and History in Bulgakov's “Belaia gvardiia”, *New Zealand Slavonic Journal* (1985), 129.

⁴Max Hayward, “Russian Literature in the Soviet Period, 1917-1973,” in his *Writers in Russia: 1917-1975* (San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983), 77-8. (This essay was originally published in 1977.)

⁵Barratt 105. Barbara Kejna Sharratt makes a similar argument: “In Defense of Bulgakov's *Belaja gvardija*, *Russian Language Journal* 36 (1982, nos. 123-124).

⁶ Violetta Gudkova, “Kogda otshumeli spory: Bulgakovedenie poslednego desiatiletiiia,” *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie* (2008, no. 91). <http://magazines.russ.ru/nlo/2008/91/gu33.html> [Accessed 26 Jan. 2012.]

seven times more hits for “Master and Margarita” than it does for “White Guard”.⁷ Is it the (superficially) nineteenth-century flavour of the author’s literary approach? Or maybe it is the fact that this is much more a novel about what it means to be Russian, rather than (as we have come to expect from Bulgakov) what it means to be Soviet – as are *Master i Margarita*, as well as the author’s second most celebrated work today, the short novel *Sobach’e serdtse* (*Heart of a Dog*, written 1925; first published in the USSR in 1987).

If there is one reason why a reader of *Master i Margarita* might feel ever-so-slightly let down when encountering *Belaia gvardiia* for the first time, it is perhaps because Bulgakov’s earlier novel gestures in the same direction as *Master i Margarita* – towards euphoric optimism in the face of grim historical reality (“manuscripts don’t burn”), towards happy-ends on a cosmic scale – but does no more than gesture. Bulgakov’s “sunset novel” provides a monumental cathartic fix (its chapter upon chapter of plot resolution reminiscent of the drawn-out ending of some grand Romantic symphony). *Belaia gvardiia*, in contrast, has been faulted for a certain unfinished quality. This is indeed the impression one might get coming to the novel from *Master i Margarita*; but it is in reality no flaw, merely a reflection of the author’s honesty in refusing any neat resolution of the contradictions and conflicts at the heart of his tale.⁸ Underlying the various historical and personal conflicts depicted in the novel, as several commentators have noted, is a particular version of the eternal duality of chaos and cosmos.⁹ By various means – including the naive, fairytale intonation exemplified

⁷293 vs. 42. (This includes a percentage of results for the phrase “White Guard” that have an historical rather than a literary referent.) [Accessed 26 Jan. 2012.]

⁸Dobrenko, xx-xxi.

⁹See, for example, Margret Fieseler’s analysis of the opposition of *Geborgenheit* and *Chaos/Verwirrung* in her *Untersuchungen zu Bulgakovs Romanen “Belaja gvardija” und “Master i Margarita”*. (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1982), or Lidiia Janovskaia’s discussion of the image of the house in her *Tvorcheskii put’ Mixaila Bulgakova* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel’, 1983).

in the quote that opens this article, as well as the author's repeated situating of the events depicted in the novel in a universalizing (biblical, cosmological) context – Bulgakov attempts to elevate this duality beyond the specifics of class and national identity.

Belaia gvardiia presents itself as a novel of emotions, not ideas. Like Pasternak's *Doktor Zhivago* (*Doctor Zhivago*, 1957), and unlike most Soviet civil war novels, it does not rank characters by political orientation, but by the moral rectitude of their deeds.¹⁰ Of course, one might insist that the author's choice of a moral standard – in which he labels the chief virtue “honour” – betrays his class sympathies. But Bulgakov's bourgeois ethics are class-bound in theory only: the standard of decency by which he judges his characters is more universal than some Soviet critics have admitted. The reader sees the war through the eyes of the Turbin family, and thus feels the basic conflict not in terms of White versus Red (not to mention the several other political forces that were struggling for control of Kiev at this moment in history), but stability versus change: on one hand fear and uncertainty of the war-torn present; on the other the Turbins' desperate back-to-the-womb longing for the moribund world in which they grew up.

The first pole of this opposition is adequately covered by the word “chaos”; yet, for the second, there is no one term in English that adequately covers what Bulgakov is trying to describe. He uses the word *uiut* (31) which may be translated as *comfort* – plus a connotation of domestic security (the word shares a root with the Russian word *priut* “shelter”), including that provided by the family or intimate social group. (Compare the German *Gemütlichkeit*.) In *Belaia gvardiia*, *uiut* refers not only to those purely physical comforts – such as food and protection from the elements – that are menaced by the war. It also refers more generally to

¹⁰Thus the epigraph: “and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.”

the culture and prejudices whose common possession gives members of a social stratum the security of a shared identity. Bulgakov reflects the *uiut*/chaos conflict on various levels of the novel's structure: in his handling of setting, plot, style, narration, symbols and leitmotifs. His stratagems on all these levels tend to be ambiguous, suggesting in their artistic economy both poles of the opposition at once, and thus mirroring the historical conflict at the centre of *Belaia gvardiia*, in which no one element wins decisively (at least within the limited time frame of the story).

To begin with: the historical setting obviously lends itself admirably to Bulgakov's purpose. The Russian Civil War exposed civilians to the confusion of the battlefield to an exceptional degree. It also made the experience of social turmoil that underlies all wars more immediate, since so many of its participants treated it as a class war. (Having said this, one should also make mention of the factor of nationality which separates the Russian Turbins from many of their prospective foes.) Furthermore, the choice of an urban locale puts the collision between war and civilian life into especially sharp focus. The reader is conditioned to accept the battlefield as a stage for the violent death of individuals, cut off from the context of society and *uiut*. In an ordinary war novel, with its soldier in a foxhole, direct consideration of death's effect on the world of *uiut* is limited – perhaps to the recollection of a love-letter in a breast pocket.

But what is the effect on the reader of seeing the young Nikolka Turbin race for his life down the beloved streets of his native city (139-144)? This nightmare is far more effective than that of the battlefield, since it is staged in a place that one ordinarily thinks of as the setting for a peaceful, *uiutnyi* existence. Nikolka's flight is made all the more nightmarish by the fact that, as he runs from the enemy (in this case, the Ukrainian nationalist forces of Symon Petliura), he encounters ordinary citizens walking down the street as if all

were normal – only he is singled out, because he is a suspected member of the pro-Russian White Guard.

It is interesting to compare this effect with that achieved in Tolstoi's *Voina i mir* (to which *Belaia gvardiia* has been compared as an ironic commentary).¹¹ The scene in which the soldier Nikolka is shot at in a civilian environment is the precise opposite of the scene in *Voina i mir* in which the civilian Pierre Bezukhov is plunged into a military environment: the battle of Borodino. It is the alienation effect created by juxtaposing civilian and military that makes Tolstoi's passage so effective (as first noted by the Formalist scholar Viktor Šklovskii) – and Bulgakov's technique is no different.

Thus Bulgakov chooses a time and place that allow him to render the *uiut*/chaos conflict as concretely as possible. The plot is crafted with the same goal in mind. The action is strictly divided into inside (*uiut*) and outside (chaos) scenes. The most important inside setting is, of course, the Turbin family flat at No. 13 Alekseevskii spusk. It is the main embodiment of shelter, both symbolically and physically. The flat is paralleled by several other insides with similar *uiutnyi* characteristics, which also take on a clear symbolic function, becoming more than simply rooms and buildings. The inside/outside opposition is further reflected in the setting of the novel as a whole. The city of Kiev, mother of Russian cities, is itself an inside. From the perspective of the Turbins it constitutes a bastion of Russian civilization and culture, floating like a storm-tossed ship in a sea of Ukrainian peasantry.

The story of *Belaia gvardiia* consists of a series of adventures which befall members of the Turbin household and their friends when they leave No. 13 for the outside world of chaos. This is a series of events (mainly dire) whose effect penetrates, one way or another,

into the inside world, the bastion of *uiut* – which is also where the characters return to tell their stories. Thus the outside is the realm of action, and the inside the realm of narration. Similarly, the city itself is an inside which various agents of chaos – armies, refugees, ideologies – attempt to penetrate. Kiev falls more than once; but the microcosm of the Turbins has better luck. The violence which threatens the citizens of Kiev throughout the book for the most part bypasses the Turbins. Jackbooted chaos never makes it through the front door of No. 13, despite the fears of its inhabitants and habitués. After their first gathering with their friends at home (Chapter Three), the war scatters the family members in different directions, and the reader strongly suspects that this is indeed the last time that all of them will meet together alive. In their parallel flights through the city, both of the Turbin brothers, Aleksei and Nikolka, come a hair's breadth from death. Still, to the disbelieving relief of both the characters and the sympathetic reader, they (one is wounded, but God will save him), as well as all their friends, make it back again to No. 13 by Chapter Fourteen (179).

Significantly, the family unit not only survives undamaged, but is strengthened. For the miracle that saves the life of the wounded Aleksei, his sister Elena prays to the Virgin Mary, and offers her own marriage as a sacrifice. God accepts the deal, Aleksei is saved, and the Turbins are thus also rid of Elena's uncongenial husband Talberg, who has represented the one imperfection in their life (the “treshchina v vase turbinskoi zhizni” (22)). And not only does Talberg leave: the family is also strengthened by the prospect of happy marriages for all three Turbin siblings by the novel's end. The only character to die in the book who is at all close to the Turbins is Nikolka's father-figure, the heroic Colonel Nai-Turs. As a character he belongs with the Turbins' parents and the murdered Tsar himself: figures whose

¹¹A. Colin Wright, *Mikhail Bulgakov: Life and Interpretations* (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1978), 71.

death only makes the old, *uiutnyi* way of life they represent seem all the more untouchable and unblemished.

Thus Bulgakov does all he can to pull the reader's heart-strings, but, in a manner more suitable to melodrama than to a work of novelistic realism, offers a last act in which all threats are magically neutralised and a happy status quo seemingly confirmed. His characters, as Bulgakov's narrator does not hide, find themselves in typical melodramatic situations:

Она наполовину провалилась в эту стену и, как в мелодраме, простирая руки, сияя огромнейшими от ужаса глазами, прокричала:

– Офицер! Сюда! Сюда... (171)

Yet Bulgakov does not quite let his material as a whole slip into melodrama, for he intends the reader's response to his characters to be more than just visceral. The use of mild ironic distancing, in passages such as this one describing Alexei's adventures, steers us away from mere pity, and opens the door to a deeper empathy.

Similarly, Bulgakov sympathizes with his characters' instinctive reactions to events, but does not hesitate to point out how shallow their attitudes are when manifested in the abstract, divorced from the personal and the specific. The Turbins' longing to escape the tide of history, based on the reality of their lives, is understood and accepted. Yet their sacred ideas, when expressed more theoretically by their friend the poet Lariosik, are justifiably satirized. In the same way, the boastful loyalist Shervinskii embodies the ridiculousness of Tsarist aspirations; yet Nikolka Turbin's desperate, impulsive toast to the dead monarch in Chapter Three (40) is human and sincere, and accordingly Bulgakov portrays it with sympathy, not irony.

Thus the presentation of the events of *Belaia gvardiia* makes it clear to the reader that it is the humanity rather than the wisdom of his characters' attitudes that counts. The order in which these events are narrated offers one of the most conspicuous reflections of the

uiut/chaos polarity in the novel. The non-linearity of the narration, with its flashbacks and abrupt changes of scene, echoes the confusion that grips the characters in their struggle to understand the events in which they are caught. Bulgakov is uncharitable to readers who may be unfamiliar with the hectic events of the Civil War in Kiev. He is less concerned with explicating the various historical players and their roles, than he is with giving the reader a taste of the confusion felt by eyewitnesses. Bulgakov is certainly not the only Russian author to make use of fragmented, non-linear narrative to suggest the chaos of a revolutionary or wartime situation. One sees the same typically modernist approach in Belyi's *Peterburg* and Pilniak's *Golyi god*, both works whose influence on *Belaia gvardiia* is undeniable.¹² Still, underlying the chaos of the action one can detect a certain order, which somehow mitigates against a pervasive feeling of the fragility of *uiut*, and reflects an implicit covenant made by the author to Nikolka and the rest of the Turbins on the second page of the novel, "что все, что ни происходит, всегда так, как нужно, и только к лучшему." (8)

Along with this goes the affirmation that:

башни, тревоги и оружие человек воздвиг, сам того не зная, для одной лишь цели – охранять человеческий покой и очаг. Из-за него он воюет, и, в сущности говоря, ни из-за чего другого воевать ни в коем случае не следует. (163)

These two solitary statements stand against the weighty evidence of the plot for the side of chaos. With them goes the aforementioned hint of order. The structural opposition between chaos and order in *Belaia gvardiia* is not as highly developed as it is, for example, in the dualistic counterpoint of *Peterburg*. A better comparison would be Dostoevskii. Bulgakov uses a system of parallels – for example, the flight and subsequent romantic entanglements of

¹²Bulgakov might have demurred in the case of Pilniak, whose work he disliked. Yet the ornamentalist Pilniak is so central a figure in the landscape of post-1917 prose that it would have been impossible for the author of *Belaia gvardiia* to remain unaffected. Along with Belyi and Pilniak one might also mention Zamiatin, another writer with whose work (e.g., the story "Peščera") Bulgakov's shares certain similarities.

both Aleksei and Nikolka, and the many ways in which the book's ending echoes its beginning – just as Dostoevskii does in such works as *Brat'ia Karamazovy*. In both cases the effect is to give an underlying sense of order and purpose to the apparent chaos of the action.

A few words in particular should be devoted to the parallels between beginning and end, which lend the structure a circularity underlying all the chaos. The first chapter has a proleptic function: it introduces the major characters and their struggle, which is in essence their attempt to answer the question “Kak zhe zhit'?” (9) posed in the opening pages; it sets up the symbolic technique that will be used to describe their home, and introduces the major leitmotifs. The final chapter, with its repetition of the book's introductory words “Velik byl god i strashen god” (242), returns to the apocalyptic tone of the first chapter, and reassembles all the symbols which it introduced. The dreams of various characters which are depicted in this chapter also return us to the question “Kak zhe zhit'?”, and the novel closes giving the best answer it can.

Perhaps the single most important, and surely the most original method by which Bulgakov brings his characters' emotions close to the reader is through his narrator. The most striking feature of the narration of *Belaia gvardiia* is the use of represented discourse, and the most striking feature of the latter is that it is often very difficult both to identify and to attribute. For example, there is the passage in Chapter Three (34-35) describing the singing exploits of Shervinskii, a friend of the Turbins. It moves from narrator's discourse through represented discourse to Shervinskii's direct discourse in the space of one paragraph. The shift occurs imperceptibly, without markers to divide narrator from character, and the reader only fully realizes that it is Shervinskii who has been speaking all the time in the very last sentence:

Маленький улан сразу почувствовал, что он, как никогда, в голосе, и розоватая гостиная наполнилась действительно чудовищным ураганом звуков, пел Шервинский эпиталаму богу Гименею, и как пел! Да, пожалуй, все вздор на свете, кроме такого голоса, как у Шервинского. Конечно, сейчас штабы, эта дурацкая война, большевики, и Петлюра, и долг, но потом, когда все придет в норму, он бросает военную службу, несмотря на свои петербургские связи, вы знаете, какие у него связи – о-го-го... и на сцену. Петь он будет в La Scala и в Большом театре в Москве, когда большевиков повесят на фонарях на Театральной площади. В него влюбилась в Жмеринке графиня Лендрикова, потому что когда он пел эпиталаму, то вместо fa взял la и держал его пять тактов. Сказав – пять, Шервинский сам повесил немного голову и посмотрел кругом растерянно, как будто кто-то другой сообщил ему это, а не он сам. (35)

Even more difficult than deciding where a passage of narrated monologue begins and ends, as in the above example, is the problem of deciding to whom it should be attributed. For instance, there is this passage at the beginning of the novel, in which the Turbins anxiously wait for the resolution of their uncertainties about the war, the whereabouts of Elena's husband, and the proper course of their own future actions:

Николка прильнул к окошку. . . . в глазах – напряжённейший слух. Где? Пожал унтер-офицерскими плечами.

– чёрт его знает. Впечатление такое, что будто под Святошинным стреляют. Странно, не может быть так близко.

Алексей во тьме, а Елена ближе к окошку, и видно, что глаза её чёрно-испуганы. Что же значит, что Тальберга до сих пор нет? Старший чувствует её волнение и поэтому не говорит ни слова, хоть сказать ему и очень хочется. Стреляют 12 вёрст от города, не дальше. Что за штука? (14)

Some of the voiced and unvoiced statements in this passage are easier to attribute than others. In general, though, any of them could be conceivably uttered by any of the three Turbins. Nikolka's shrug suggests that he is the one who asks "Gde?"; but he could have just as well been responding to either of the other two: the question is a collective one.

There are also instances of emotional interjections such as "ekh, ekh" or "slyshete li" in passages in which there is no nearby speaker to hang them on. They can thus only be attributed to the narrator himself. Although he occasionally makes personal comments on his tale, he never refers to himself directly. In avoiding speaking of himself, he avoids having to

voice his opinions on the events of the story. One hears his instinctive emotional reaction to what he describes, but never his reasoned judgment. As always, the focus is on emotions, not ideas.

The emotional reaction of the narrator to a given situation in the narrative corresponds with what might be the reaction of one of the Turbins, were they to witness the same scene. Thus the narrator is sympathetic, but not to all characters equally: the degree of his sympathy is directly proportional to the closeness of a character to the No. 13 world-view. Furthermore, he does not sympathize with any one of the Turbins in particular, but with the family as a collective. There is no single hero in *Belaia gvardiia*: the central consciousness of the novel is the collective consciousness associated with the household of No. 13, composed of the shared attitudes and behaviours connected with the Turbin idea of *uiut*. Thus the narrator might be said to represent a generic Turbin consciousness.

The function of the blending of character's and narrator's discourse is subtly to encourage the reader to identify, as does the narrator, with the collective Turbin world-view. The interpretive difficulties which this method presents to the reader also contribute to the feeling of confusion engendered by the non-linear development of the plot. Yet its main function remains to bring the emotional reactions of the reader in line with those of the Turbins.¹³

The style itself is influenced by the narrator's focus on the Turbins. According to the presence or absence of the Turbin consciousness, it shifts from fairytale/apocalyptic lyricism (the *uiut* style), to objective and ironic (the chaos style). The variety of narrative styles

¹³This technique has had an interesting effect on critics of the novel, especially those early Soviet critics whose main interest was in Bulgakov's politics. They experienced great difficulty in trying to trace statements made in the fiction back through the narrative muddle to the author himself, and give evidence of their confusion in the variety of their critical approaches. (Wright, 68; Proffer 1984, 82)

evident in *Belaia gvardiia* certainly contribute to the general sense of confusion. Yet they have their specific roles in the text. Compare, for example, the passage in Chapter One dealing with the Turbins' dead mother, with the section in Chapter Seventeen dealing with Nikolka's search for the corpse of Nai-Turs. In the first case the mood is lyrical:

Когда отпевали мать, был май, вишневые деревья и акации наглухо залепили стрельчатые окна. Отец Александр, от печали и смущения спотыкающийся, блестел и искрился у золотеньких огней, и дьякон, лиловый лицом и шеей, весь ковано-золотой до самых носков сапог, скрипящих на ранту, мрачно рокотал слова церковного прощания маме, покидающей своих детей. (7-8)

The vocabulary (“mai”, “vishnevye derev'ia”) contributes to the feeling of *uiut* connected with the mother, who is earlier referred to as “svetlaia koroleva” (7), and is thus linked to the dead Tsar, another invisible symbol of *uiut*. In the second case, in the terse, naturalistic description of a visit to the morgue, Bulgakov brings his own medical experience to the fore in impressing upon the reader the reality of the threat posed by the Kievan chaos:

– Вы смотрите – он? Чтобы не было ошибки...

Николка глянул Наю прямо в глаза, открытые, стеклянные глаза Ная отозвались бессмысленно. Левая щека у него была тронута чуть заметной зеленью, а по груди, животу расплылись и застыли темные широкие пятна, вероятно, крови.

– Он, – сказал Николка. (221)

Of crucial importance are the frequent literary allusions. References to Russian literature and to the Bible help instill a sense of identity between the reader and the generic Turbin consciousness. They have the effect of suggesting a shared body of cultural knowledge, linking reader and author to the world of *uiut*. The references to the Bible, in particular, point to the deepest roots of a shared heritage. Ironically, all the allusions to this book actually refer to scenes of Biblical chaos. Thus, again, Bulgakov manages to point to both sides of the polarity at once.

A further irony is that the actual examples given of those important symbols of *uiut* –

the so-called “shokoladnye knigi” – are all themselves tales of chaos: *Kapitanskaia docha*, *Idiot*, “Gospodin iz San Frantsisko.” The Turbins wonder, in Chapter One, when they will be able to begin to live the longed-for life “o kotoroi pishetsia v shokoladnykh knigakh.” (9) This is doubly ironic: firstly, they ignore the real content of these books; secondly, they do indeed end up living the life that is portrayed in them. There are many similarities, for example, between the plot of *Belaia gvardiia* and that of *Kapitanskaia dochka*, from which Bulgakov takes one of his epigraphs. (For example, the Ukrainian nationalist leader Petliura is a version of Pugachev.)

Along with literary allusions, the novel makes wide use of leitmotifs. Objects, as well as certain descriptive words, gain symbolic meaning through repetition. Not all of Bulgakov’s leitmotifs are original to him. He admits his link to contemporary Russian authors in his use of elements of the emblematic vocabulary that was developed in revolutionary and civil war literature. For example, the snowstorm as a symbol for revolution, which first appears in *Belaia gvardiia* in an epigraph from Pushkin’s *Kapitanskaia dochka*, comes also from Pilniak’s *Golyi god*, and before that from Blok’s *Dvenadtsat’*. The use of unsettled weather, fog and shadows to reflect chaos harks back to Belyi’s *Peterburg*. The symbolization of comfort and order by domestic objects also appears in both *Peterburg* and Zamiatin’s “Peshchera.”

The Turbin household is filled with domestic objects which take on the role of emblems of *uiut*. The most important of these, however, all have some sort of connection with the world of chaos as well. One of the most frequently repeated items are the “kremovye shtory.” Both these and the “lampa s abazhurom,”¹⁴ another important symbol of *uiut*, control

¹⁴Lampshades, which are also prominent in *Master and Margarita*, featured among the “bugbears of the time” in official Soviet attacks on bourgeois vulgarity. (Vladimir Lakshin, “Home and Homelessness (Aleksandr

the flow of light, and add privacy and an air of domestic comfort. Yet these are ominously fragile symbols: a rather portentous removal of a lampshade is depicted in the novel; and the poet Lariosik's attachment to the "shtory" is cruelly mocked.

The stove – the "Saardamskii Plotnik" – is a prime center of *uiut*, as in any traditional Russian home. Yet it contains fire, the great symbol of chaos; and the threat is made in the first chapter that a symbol of *uiut*, namely *Kapitanskaia docha*, will be cast into it. (9)

Then there is the crockery motif. In Chapter Two it is revealed that Elena uses the family's best tea-service, which her mother used to save for special occasions. (15) This seems an effort on her part to take her mother's place and uphold *uiut*; yet there is a hint of desperation in the fact that she uses the best service for everyday. The reader's vague anxiety at reading this passage bears fruit later in the novel, when the hapless Lariosik smashes most of the dishes. Lariosik, who speaks the loudest about upholding *uiut*, actually brings more chaos into No. 13 than any other character.

Elena herself has a symbolic function which sets her apart from her siblings. She, among the Turbins, is the one with the closest link to the mother. (26) She alone is not once shown outside of No. 13 – she is a fixture in its world. Her main distinguishing feature is her beautiful hair, with which her brothers and friends associate happy bygone days. Yet the striking thing about this hair is that, in the narrator's descriptions, it never stays quite the same colour. It ranges from "ryzhyi" through "ryzhevatyi" to "zolotoi" and "iasnyi": thus, evoking *uiut*, it simultaneously reflects instability. It would not be going too far, perhaps, to link her changing hair with the conflict between the forces of White and Red. In other instances in the novel Bulgakov explicitly recalls the political symbolism of these colours.

Blok and Mikhail Bulgakov", in Lesley Milne, ed., *Bulgakov: The Novelist-Playwright* (Florence KY: Routledge, 1996) 6-7.)

(e.g., 236) Elena is also identified with the Virgin to whom she prays for Aleksei's recovery: her ikon, like herself, is "okaimlennyi zolotoi kosynkoi." (232)

As mentioned, various interiors in the novel symbolize *uiut*. Madame Anjou's dress shop, for example, has pleasant associations for Aleksei. Yet its ties to the past – a tinkling bell and a faint odour of scent – seem frail, threatened by the shop's present role as recruiting center and ammunition depot. The external landscape of the city is dotted with monuments, emblems of authority and order. In particular, there is the massive statue of Vladimir, grand prince and patron saint of Kiev, baptiser of medieval Rus'. He stands on a hill overlooking the Dnieper River, guarding his island of stability and civilization. (47) Acknowledging this symbolism, the gun on the armoured train of the Reds points straight toward the statue in Chapter Twenty. (245) On the last page of the novel, the monument – or at least the cross held aloft in the saint's right hand – seems to have been transformed from a symbol of *uiut* into a symbol of chaos:

Издали казалось, что поперечная перекладина исчезла – слилась с вертикалью, и от этого крест превратился в угрожающий острый меч. (248)

Still, the novel ends with a reiteration of the promise that all will someday turn out for the best: "Mech izcheznet, a vot zvezdy ostanutsia, kogda i teni nashikh tel i del ne ostanetsia na zemle." This passage brings in one more key symbol for the *uiut*/chaos conflict: that of the stars. In *Belaia gvardiia*, one finds frequent mention of the stars in general, and of the planets Mars and Venus in particular. In the first sentence of the novel, the collision of the forces of *uiut* (Venus) and chaos (Mars) is symbolically introduced: ". . . i osobenno vysoko v nebe stoiali dve zvezdy: zvezda pastusheskaia – vecherniaia Venera i krasnyi, drozhashchii Mars." (7) Venus, as the "pastoral planet" recalls Kiev's status as a garden city; and besides this connection with the mother of Russian cities, Venus reminds us of the bronze shepherdesses

on the front of the clock that used to belong to the mother of Alexei, Nikolka and Elena. (29) Like the “Saardamskii Plotnik” stove, this clock, which chimes out a gavotte every third hour, is an icon of Turbin family *uiut*. Both of these, the narrator insists, are “sovershenno bessmertny”. (9)

By the end of the novel Venus has disappeared; but Mars still hangs “osobenno vysoko v nebe”. (246) It still throbs with threatening life, and now appears as a distinctly Bolshevik planet (“krasnaia i piatikonechnaia”). Its light is reflected in the red star badges worn by Trotsky’s forces, who are at this moment preparing to enter the city. When the retreating men of Petliura beat a Jew to death with a ramrod, Mars triumphantly explodes: “bryznula ognem i oglushitel’no udarila.” (242) Venus, however, returns symbolically in the dream of little Pet’ka Shcheglov, a neighbour of the Turbins. In it the child sees a diamond ball, which like Mars explodes – but in the most *uiutnyi* way imaginable: “Shar obdal Pet’ku sverkaiushchimi bryzgami.” (248) (Note the echo of “bryznula” from the previous quotation.) The novel ends with the suggestion of a new permanence to replace the illusory, mundane *uiut* represented by the symbols and leitmotifs of the first chapter. This new order is symbolized in a final tableau of the stars – neither Mars nor Venus alone, but the whole firmament, towards which the narrator entreats the reader, as well as all of humanity, to turn: “Tak pochemu zhe my ne khotim obratit’ svoi vzgliad na nikh? Pochemu?” (248)

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