

6 Coming to Terms with Evil

Abstract. The paper is conceived as a study of the concept of evil in the process of mutual perceptions of the West and China since the early 20th century until today. It begins with a discussion of the theory according to which the “otherness” of Chinese civilization, the specific course of its development, and the difficulties China faced in coming to grips with Western powers in the 19th century are largely due to the fact that the idea of radical personified evil was known to the Christian world but not to China.

The debate among Western sinologists on this theory is investigated along with the study of the parallel reception process of the Western idea of evil among Chinese intellectuals. First of all, it was the Faustian tradition, one of the promising achievements of the European Renaissance, making this idea become so attractive to China in the previous century. While this article reflects upon China’s reception of the significant elements of this tradition as ideas such as creation, originality, negation, Chinese discussions of GOETHE’s *Faust* etc., focus is put on Chinese readings of three Russian classical writers who centrally employ the motif of personified evil in their works: Nikolai GOGOL, Fyodor DOSTOEVSKY, and Mikhail BULGAKOV. The decided selection of Russian classics was motivated by the highly ambivalent position of Russia in the process of intercultural dialogue between the East and the West - not only as part of the West but also as a culture which at many crucial stages of its history distanced itself from the West in search for some original unique path into future.

Keywords. Motif of evil, Christianity, Gogol, Dostoevsky, Bulgakov.

Introduction

Academic studies on cultural differences between China and the West in regard to the idea of evil have always rested on the assumption of a fundamental mutual otherness of both cultures: Their focus lies on the peculiarities of the other and on an intensive investigation of them which is seen as helpful in the construction of one's own cultural identity. The most important one among all the initial works in this area was Max WEBER's (1864–1920) *Economy Ethics of World Religions (Confucianism and Taoism, 1911–1915)*; and among later influential studies there were Alfred FORKE's (1867–1944) *The World Conception of the Chinese* (1925), Frederick MOTE's (1922–2005) *The Cosmological Gulf between China and The West* (1972) as well as François JULLIEN's (b. 1951) *L'Ombre au tableau. Du mal ou du négatif* (2004).¹ Among the most recent works, Adrian CHAN's monograph *Orientalism in Sinology* (2012) deserves special attention as it combines the Weberian tradition of discussing the idea of evil with the post-colonial discourse and with all the political critiques in Sinology that have been inspired by Edward SAID's (1935–2003) *Orientalism* (1978). CHAN's monograph is also conceived as a political critique and pursues the liberation of China related studies from elements of Western ideology projected upon it. One of the most important ideological projections discussed by CHAN is the concept of *sin*. According to him, it is one of the most crucial mistakes in Sinology to interpret the Chinese concepts of *guo* 过 and *zui* 罪 as *sin*,² because it makes the idea of Christian transcendence which is foreign to Chinese cosmology and cosmogony appear as something indigenously Chinese. While discussing this topic of “sin in a cross-cultural comparison”, CHAN resumes one of the key arguments of Max WEBER³ and demonstrates that studies of evil do not only remain important for academic discourse, but also are highly relevant from a political standpoint, reflecting the post-modern

1 See also Livia KÖHN: “Zur Symbolik des Bösen im alten China”. In: Ingrid KRÜSSMANN (ed.): *Der Abbruch des Turmbaus: Studien zum Geist in China und im Abendland. Festschrift für Rolf Trauzettel*, Nettetal: Steyler Verlag 1995, pp. 113–133; Fabian VÖLKER: “Der Ursprung und Sinn des Bösen und des Seins der Welt: Zu einer theodiceeanalogen Frage im Vedānta und Buddhismus”. In: *Zeitschrift für Religionswissenschaft*, 2014, pp. 330–374; Franklin PERKINS: *Heaven and Earth are not Humane: The Problem of Evil in Classical Chinese Philosophy*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press 2014.

2 Adrian CHAN: *Orientalism in Sinology*, Bethesda: Academica Press 2012, pp. 2–4.

3 For Max WEBER's study of the idea of *sin* in Western-Chinese comparative frame, see his *Die Wirtschaftsethik der Weltreligionen: Konfuzianismus und Taoismus*, Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr 1991, pp. 145, 194–195, 205, 213.

issue of a global over-communication as well as the problematics of ties between knowledge and power.

For the present paper, all these theoretical cultural studies of the evil East and West represent an important discursive frame. However, my core issue would be not the idea of evil as it is reflected in Western academic discourse, but rather the interpretations of the Western ideas of evil by broader strata of Chinese intellectuals and the connections between these interpretations and Chinese politics.

The first decisive phase in China's coming to terms with Western idea of radical evil resulted in a confrontation of Chinese intellectuals with Christian missionaries, not in the early stage of the mission, but rather in the 18th and 19th centuries, when Chinese saints and sages were increasingly perceived by Christian missionaries as sinful and for this reason were systematically banned to Christian hells.⁴ In this dramatic dialogue, too, cultural differences pertaining to the idea of sin were a crucial factor. The spiritual background of coming to terms with Western evil at this early stage has been thoroughly discussed in Sinology.⁵

The second phase, roughly between the late 19th century and 1949, took its course under a general conviction of the necessity of modernizing China after the model of the militarily and technologically superior West. It was the time of an active reception of the history of Western thought and Western concepts, such as the Renaissance, the Faustian tradition which originated from the Renaissance⁶ and GOETHE's (1749–1832) *Faust* with its philosophical elaboration of the theme of radical evil. It seems important that the reception of GOETHE⁷, as well as that of many other figures associated with the genealogy of Western modernity (DANTE (1265–1321) LUTHER (1483–1546), etc.), was only marginally connected to Chinese translations of these works and real acts of reading them either in the original or in translation. Both the Renaissance and the Faustian spirit had become part and parcel of Chinese political discourse long before the first translation of *Faust* (part one) by GUO Moruo 郭沫若 (1892–1978) appeared in 1928. The idea of evil came to the fore in its constant deep interrelation with such other concepts as *creation*,

4 For more details, see the chapter "Damnation des Saints et dieux de la Chine" in Jacques GERNET, *Chine et christianisme, action et réaction*, Paris: Gallimar 1982, pp. 238–247.

5 See, for example, the monographs by Paul A. COHEN, *China and Christianity: The Missionary Movement and the Growth of Chinese Antiforeignism, 1860–1870*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press 1963, and by Jacques GERNET, *Chine et christianisme, action et réaction* (1982).

6 For the ideological background of the boom of the Renaissance idea during the May Fourth, see Jerome GRIEDER: *Hu Shih and the Chinese Renaissance, Liberalism in the Chinese Revolution 1917–1937*, Cambridge: Harvard University 1970.

7 For the reception of GOETHE's *Faust* in East Asia, see Adrian HSIA (ed.): *Zur Rezeption von Goethes „Faust“ in Ostasien*, Bern: Peter Lang 1993.

negation, negation of negation, individuality and geniality, all of them becoming a subject of new intercultural interpretations within the current political discourse.

Reflections on creation as one of the most ambivalent concept in Chinese cultural tradition were central for such seminal sinological studies as Kirina GOLYGINA's "Kontseptsiia tvorcheskoj lichnosti v konfučianskoj èsteticheskoj teorii" (On the creative personality in the Confucian aesthetic tradition, 1973⁸) and Michael PUETT's *The Ambivalence of Creation* (2001.) In Western tradition, creation is also a highly ambivalent concept which is documented as early as in the *Book of Genesis*: by committing the original sin, man puts himself in a competing position with God. The ability to judge on good and evil, which man attains through the original sin, is closely associated with the act of divine creation. Creation, creativity, individuality, geniality, all these concepts, since the Renaissance and most essentially in the age of Enlightenment, developed to underscore the ambivalent position of man before God. Man is seen as a creation of God, but he is himself also a creator who increasingly aspires to affirm himself as a competitor to God, i.e. as the subject of an individual, independent, and progressive creation.

The topoi of creation⁹, creativity, and the Renaissance, dominated the Chinese intellectual discourse since the beginning of the 20th century. The metaphysical ambivalence of these concepts in the Western cultural tradition¹⁰ was not in the focus of debates among Chinese intellectuals. Neither were the changes in the spiritual atmosphere of the West which marked the transition from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance in the focus of debates among Chinese intellectuals. The focus was, instead, on the perception of the Renaissance as a symbol of rapid scientific, economic, and technical growth, of rising national strength and of consolidation of political power. Renaissance came to be one of the most popular political slogans which united ideologically different thinkers such as HU Shi 胡适 (1891–1962), ZHOU Zuoren 周作人 (1885–1967), XU Zhimo 徐志摩 (1897–1931), and LIANG Shuming 梁漱溟 (1893–1988) etc. For this reason, it was no coincidence

8 In: *Izuchenie kitajskoj literatury v SSSR* (Soviet Studies on Chinese Literature), Moskva: Nauka 1973, pp. 194–205.

9 Ironically, it is this very concept of creation which is among the primary aims of Adrian CHAN's critical study. In his scathing polemics against Western sinologists – first of all against James LEGGE (1815–1897) – these are constantly addressed as “created people”, as for example in the following passage: “The lack of sin [in China – V. V.] has led to conflicts and misunderstanding, not only in sinology but ... also in the contemporary international political relations between China and the Created people.” (Adrian CHAN: *Orientalism in Sinology* (2012), p. 9.)

10 For more details see Viatcheslav VETROV: “Zur Dekonstruktion des Un/Gesunden in philologischen Taxonomien: Westlich-chinesischer Renaissance-Diskurs”. In: *Oriens Extremus* vol. 51, 2012, pp. 331–368.

that the combination of the concepts of evil and creation became a focal point in the general self-strengthening discourse.

It was in 1927 that CHENG Fangwu 成仿吾 (1897–1984) presented in his essay “Cong wenzue geming dao geming wenzue” 从文学革命到革命文学 (From Literary Revolution to Revolutionary Literature), published in 1928 in the *Chuangzao yuekan* 创造月刊 (*Creation Monthly*), a political manifesto in which leading Chinese intellectuals of the May Fourth were scathingly criticized for being alien to the masses and unable to carry out the overdue revolutionary mission. In a laconic form, CHENG formulates his own mission as a *negation of negation* (*fouling de fouling* 否定的否定).¹¹ This remarkable fruit of negation spirit was brought forward in the middle between two great events in the modern Chinese history: the New Culture movement, within which the Creation Society (Chuangzao she 创造社, 1921–1930) was formed; and the political triumph of the Chinese Communist Party (1949.) The Creation Society¹² which produced this prominent communist ideologist and translator of the *Communist Manifesto* into Chinese, was on its part very much concerned with the topic of coming to terms with Western evil, which can be illustrated by the examples of GUO Moruo’s translation of GOETHE’s *Faust* (Part One) and QUAN Ping’s 全平 *Satanic Project* (*Sadan de gongcheng* 撒但的工程.)

GUO Moruo’s translation of GOETHE’s *Faust* on which he worked from 1919 until 1928 was not the beginning of Chinese intellectuals’ reception of GOETHE. GOETHE had been a major figure of Chinese political debates since the *Yangwu* movement (*Yangwu yundong* 洋务运动, Western affairs movement), and the early decades of the 20th century are often called the age of the Faustian spirit in China. Among the early Chinese works which discussed GOETHE was GU Hongming’s 辜鸿铭 (1857–1928) chapter *Zi qiang bu xi* 自强不息 (On unswerving self-strengthening) from his *ZHANG Wenxiang mufu jiwen* 张文襄幕府记闻 (Recollections from the Quarters of ZHANG Wenxiang, 1910.) In this chapter, GOETHE’s work is discussed not as a tragedy, but as a triumph of an unswerving aspiring mind which is interpreted in terms of, and assimilated to, the indigenous Chinese tradition by a quotation from the *Book of Changes – Zi qiang bu xi*; being

11 CHENG Fangwu 成仿吾: “Cong wenzue geming dao geming wenzue” 从文学革命到革命文学 (From Literary Revolution to Revolutionary). In: *Cheng Fangwu wenji* 成仿吾文集 (Collected works of CHENG Fangwu), Jinan: Shandong daxue chubanshe 1985, pp. 241–247, here p. 246.

12 For the significant role of the Creation Society in the politics of Republican China, see TANG Xiaobing and Michel HOCKX, “The Creation Society (1921–1930)”. In: Kirk A. DENTON, Michel HOCKX (eds.): *Literary Societies of Republican China*, Lanham: Lexington Books 2008, pp. 103–136; YIN Zhiguang: *Politics of Art: The Creation Society and the Practice of Theoretical Struggle in Revolutionary China*, Leiden: Brill 2014.

an allusion to the sentence: *Tian xing jian, junzi yi zi qiang bu xi* 天行健，君子以自强不息 (Just as the heaven is constant in its motion, the sage never ceases from strengthening himself.)¹³ It is significant that in this interpretation GOETHE comes to personify the unity of man and the cosmos; he is placed within the immanent natural order; and there is no reference to the Christian transcendence, to the symbolic accompaniment of Faust both by Mephistopheles and by God. GOETHE who thus is seen as representing an immanent world vision, is interpreted as a key figure who demonstrates the unity of Chinese and Western cultures. As another prominent intellectual FENG Zhi 冯至 (1905–1993) summarized the attractive force of the Faustian evil to Chinese intellectuals of the 1920s and 1940s, the evil was seen as an effective stimulus to action, as something which in the end is positive and good, which he supports by the following quotation from GOETHE's *Faust*: *Wo shi na liliang de yi bufen, ta yongyuan yuanwang e er yongyuan chuangzao le shan* 我是那力量的一部分，它永远愿望恶而永远创造了善 (I'm part of that power which wills forever evil, yet does forever good).¹⁴ Thus, the Faustian good and evil come to be seen as complementary, just like the categories of *yin* and *yang* in Chinese cosmology and completely in accordance with the traditional Chinese interpretations of evil, for example by ZHU Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200) or by WANG Yangming 王阳明 (1472–1529).¹⁵

Both for GOETHE's *Faust* and for the whole European Faustian genealogy (from Christopher MARLOWE up to Thomas MANN and Mikhail BULGAKOV), Christianity was a very important spiritual source. In this tradition, evil always shows itself in its intentionality (as an explicit ethical choice, "that always *wishes* evil"¹⁶), which is reflected upon in terms of the transcendence idea. It is also this metaphysical Christian context which is missing both in the first translation of GOETHE's *Faust* by GUO Moruo and in most of other acts of Chinese reception of the Renaissance and the Faustian problematics at that stage of the cultural dialogue with the West.¹⁷

13 GU Hongming 辜鸿铭: *Zhang Wenxiang mufu jiwen* 张文襄幕府记闻 (Recollections from the Quarters of Zhang Wenxiang, 1910), Taiyuan: Shanxi guji chubanshe 1996, p. 76.

14 FENG Zhi: "Fushide li de mo" 浮士德里的魔 (The Evil in GOETHE's *Faust*, 1943). In: *FENG Zhi xueshu lunzhu zixuan ji* 冯至学术论著自选集 (Self-selected academic works of Feng Zhi), Beijing: Beijing shifan xueyuan chubanshe 1992, pp. 292–313, here p. 312.

15 For the Neo-Confucian perspective on the problem of evil, see the essay by CHEN Lisheng and HUANG Deyuan: "Research on the issue of 'evil' in WANG Yangming's thought". In: *Frontiers of Philosophy in China* vol. 2 no. 2, April 2007, pp. 172–187.

16 Note that BULGAKOV used this self-introduction of Mephistopheles as an epigraph to *The Master and Margarita*.

17 From the very outset, the Western Renaissance discourse was marked by extreme ambivalence: alongside the optimistic view of its emphasis on the beautiful and healthy body, freedom of personality, creativity, etc., there was a very strong pessimistic attitude to it,

Among the statements of Mephistopheles concerning his identity, one of the most important is the sentence which I have just quoted from the essay by FENG Zhi's concerning evil in *Faust*. In GUO Moruo's translation, this phrase reads as follows: *wo shi zuo e zao shan de li zhi yi ti* 我是作恶造善的力之一体 (I am a part of that force which commits evil and creates goodness).¹⁸ The intentionality of evil which is so important in the German original is completely neutralized by GUO; working good deeds is complementary to committing evil, which is also an assimilation of GOETHE to the Chinese conceptual system and an alienation from the original Western one. A further characteristic of GUO's strategy and role as the translator is an almost complete renunciation of commentary and notes on especially important parts in the text, for example in the *Prologue in Heaven*, in which GOETHE alludes to the *Bible*, the bet between God and Mephistopheles in the *Prologue* is thought as parallel to the story of Job, which is made unrecognizable by GUO Moruo.¹⁹ It is neither the tragedy of Faust, nor the highly complex positioning of Faust within the ethical coordinate system that is important to GUO Moruo, but the triumph of an aspiring mind. His interpretation is therefore similar to that of GU Hongming. It is not the original context or the original conceptual frame, which they try to grasp in coming to terms with evil; the Western classic is rather assimilated to the indigenous conceptual frame, and no commentary is deemed necessary for its understanding.

The Satanic Project by QUAN Ping illustrates how far Chinese intellectuals of the early 20th century were driven in their discussions of the practical application of the idea of evil. This essay, with which the periodical *Hongshui* 洪水 (Deluge) – a direct offspring of the *Chuangzao*-Journal – was started in 1924, represents a manifesto of the Creation Society. Satan is conceived as a symbol of progress and of an effective struggle against stagnation and ugliness; the Satanic Project is a call for destruction of all that had been responsible for this stagnation in Chinese traditions. The negation (destruction) idea is as complementary to the idea of creation – the central idea of the Creation Society – as in GUO's interpretation of good and evil in the auto-reflections of Mephistopheles. In QUAN Ping's words on the division of labor: “所以我们不妨说：美善的创造是上帝的本能。真正的破坏

which was first expressed by Jacob BURCKHARDT in his *Die Kultur der Renaissance in Italien* (1860). This classical study of Renaissance was hardly known in China in the early 20th century. For more details, see my above-mentioned essay.

18 GUO Moruo 郭沫若 (tr.): *Fushide* 浮士德 (Faust) vol. I, Beijing: Renmin wuxue chubanshe, 1987, p. 65.

19 GUO Moruo: “Tian shang xumu” 天上序幕 (Prologue in Heaven). In: *Fushide* (1987), pp. 13–20.

是撒旦的天职。”²⁰ (That’s why we should say that the creation of what is good is the ability of God and the destruction is the righteous task of Satan.) It is not only the self-identification with Satan which is placed in the focus of this manifesto, but also a twofold critical attitude of its author both to his own tradition and to Christian ethics:

所以我们固然不愿抹去良心，做假守祖宗律法，立在街头祈祷的法利赛人；但也没有那种伟大的愿力去学牺牲一己，钉死十字架，为恶人赎罪的救主。我们只凭着我们的良心，顺着我们的感情，来做被人咒诅被人憎厌的撒旦…。
21

Therefore, we are not willing to eradicate our conscience sticking to the laws of the ancestors and reciting Pharisee prayers. But we do not possess the willingness to sacrifice ourselves on the cross or to be redeemers for the sins of others. We lean only on our conscience, we follow only our feelings, in order to fulfil the satanic task which is condemned and hated by ordinary men etc.

In this second phase, we can see Chinese intellectuals coming to terms with Western evil was a process of an assimilation of Western concepts to the Chinese cultural context and the current political agenda, rather than a confrontation with the West which was characteristic of the 18th and 19th centuries. Cultural “othering” was now replaced by an effective Sinicization. CHENG Fangwu’s above mentioned essay *Cong wenxue geming*, in which the negation of negation – an augmentation of the negation spirit of GOETHE’s Mephistopheles – and the Hegelian dialectics of *Aufheben* were projected upon the current political agenda in China, was a variety of instances of Sinicization within the influential ideology of the Creation Society. CHENG’s text, which anticipates all the basic points of the state ideology of the communist regime, is a logical continuation of the interpretations of GOETHE and HEGEL within the Creation Society; but on the other hand, it overcomes the predominance of aesthetic problems characteristic of the creationists and focuses on the purely political issue of class struggle.

Between 1949 and 1977, Marxism became the predominant religion in China and the notions of good and evil were no more under free debates among intellectuals. What was to be perceived as good or evil, was clearly sanctioned from above. It was only in the 1980s – after the beginning of the “Reform and Opening” era 改革开放 – when Chinese intellectuals resumed discussions of many inter-cultural issues which had been of central concern to the intellectuals prior to 1949. One of

20 QUAN Ping 全平: *Sadan de gongcheng* 撒旦的工程 (The Satanic Project, 1924). In: *Chuangzaoshe ziliao* 创造社资料 (Material of the “Creation Society”) vol. I, Fuzhou: Fujian renmin chubanshe 1985, pp. 493–495, here p. 493.

21 *Ibid.*, p. 495.

these issues was the Western concept of evil, which was now approached in a strikingly different manner from that characteristic of the earlier stages: among the most significant intellectual productions of this period were new translations of GOETHE's *Faust* (among them QIAN Chunqi's 钱春绮 *Fushide* 浮士德 (1982),²² which in stark contrast to the above-mentioned translation by GUO Moruo was a minutely commentated rendering of the original text, as well as the first translations of Mikhail BULGAKOV's *Master i Margarita* (The Master and Margarita).

The present study focuses on Chinese readings of three Russian writers, all of whom take a firm position in the tradition of Christian faith as well as in the tradition of literary elaboration of the motif of Faust and the personified evil: Nikolai GOGOL (Nikolai GOGOL', 1809–1852), Fyodor DOSTOEVSKY (Fedor DOSTOEVSKIĪ, 1821–1881), and Mikhail BULGAKOV (1891–1940). The choice of Russian writers was motivated by the fact that in the history of the cultural dialogue between China and the West, Russia played the role of a very special partner: On the one hand, Russia is itself part of the West, on the other hand, it has experienced quite a long history of confrontations with the West. Of the three authors chosen for the present analysis, this ambivalent position to the West is especially characteristic of GOGOL and DOSTOEVSKY. Both of them participated in the debates between Westernizers and Slavophiles – two major political camps with different programs for answering the question which way Russia should follow in the future: that of the West or its own peculiar way. The participation in these debates strongly influenced the manner in which both authors conceptualized the problem of evil: from the psychologically rather simple figure of the Devil in GOGOL's *Noch' pered Rozhdestvom* (Christmas Eve, part of the *Vechera na khutore bliz Dikan'ki* (Evenings on a Farm Near Dikanka, 1831–1832)) to the far more sophisticated incorporation of evil in CHICHIKOV (*Mertvye Dushi* (Dead Souls), 1841) and to the highly complex idea of evil elaborated in DOSTOEVSKY's Grand Inquisitor (the Antichrist) in *Brat'ia Karamazovy* (The Brothers KARAMAZOV, 1875–1880). The following words of DOSTOEVSKY testify to the prominence of this theme in GOGOL's work:

Byli u nas i demony, nastoiashchie demony...Odin iz nikh vse smeial'sia; on smeial'sia vsiu zhizn' i nad soboi i nad nami, i my vse smeialis' za nim, do togo smeialis', chto nakonets stali plakat' ot nashego smekha.²³

22 QIAN Chunqi 钱春绮 (tr.): *Fushide* 浮士德 (Faust), Shanghai: Shanghai yiwen chubanshe 1982.

23 Fedor DOSTOEVSKIĪ: *Riād stateĭ o russoĭ literature* (A Series of Essays on Russian Literature, 1861). In: *Polnoe sobranie sochineniĭ v tridsati tomakh* (Complete works in thirty volumes) vol. 18, Leningrad: Nauka 1978, pp. 41–107, here p. 59.

Among other things, we had demons, real demons...One of them laughed all the time; throughout all his life, he was laughing at himself as well as at us, and we followed him in this laughing and laughed, too, till the laugh turned into a cry.

In these words, GOGOL himself is said to be one of the demons of Russian literature. This demonic quality refers both to the demonic figures in his works as well as to GOGOL's capacity to hit the audience's nerves and make his readers laugh and cry over his demonic literary productions. The idea that GOGOL by himself regarded his major aim as deriding the Devil was also central to one of the most profound studies on GOGOL: Dmitry MEREZHKOVSky's (Dmitriĭ MEREZHKOVSkiĭ, 1865–1941) *Gogol' i chort* (GOGOL and the Devil, 1906.)

In MEREZHKOVSky's eyes, the artistic elaboration of evil in GOGOL's work went through some powerful transformations, from the first initial stage when it was conceptualized as a fantastic force – a Devil from *Dikanka Tales* who steals the moon from the sky in his desire to harm people – to a stage in which all fantastic elements were eliminated, and evil appeared as something quite ordinary. This ordinary manifestation of radical evil possesses, in MEREZHKOVSky's description, the following traits: as flatness it is the negation of all human depths and heights; as the face of the crowd it is all too familiar to us, especially in the moments when we lose the courage to be ourselves and thus willingly become part of the crowd; there is nothing tragic about radical evil however, on the contrary, it manifests itself in the absolute absence of any tragedy, as the infinite vulgarity of the human race.²⁴ CHICHIKOV is among the most successful incarnations of evil and as such he receives a most detailed analysis by MEREZHKOVSky.

At the end of his study, he turns to discussing one of GOGOL's books which only at first sight has little to do with its main topic (evil): (*Vybrannye mesta iz perepiski s druž'iami* (A Selection of Letters to My Friends, 1847.)) This publication was a milestone in GOGOL's life and belonged to the most controversial intellectual productions of the 19th century.

In these letters, GOGOL tried to fulfil what he perceived to be his direct civil duty to make public his ideas concerning the future of Russia; its unique destiny as a Christian country, the necessity to preserve its spiritual heritage, and the divine significance of monarchy. It goes without saying that such ideas were met with sharp criticism by the Westernizers. The possibly most famous reaction to this publication was the letter by Vissarion BELINSky (Vissarion BELINSkiĭ, 1811–1848) – one of the leading ideological figures under the future Soviet regime – to GOGOL in which the following was said:

²⁴ Dmitriĭ MEREZHKOVSkiĭ: *GOGOL' i chort* (GOGOL and the Devil), Moskva: Skorpion 1906, pp. 2–4.

Rossiiā vidit svoe spasenie ne v mistitsizme, ne v asketizme, ne v pietizme, a v uspekhhakh tsivilizatsii, prosveshcheniia i gumannosti. Eī nuzhny ne propovedi (dovol'no ona slyshala ikh!), ne molitvy (dovol'no ona tverdila ikh!), a probuzhdenie v narode chuvstva chelovecheskogo dostoinstva, stol'ko vekov poterianogo v griazi i navoze, prava i zakony, soobraznye ne s ucheniem tserkvi, a s zdravym smyslom i spravedlivost'iu...²⁵

Russia sees its salvation not in mysticism, not in asceticism, not in pietism, but in the progress of civilization, enlightenment and humanism. It needs no sermons (it has heard enough of them!), no prayers (it has repeated them long enough!), what it needs is the awakening of the sense of human dignity in its people that for centuries were lost in the mud and dung. It needs rights and laws which would satisfy not the Church teachings but common sense and righteousness.

From this point onwards, an unbreachable gulf in the perception of good and evil divided the traditionalist GOGOL and the reformer BELINSKY. This gulf was caused by the book which was barely discussed during the Soviet era. It was only in the last twenty years that Russian readers began to show interest in the patriarchal – still practically unknown today – aspects of the psychology of one of Russia's greatest writers, aspects which heavily influenced GOGOL's conceptualization of good and evil. The fact that GOGOL saw the future of Russia in further practice of Christian (Orthodox) belief rather than in pursuing comforts produced by the technical achievements of the West had great impact on Chinese reception of this work (very much like the reception in the Soviet Union and later in post-Soviet Russia). Chinese discussions of the *Letters to My Friends* are in themselves a symbolic milestone and mark a turning point in the intellectual atmosphere after the beginning of the “Reform and Opening” reforms.

DOSTOEVSKY was GOGOL's direct spiritual follower in the expression of his own concerns about the global future of Christianity as well as in the literary elaboration of evil in the discussion of these concerns. For him just as for GOGOL, Western civilization was primarily associated with a beginning alienation from Christianity. The main causes for this alienation were seen in intellectual currents which acted in the name of universal happiness and turned man into an object of almost religious worship, eventually replacing God by man. Vasilij ROZANOV's (Vasilii ROZANOV, 1856–1919) *Legenda o velikom inkvizitore F. M. Dostoevskogo* (The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor by F. M. DOSTOEVSKY) is a well-known study which focused on DOSTOEVSKY's criticism of these spiritual developments in the West. ROZANOV recognizes a deep relationship between

25 Vissarion BELINSKY's (Vissarion BELINSKIĪ) letter to GOGOL (on 15 June 1847, Salzbrunn). In: In: Nikolaĭ GOGOL': *Polnoe sobranie sochineniĭ* (Complete Works) vol. 8, Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo Akademii Nauk 1952, pp. 500–510, here p. 501.

Catholicism and the boom of the socialist idea as one of the intuitions which were central to the poetics of DOSTOEVSKY: *the formicary* (*muraveĭnik*), *the crystal palace* (*khrustal'nyĭ dvorets*), *the henhouse* (*kuriatnik*) are among the most frequent figurative expressions for this intuition which ROZANOV discusses at large.²⁶ *The Grand Inquisitor* is DOSTOEVSKY's most significant philosophical elaboration of radical evil. As in the case with GOGOL, the exposition of this theme is inseparable from DOSTOEVSKY's concerns about the future of Christian faith. For this reason, it is self-explanatory that the developments in Chinese discussions of evil in DOSTOEVSKY's work followed similar patterns as in GOGOL's case.

Compared with GOGOL and DOSTOEVSKY, BULGAKOV displays a significantly different approach to the problem of evil. His exposition is an open political parody of the Soviet reality and of communism. The incorporation of evil is conceptualized in a quite different manner from the Devil and CHICHIKOV by GOGOL and *the Grand Inquisitor* by DOSTOEVSKY: BULGAKOV's Voland comes to Moscow to carry out a task which in effect – “normally” – he is considered to manage in the afterworld. He punishes all possible manifestations of evil in humans: envy, greed, cruelty, etc. He emerges as a gentleman who is able to recognize great personalities and helps them struggle through all the horrors of the socialist reality. BULGAKOV's *The Master and Margarita* is therefore first and foremost a socio-critical psychological parody. However, he operates with similar visions of evil – against the background of Christianity – as GOGOL and DOSTOEVSKY did before him. The epigraph which he has chosen for the novel – the self-introduction of Mephistopheles from GOETHE's *Faust*²⁷ – already clearly indicates the adherence to the same spiritual tradition as both of his predecessors. Yet ironically, precisely in spite of this epigraph and in marked contrast with Mephistopheles, Voland does not display even the slightest intent of acting out evil. Evil is alien to him, and hence this is maybe the greatest metamorphosis of evil if one compares BULGAKOV's novel with all other literary elaborations of evil in Western and Russian literature.

Another essential difference between BULGAKOV and his two predecessors can be observed from the perspective of their attitude to the West. BULGAKOV is much more positive in this respect, which is reflected in many episodes of his novel: Margarita is not only said to be a queen at Satan's ball, but is made far more specific in her royal qualities – as a direct descendant of the French court²⁸; KANT is

26 Vasilii ROZANOV: *Legenda o Velikom Inkvizitore F. M. Dostoevskogo* (The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor by F. M. DOSTOEVSKY, 1894), Moskva: Respublika 1996, p. 87.

27 “Ein Teil von jener Kraft, die stets das Böse will und stets das Gute schafft.” (Johann Wolfgang von GOETHE: *Faust*, Weimar: Volksverlag 1958, p. 52.) Mikhail BULGAKOV: *Master i Margarita* (The Master and Margarita), Moskva: Golos 1999, p. 156: “Īa - chast' toĭ sily, chto vechno khochet zla i vechno sovershaet blago.”

28 Mikhail BULGAKOV: *Master i Margarita* (1999), p. 387.

said to have attained access to the Paradise for developing his own way of proving the existence of God²⁹; alone the fact that BULGAKOV takes a passage from GOETHE as the epigraph for the novel is sufficient to prove his inner self-identification with the culture of the West.

The present study aims at an analysis of the Chinese reception of all the above mentioned affinities and differences in the work of three Russian classics, and is intended as a contribution to better understanding the complex process of intercultural communication and the exchange of ideas between China, Russia, and the West.

GOGOL

In the history of the Chinese reception of GOGOL, LU Xun 鲁迅 (1881–1936) played a remarkable role both as an active propagator of GOGOL and as the first translator of *Dead Souls* into Chinese, on which he worked in 1935/1936. Raoul FINDEISEN who made this translation – one of the last works of LU Xun – the subject of a separate study, lists considerable complexities LU Xun was confronted with while preparing it. Among other things, FINDEISEN mentions a letter written by LU Xun to his younger colleague HU Feng 胡风 (1902–1985) in the year 1935, in which the following statement may be found: “My head and brain are confused because I have read too little of GOGOL in the past. I thought it would be easy to translate and did not imagine it so difficult.”³⁰ This is a remarkable complaint if one considers that prior to this letter LU Xun often referred to GOGOL as one of his own literary authorities, a person who exerted great influence on his own career as a writer: in this sense GOGOL was mentioned in his essay *Wo zenme zuo qi xiaoshuo lai* 我怎么做起小说来 (How I Began to Write Fiction, 1933)³¹ as well

29 Ibid., p. 163.

30 Raoul David FINDEISEN: “A Translator’s Testament: Lu Xun’s *Si hunling* (*Dead Souls*, 1935–1936)”. In: Raoul D. FINDEISEN, Gad C. ISAY (et al., eds.): *At Home in Many Worlds: Reading, Writing and Translating from Chinese and Jewish Cultures, Essays in Honour of Irene Eber*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz 2009, pp. 189–202, here p. 194. *LU Xun quan ji* 鲁迅全集 (Complete works by LU Xun), Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe 2005, p. 458: “这几天因为赶译《死魂灵》 vol. 8, 弄得昏头昏脑, 我以前太小看了ゴゴリ, 以为容易译的, 不料很难...” Literally, “tai xiaokan le” should be more accurately translated as “underestimated” (rather than “read too little”), but the reason for *underestimating* GOGOL should actually have been LU Xun’s insufficient experience of reading GOGOL.

31 *LU Xun quan ji* (2005) vol. 4, pp. 525–530, here p. 525.

as in the work of his youth, a literary manifesto of modern China *Moluo shi li shuo* 摩罗诗力说 (On the Power of Mara Poetry,³² 1907). For the present study, the manifesto on Mara Poetry is especially relevant because it signaled the beginning of the Chinese reception of GOGOL and listed GOGOL's name alongside various other poets all of whom were called by LU Xun *Mara* or *Satanic* poets. The following passage from this work in the translation by Shu-ying TSAU and Donald HOLOCH may illustrate what exactly he meant by this designation:

I cannot detail each varied voice, but none has such power to inspire and the language as gripping as Mara poetry. Borrowed from India, the term “Mara” – celestial demon, or “Satan” in Europe – first denoted Byron. Now I apply it to those, among all the poets, who were committed to resistance, whose purpose was action but who were little loved by their age... They'd bellow an audience to its feet, these iconoclasts whose spirit struck deep chords in later generations, extending to infinity.³³

One mutual trait is shared by all Satanic poets who are brought together in this piece of writing by LU Xun is that all of them are *loud* poets. The pictures LU Xun resorts to in describing them constantly underline this loud disposition: *voices*, *bellowing*, *striking deep chords*, etc. Loud voices – especially those from the West – are reported to be necessary in order to shake China from its perilous dream and develop a strong national spirit. According to LU Xun, China has to recognize that any state of peace is yet an illusion, and Satan (*sadan* 撒旦) is regarded as someone who can help China arrive at this realization: Satan is opposed to any harmony between man, God, and nature; he is the very personification of the impossibility of a peaceful existence:

Consider Nature: woods caressed by soft breezes, everything moist with sweet rain, as though all things were meant to bless humanity; yet flames raging underneath make vents in the earth and erupt one day to destroy all things. The frequent breeze and rain are passing phenomena, not an eternal idyll as in Adam's native place... The killer instinct is born with life; “peace” is a name for what is not.³⁴

The destruction is the reality of Satan which is opposed by the force of LU Xun's imagination to the illusory harmony of Adam. All the poets who are associated with this reality are said to have the same ability: to erupt and rebel. GOGOL figures among the first of these powerful eruptions and is introduced in the following

32 *LU Xun quan ji* (2005) vol. 1, pp. 65–120.

33 LU Xun: “On the Power of Mara Poetry”, tr. by Shu-ying TSAU and Donald HOLOCH. In: Kirk A. DENTON (ed.), *Modern Chinese Literary Thought: Writings on Literature 1893–1945*, Stanford: Stanford University Press 1996, pp. 96–109, here p. 99.

34 *Ibid.*, p. 100.

characteristic manner: “十九世纪前叶，果有鄂戈理者起，以不可见之泪痕悲色，振其邦人。”³⁵ (In the early 19th century, GOGOL appeared and struck his countrymen by the force of unimaginable tears and suffering.)

All the figures from the huge melting pot of LU Xun's *Mara school* (*Molozong* 摩罗宗, or Satanic school/Satanic poets, as it is sometimes called by his interpreters³⁶) including PUSHKIN, BYRON, SHELLEY, LERMONTOV, and GOGOL are quite simple symbols, all of them meaning nothing more than “a storm”, “an upheaval”, “a revolt”, “an eruption”,³⁷ all mutually interchangeable, in spite of any actual differences existing in their worldviews. The very idea of a “complicated worldview”, of inner conflicts and philosophical quests which could have accompanied these authors in the course of their lives is negated by LU Xun from the outset, as – according to him – “no principles are pursued (in literature)” (*jiuli fu cun* 究理弗存).³⁸

LU Xun's idealization of liberation powers associated here with Satan is completed by explicitly neutralizing any rationality. The poetry theorist is literally enchanted by feeling, intuition, and Satanic inspiration which in the first place allows him to equalize such aesthetically different writers such as PUSHKIN and GOGOL. This methodology also explains why some thirty years later he would complain to a colleague about not having had enough reading experience of GOGOL: the emotional emphasis and the negation of rationality allowed him that in his youth he could bring forward judgments on literature without sufficiently relying on primary sources. However, in spite of all the irrationality of this approach to literature and arts, or maybe exactly due to this irrationality and intuition, LU Xun had understood the prominence of evil and the Satanic as a major constituent of GOGOL's poetics. Ironically, it would take almost a whole century to revise the sometimes

35 *Lu Xun quan ji* (2005) vol. 1, p. 66.

36 Cf. OU Li: “Romantic, Rebel, and Reactionary: The Metamorphosis of Byron in Twentieth-Century China”. In: Alex WATSON, Laurence WILLIAMS (eds.), *British Romanticism in Asia: The Reception, Translation, and Transformation of Romantic Literature in India and East Asia*, Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan 2019, pp. 191–220, here p. 198; SONG Qingbao: “The Different Views of Women of Lord Byron and Su Manshu”. In: Peter COCHRAN (ed.): *Byron and Women [and men]*, Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars 2010, pp. 81–88, here pp. 87–88.

37 A much more thorough analysis of the psychology of BYRON's revolting “Satanic heroes” is provided by Fred PARKER: “Their consciousness is withdrawn, inflamed and brooding; the pain they carry within is never fully communicated, but expressed in part by the attitude of disdain, severe and superb...” (Fred PARKER: “Between Satan and Mephistopheles: Byron and the Devil”. In: *The Cambridge Quarterly* vol. 35 no. 1, 2006, pp. 1–29, here p. 2.)

38 Shu-ying TSAU and Donald HOLOCH (“On the Power of Mara Poetry” (1996), p. 105) provide a more expressive translation for this passage: “no philosophy is to be dug out of it.”

too simplistic sentimental judgments made by the classic of modern Chinese literary theory.

The present paper cannot provide an exhaustive picture of Chinese translations of GOGOL³⁹ and studies on his work. Instead some turning points in the history of GOGOL'S reception have to be highlighted here, i.e. the most important stages in China's coming to terms with GOGOL'S evil. During the first of these stages – roughly between the May Fourth era and the 1960s – GOGOL was seen primarily as a great satirist and social reformer. Therefore, Chinese readings of GOGOL of the time can be interpreted as quite in tune with LU Xun's exposition of his Satanic qualities. A good overview for this particular stage is provided by WANG Zhigeng 王志耕 in his essay *Guogeli zai Zhongguo de bashi nian licheng* 果戈理在中国的八十年历程 (Eighty Years of GOGOL in China).⁴⁰ WANG begins his discussion with LU Xun and the May Fourth and approaches GOGOL as a romantic author whose main intent was to call people to freedom (*dui ziyou de nahan* 对自由的呐喊).⁴¹ He, too, interprets GOGOL as a critical reformer, and it is striking that for the whole period of eighty years of Chinese readings of GOGOL, which he discusses, the religion is practically not mentioned at all. The problem of evil is mentioned, but only as *the evil(s) of the epoch (dangdai de zuie* 当代的罪恶,)⁴² which is (are) in need of corrections. Another striking feature of this analysis is the predominantly negative approach to spiritual components in GOGOL'S thought: as early as in the 1920s Chinese intellectuals were said to have avoided any discussions on the supernatural (*shengui de shijie* 神鬼的世界) as something alien to them for the following reason: “而中国人需要的是写实主义的旗帜，是对黑暗的揭露与控诉，而不是带有中国传统味的轮回报应故事” (What people in China need[ed], was the banner of realistic writing by which darkness is revealed and denounced rather than stories about retribution which are reminiscent (lit.: which *smack*) of Chinese tradition).⁴³ In other words, he makes it clear that the early reception of GOGOL in China was accompanied by a serious contradiction: on the one hand, GOGOL the reformer was welcome, but on the other hand, a critical distance was taken to some of his major themes, among other things, to the demonic

39 The above-mentioned article by Raoul D. FINDEISEN lists a large number of further translations of *Dead Souls* which appeared after that of LU Xun (FINDEISEN: “A Translator's Testament” (2009), p. 202). A good review of other works of GOGOL translated into Chinese up to 1990 is provided in the essay by WANG Zhigeng 王志耕, “Guogeli zai Zhongguo de bashi nian licheng” 果戈理在中国的八十年历程 (Eighty Years of GOGOL in China). In: *Waiguo wenxue yanjiu* 外国文学研究 (Foreign Literature Studies), no. 2, 1990, pp. 194–199.

40 WANG Zhigeng: “Guogeli zai Zhongguo de bashi nian licheng” (1990).

41 *Ibid.*, p. 194.

42 *Ibid.*, p. 195.

43 *Ibid.*

and supernatural and to the religious component which in the eyes of Chinese literati smacked of their own obsolete cultural past.

That this contradictory attitude lasted for quite a long time can be corroborated by an essay of another GOGOL specialist PENG Ke 彭克 from 1959: *Jinian weida de Eluosi zuojia Guogeli dansheng yi bai wu shi zhou nian* 纪念律大的俄罗斯作家果戈理诞生一百五十周年 (Commemorating the 150th Anniversary of GOGOL's Birth).⁴⁴ He, too, begins his commemoration with GOGOL's impact on many pioneers of the May Fourth, among others on LU Xun and QU Qiubai 瞿秋白 (1899–1935) and approaches the motif of evil as *social evils* (*shehui de chouse* 社会的丑恶, p. 121). Nonetheless, until the time of PENG writing this essay, nothing seemed to have significantly changed about this approach:

在解放了的中国，果戈理的作品受到广大人民的热爱。他的主要作品，从《狄康卡近乡夜话》直到《死魂灵》，都已经有了较好的译本。《钦差大臣》经常在舞台上演出，加深观众对于旧社会的仇恨和对于果戈理所追求的光明的新社会的热爱。⁴⁵

In the liberated China, the works of GOGOL were met with universal love. Fairly good translations were produced for all of his major works, from *Dikanka Tales* up to *Dead Souls*. *The Government Inspector* was staged several times: it has deepened the audience's hatred of the old society as well as its love for an enlightened new society which GOGOL had sought.

Dikanka Tales – a product of distinctly religious thinking – are not only mentioned by PENG, but receive a rather detailed description. Among other things, he reports on the doings of the Devil in *Christmas Eve*, how he tries to steal the moon from the sky in order to hinder the protagonists' meeting and how Wakula (Vakula) – the main character of the tale – circumvents the Devil's schemes. The work is said to be imbued with *folk intonation* (*minjian koutou* 民间口头) and *romanticism* (*langman zhuyi* 浪漫主义), etc.⁴⁶ However, nothing is said about the real motives of the Devil's action (it is Wakula's religiosity that highly disturbs the Devil) or about the friendly reception of Wakula by Empress Katharina at her court in St Petersburg. Popular and romantic features play the dominant role in this reception of evil in GOGOL's early work: evil is equal to darkness, which is understood purely in socio-critical terms, not as part of a religious program. The religious motives are also cut out in PENG's analysis of *Peterburgskie povesti* (The

44 In: *Beijing daxue xuebao* 北京大学学报 (Journal of Beijing University), 1959, no. 2, pp. 121–128.

45 PENG Ke, "Jinian weida de Eluosi zuojia Guogeli dansheng yi bai wu shi zhou nian" (1959), p. 121.

46 Ibid., p. 122.

Petersburg Tales, pp. 124-125), and of all the tales it is *Portret* (The Portrait) which is omitted completely, a tale which hardly allows any socio-critical approach and is filled with reflections on evil against a predominantly religious background. The role of GOGOL as a progressive reformer is fortified by the authority of BELINSKY: “别林斯基并且指出果戈尔创作的巨大的革命意义，经常利用他的作品进行反对专制农奴制度的斗争。”⁴⁷ (BELINSKY also mentions the great revolutionary idea in the works of GOGOL who often used them to struggle against the traditional system of serfdom.)

As mentioned in the introduction of this article, in the course of time BELINSKY had developed a much more critical view of GOGOL than is shown in PENG's study. The reason for such a critical reevaluation of his views on GOGOL was primarily the publication of *Selected Letters to my Friends* (1847) in which GOGOL was emphatically portraying to his contemporaries the great mission of the Orthodox faith; the needs to preserve the national spiritual heritage; and the sacred nature of the monarchy, which eventually caused a wave of scathing criticism against GOGOL primarily among Westernizers like BELINSKY. The book marked a turning point in GOGOL's career, but in the history of Chinese reception of GOGOL and his ideas of evil, discussions of this book were also a significant milestone. They began relatively late, and a prominent role in them was played by REN Guangxuan 任光宣 who in effect opened the eyes of Chinese readers on the very existence of this book. In the year 1999 REN published his complete Chinese translation of it,⁴⁸ but already in his earlier publications he explored the extreme importance of the religion for GOGOL's thought. In his essay “On the Religious Vision in GOGOL's Work” (1993), he introduced this theme as follows: Unlike religious mystics, GOGOL did not plunge into any kind of religious romanticism to describe a supernatural world. From the very beginning to the end, his work was dedicated rather to the realities of life in Russia. Still, it was exactly his religious vision that helped him come to grips with that real life. The best picture of his religious thought may be gained from his *Excerpts from Letters to My Friends* (*Yu youren shuxin xuan* 与友人书信选, 1847).⁴⁹ In REN's exposition, the main idea behind *The Letters* is similar to that of *Dead Souls*: the evils of reality can be overcome only by means of faith, because it is only in the realm of religion that man can gain an exact picture of evil's nature and provenance. If in *The Letters* the prominence of this

47 Ibid., p. 127.

48 REN Guangxuan 任光宣 (tr.): *Yu youren shuxin xuan* 与友人书信选 (Excerpts from Letters to My Friends), Anhui wenyi chubanshe 1999.

49 REN Guangxuan: “Lun Guogeli chuanguo zhong de zongjiao guannian” 论果戈理创作中的宗教观念 (On the Religious Vision in GOGOL's Work). In: *Waiguo wenxue pinglun* 外国文学评论 (Foreign Literature Review), no. 4, 1993, pp. 105-111, here p. 105.

theme is discussed directly, *Dead Souls* provides the aesthetic elaboration of the relationship between evil and reality:

果戈理认为，恶不是一个抽象的概念，而是具有本体论实质。就是说，每个人本质里含有恶的因素，纯洁的无恶的人是没有的…《死魂灵》展示俄国生活的邪恶和弊端，是从揭示人身上的恶开始的。在第一部里，各种人物表现出俄罗斯这座“地狱”里人的种种邪恶欲望，表现出人物内心的黑暗。⁵⁰

In GOGOL's thought evil is not an abstract category. It has its own ontological status, i.e. everybody carries inside themselves an element of evil, and no one is absolutely free from it... *Dead Souls* demonstrates some of the evils pertaining to life in Russia and begins with the evil within man himself. Every figure in the first part of the novel displays various evil aspirations of this "hell (on Earth)" and makes visible the darkness of the human mind.

Within the *Earthly hell of life*, CHICHIKOV is said to be an evil spirit or the Devil (*e mo* 恶魔),⁵¹ an observation which is quite in tune with MERZHKOVSKY's judgment on the nature of the Devil in GOGOL's work. REN informs his readers that according to GOGOL's design of the complete novel, this Devil stands in the center of both parts. Sin is his essential nature, and as a personification of it, it appears not only in the center of *Dead Souls*, but also in a number of other works by GOGOL, such as *The Grand Inspector* and *The Portrait*.⁵² REN abstains from a detailed discussion of transformations which the motif of evil went through in GOGOL's thought but he captured the essence of what was characteristic of it from the beginning to the end: it is not a purely ethical or socio-critical motif but one which is firmly rooted in religion, i.e. in the Christian frame of reflections on good and evil. This is a completely different way to approach GOGOL compared with what had been the case in the early stage of his reception. REN's analysis neither rests on omissions, adaptations, and concealments nor does it pursue any officially prescribed ideological correctness. On the other hand, this new approach does not appear to be something accidental, but is rather in accord with a general search for new ways of communication with the world which began with the "Reform and Opening" reforms, i.e. it is in accord with a radical re-evaluation of one's own cultural past and with an active consciousness of peculiarities of one's cultural self. In the context of this new spiritual atmosphere, a significant event was the re-evaluation of the exact relationship between BELINSKY and GOGOL, and the discovery of deep complexities pertaining to this relationship. It was again REN Guangxuan who informed Chinese readers about these complexities in one of his

50 Ibid., p. 108.

51 Ibid.

52 Ibid., p. 110.

later essays, which refers directly to GOGOL's *The Letters* already in its title: "GOGOL's Spiritual Testament: Reading *Excerpts from Letters to My Friends*" (2001).⁵³ In this work, REN focuses on one of GOGOL's fundamental concerns: What way shall Russia follow in the future? REN explains the main tendencies of GOGOL's time to approach this question, reports about the tension between Russia's two major intellectual camps – the Westernizers (*xioupai* 西欧派) and Slavophiles (*silafupai* 斯拉夫派) – and describes the reasons for GOGOL's sympathies with the latter:

为了净化心灵和完善道德，果戈里认为必须了解自己的心灵，需要自我的构建。...果戈里认为为国家服务就是为天上的君主 – 上帝服务的愿望。这的确是一个基督徒在谈自己的服务思想。⁵⁴

In order to purify the soul and to bring one's morality to perfection, GOGOL thinks it is necessary to know one's own soul; an identity structure is needed... GOGOL thinks that the desire to serve one's country is equal to the desire to serve the Lord in Heaven – God. This thinking is really characteristic of a Christian who is reflecting on his personal duties.

REN elaborates on GOGOL's consciousness of deep connections between the love of God and the love of Russia, also a country that enjoys God's special love because of the unprecedented piety of her people.⁵⁵ This patriotic love is said to be no impediment for a fruitful exchange with other cultures. On the contrary, GOGOL was convinced that Russia also had to learn from others, but not at the cost of abandoning one's own cultural self: “这里果戈里首先论述了接受外来文化与继承自己民族文化传统的辩证关系；其次，他暗示出俄罗斯人性格中的宗教性。”⁵⁶ (GOGOL develops here the principle of a dialectical relationship between accepting elements of foreign cultures and going on to foster the traditions of one's own national culture; furthermore, he alludes to the religiosity peculiar to the Russian character.)

In this particular instance of interpreting GOGOL, the word “dialectics” (*bianzheng* 辩证) is by no means accidental. In my opinion, it acts as a powerful signal and points at some present-day problems with which China's intellectuals themselves are directly confronted. All the numerous studies in which GOGOL's *The*

53 REN Guangxuan 任光宣: “Guogeli de jingshen yizhu – du ‘Yu youren shujian xuan’” 果戈里的精神遗嘱——读《与友人书简选》 (GOGOL's *Spiritual Testament: Reading Excerpts from Letters to My Friends*). In: *Waiguo wenxue jikan* 外国文学季刊 (Foreign Literature Quarterly), 2001. no. 4, pp. 101–110.

54 *Ibid.*, p. 103.

55 *Ibid.*, p. 104.

56 *Ibid.*, p. 108.

Letters have been discussed here since the early 1990s make a point highlighting the great dilemma of GOGOL's time and his answer to it which is met with criticisms of many of his contemporaries for its apparent backwardness: for the defense of Russia's old patriarchal way of living, traditions, and religiosity.

Looking once more back on the early stage of the Chinese reception of GOGOL, for example, on the analysis provided by WANG Zhigeng for the 1920s in which any discussions of supernatural and spiritual are said to have been avoided by Chinese intellectuals because of the possible "smack of Chinese tradition" (*chuantong wei* 传统味), it is possible to see what a radical reversal has taken place in the conceptualization of values in the last thirty years. REN Guangxuan's discussion of GOGOL's concept of *universal love* may serve as a further illustration of this process: by displaying universal love ("liubov' ko vsemu chelovechestvu"⁵⁷ *yi pian aixin* 一片爱心) of his subjects a monarch follows one of the most essential principles of God.⁵⁸ GOGOL is said to have regarded the religious destination – and not simply a justification – of monarchy in terms of exactly this principle, which also presupposes a divine quality; in this essential ability, God's own presence is incorporated, and nobody but a monarch is ever able to come into its possession.

In the clear difference from other monarchy discourses that highlight the idea of modernization, as for example those of constitutional monarchy and enlightened absolutism, GOGOL's approach to monarchy and his conceptual elaboration of universal love are patriarchal to the core; and within current discussions of GOGOL it is striking how much interest they find in China, and how close these readings occasionally come to indigenous Chinese conceptuality, when for example "universal love" is translated by terms like "boai" 博爱 (universal love). ZHENG Weihong's 郑伟红 essay "On the Religious Thought of GOGOL"⁵⁹ follows this way in discussing the religious thought of GOGOL. By choosing the indigenous Chinese concept "boai", he constructs an ideal bridge between Russia and China, but simultaneously it functions as a call-sign to evoke the idea of a confrontation with the West and searching for an alternative for something the West is not able to offer. It is not surprising that ZHENG's analysis of GOGOL's religious thought is introduced by a discussion concerning the fourteen years GOGOL spent in Europe and, for his pessimistic impressions, gained from this travelling experience. For

57 Nikolai GOGOL: *Vybrannye mesta iz perepiski s druž'iami* (Selected Letters to My Friends). In: *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* (Complete Works) vol. 8, p. 256.

58 REN Guangxuan, „Lun Guogeli chuanguo zhong de zongjiao guannian“ (1993), p. 106.

59 ZHENG Weihong 郑伟红: “Lun Guogeli de zongjiao sixiang” 论果戈理的宗教思想 (On the Religious Thought of GOGOL). In: *Baoding xueyuan xuebao* 保定学院学报 (Journal of Baoding University) vol. 23 no. 1, Jan. 2010, pp. 15–17, here p. 15.

example his thoughts on Europe not having a future; the only possible way for Russia's future prosperity is in its Orthodox belief.⁶⁰

“The primary deception of modernity” (“xiandaixing de zhuyao huangyan” 现代性的主要谎言) is nothing else than turning its back on religion. In spite of all its technical and artistic achievements, Europe lacks a spirit of love (“qieshao guan'ai jingshen” 缺少关爱精神)⁶¹ which is said to be among the central ideas of GOGOL's *The Letters*. One of the obvious results of Europe's not duly cherishing Christian religion is the neglect of the divine mission of monarchy and the neglect of universal love. ZHENG approaches this concept as follows:

道德高尚纯洁的人固然值得尊敬，但那些下等人，心灵被恶习浸染的人更需要去爱，更值得去爱。用爱去帮助他们，用爱使他们高尚起来，这就是基督的博爱精神。⁶²

It goes without saying that people of high morality deserve respect, but those who are inferior to them and those whose souls are stained by evil need and deserve even more love. Caring for them with love in order to help them elevate themselves is exactly the spirit of Christian universal love (*boai*).

GOGOL returns to the discussion of the theme of universal love (*istinnoe chelovekoljubie*) at the end of *The Letters* in the section which he calls “The Glory of Resurrection” (*Svetloe Voskresenie*),⁶³ to which ZHENG pays special attention.⁶⁴ In GOGOL's view, the lack of sincere Christian universal love which is peculiar to the average modern Westerner manifests itself most clearly – and again in stark contrast to Russia – during Easter festivities; no enthusiasm comparable with Orthodox Easter can be perceived at this time in the West.⁶⁵ In this context again ZHENG's translation of universal love by “*boai*” is likely to exert, at least to some degree, a suggestive power on Chinese intellectuals and make them think of contexts in which it was employed by thinkers of Chinese antiquity.⁶⁶ Yet simultaneously it refers to reflections about the West, being explicitly critical about

60 Ibid.

61 Ibid., p. 16.

62 Ibid.

63 Nikolai GOGOL: “Vybrannye mesta iz perepiski s druž'iami” (Selected Letters to My Friends). In: *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* (Complete Works) vol. 8, pp. 409–418.

64 ZHENG Weihong: “Lun Guogeli de zongjiao sixiang” (2010), p. 16.

65 Ibid., p. 409.

66 For the indigenous Chinese concept “*boai*”, see for example the article by XIANG Shiling 向世陵 and XIN Xiaoxia 辛晓霞: “Rujia *boai* guannian de qi yuan ji qi yunhan” 儒家博爱观念的起源及其蕴含 (On the Confucian notion of *boai*, its origin and meaning). In: *Beijing daxue xuebao* 北京大学学报 (Journal of Beijing University) vol. 51 no. 5, Sep. 2014, pp. 35–43.

abandoning traditional spiritual values and reflecting on the lessons one can learn from GOGOL's personal experience of the West.

To sum up, it can be said that current Chinese readings of GOGOL and the theme of evil in his work testify a far deeper and more complex level of understanding of his ideas than it was in the case in the May Fourth era and before the beginning of the opening reforms. Certainly not all of the numerous studies dedicated to GOGOL in China display the same quality. Apart from perceptive psychological analyses⁶⁷ of GOGOL's thought, there are also studies which do no justice to the subject (e.g. the interpretation of the Devil in *Christmas Eve* as a lovely (*keai de* 可爱的⁶⁸) *being*). Despite all the qualitative differences, however, most of the current studies of GOGOL display one significant common feature: they all recognize that GOGOL's evil cannot be reduced to the pragmatics of social reforms; that it is primarily a religious concept; and any search for ways to overcome this kind of evil refers the reader not only to ways of securing a splendid future, but also of necessity to the realm of one's cultural past.

DOSTOEVSKY

Esli est' na svete strana, kotoraiā byla by dlīa drugikh, otdalennykh ili sopredel'nykh s neiū stran bolee neizvestnoīū, neissledovannoīū, bolee vsekh drugikh stran neponiātoīū i neponiātnoīū, to ēta strana est', bezuslovno, Rossiā dlīa zapadnykh sosedeī svoikh. Nikakoī Kitaī, nikakaīā ĪAponiā ne mogut byt' pokryty takoī taīnoī dlīa evropeīskoī pytlivosti, kak Rossiā, prezhde, v nastoīashchuiū minutu i dazhe, mozhet byt', eshche ochen' dolgo v budushchem.⁶⁹

67 For example, the analysis of evil in GOGOL's *The Portrait* in: FENG Xiaoqing 冯小庆: "Guogeli zhongpian xiaoshuo *Xiaoxiang* de zongjiao shenmizhuyi qianxi" 果戈理中篇小说《肖像》的宗教神秘主义浅析 (Some Remarks on the Religious Mysticism in GOGOL's Novel *The Portrait*). In: *Xiboliya yanjiu* 西伯利亚研究 (Siberian Studies) vol. 39 no. 5, Oct. 2012, pp. 51–54.

68 YU Xianqin 余献勤: "Cong 'Dikangka jin xiang yehua' guan Guogeli" 从《狄康卡近乡夜话》观果戈理 (A View on GOGOL from the Perspective of his *Evenings on a Farm Near Dikanka*). In: *Jiefangjun Waiguoyu xueyuan xuebao* 解放军外国语学院学报 (Journal of PLA University of Foreign Languages) vol. 26 no. 1, 2003, pp. 99–102, here p. 101.

69 Fedor DOSTOEVSKIĪ: *Riād stateī o russkoī literature* (A Series of Lectures on Russian Literature, 1861). In: Fedor DOSTOEVSKIĪ, *Polnoe sobranie sochineniī v tridsati tomakh* (Complete Works in Thirty Volumes) vol. 18, Leningrad: Nauka 1978, pp. 41–107, here p. 41.

If there exists a country in the world which is the most unknown and unexplored by other countries, either its neighbors or not, the least understood and the least comprehensible one, that country would certainly be Russia in the eyes of her Western neighbors. No other place in the world like China or Japan could ever be covered by a comparable mystery for European inquisitiveness as Russia has been before, remains to be now, and will continue to be probably for quite a long time in the future.

Meanwhile the great mystery of Russia is being explored not only by Europe, but also by other cultures which DOSTOEVSKY mentions only on the margins of his *Lectures on Russian Literature*, as well as by China and Japan. DOSTOEVSKY himself may be called one of the greatest mysteries worldwide to which not everybody has access. In her study on the parallels between *The Brothers KARAMAZOV* and *The Book of Job*, WU Shan 吴珊 complains about the pertaining complexities and states that “it has never been easy [to read DOSTOEVSKY]” (*cong lai bu shi yi jian rong yi de shi* 从来不是一件容易的事).⁷⁰ HE Huaihong 何怀宏, specialist in cross-cultural ethics, suggests that reading DOSTOEVSKY should be reserved for a special kind of people: “接受陀思妥耶夫斯基确实需要某种气质和机缘。” (A special disposition as well as special circumstances are really required in order to accept DOSTOEVSKY.)⁷¹ That the circumstances have not always been favorable for China’s approaches to DOSTOEVSKY is testified by numerous instances in which he was condemned as a reactionary (*fandong* 反动) and obscure (*heian* 黑暗) author.⁷² As in the case with GOGOL, an active reception of his work began in the May Fourth era,⁷³ and it was, again like in GOGOL’s case, the religious

70 WU Shan 吴珊: “*Yuebo ji* dui Tuosituoeyefusiji wenxue guan de yingxiang” 《约伯记》对陀思妥耶夫斯基文学观的影响 (On the Influence of *The Book of Job* on DOSTOEVSKY’s Literary Thought). In: *Henan keji xueyuan xuebao* 河南科技学院学报 (Journal of Henan Institute of Science and Technology) no. 7, 2012, pp. 70–73, here p. 73.

71 HE Huaihong 何怀宏: *Daode, Shangdi yu Ren: Tuosituoeyefusiji de wenti* 道德·上帝与人: 陀思妥耶夫斯基的问题 (Ethics, God and Man: On the Problems of DOSTOEVSKY), Beijing: Xinhua chubanshe 1999, p. 189.

72 See for example a review article by DING Shixing 丁世鑫: “20 shiji 80 niandai Zhongguo de Tuosituoeyefusiji yanjiu” 20 世纪 80 年代中国的陀思妥耶夫斯基研究 (“On Studies on DOSTOEVSKY in China in the 1980s”). In: *Zhejiang ligong daxue xuebao* 浙江理工大学学报 (Zhejiang Sci-Tech University) vol. 38 no. 4, Aug. 2017, pp. 312–317, here p. 314.

73 A detailed review of this reception is provided in: LI Wanchun 李万春: “Tuosituoeyefusiji yu Zhongguo wenxue” 陀思妥耶夫斯基与中国文学 (DOSTOEVSKY and Chinese Literature). In: *Shehui kexue zhanxian* 社会科学战线 (The Front of Social Sciences) no. 1, 1989, pp. 342–346.

Christian idea that stood in the way of a sympathetic understanding of the motif of evil before the “Reform and Opening” reforms.⁷⁴

The first complete Chinese rendition of *The Brothers KARAMAZOV* was issued in 1981.⁷⁵ For the present study, it is especially the reception of this particular novel which can prove illuminating in terms of understanding DOSTOEVSKY’S ideas on evil because it represents a synthesis of these ideas as a sum of all that he had said on this subject. The personified evil is part of the novel’s key chapters; it is always an open adversary of figures who have faith, as well as of the Christian God himself.

In itself evil is a theme that finds a place in all of DOSTOEVSKY’S writings, but it is not as optically sharply positioned within an interplay of questions generally concerning individuality, nation, and humanity in any other work as in this novel. DOSTOEVSKY gives us some illuminating hints that are helpful for approaching this complex subject in the *Lectures* which I have just cited. He does not simply formulate the great puzzle, i.e. the mysterious nature of Russian psychology in the eyes of the West but regards it as his own direct duty being a Russian writer to offer a solution to the puzzle. He defines the essence of Russian psychology as follows:

V ruskom kharaktere zamechaetsiá rezkoe otlichie ot evropeítsev, rezkaia osobenost', chto v nem po preimushchestvu vystupaet sposobnost' vysokosinteticheskaia, sposobnost' vseprimirivosti, vsechlovechnosti. V ruskom cheloveke net evropeiskoi uglovatosti, nepronišsaemosti, nepodatlivosti. On so vsemi uzhiwaetsiá i vo vse vzhivaetsiá. On sochuvstvuet vsemu chelovecheskomu vne različiia nátsional'nosti, krovi i pochvy. On nakhodit i nemedlenno dopuskaet razumnost' vo vsem, v chem khot' skol'ko-nibud' est' obshchechelovecheskogo interesa. U nego instinkt obshchechelovechnosti.⁷⁶

A striking difference can be observed between the Russian character and its European counterparts. A striking peculiarity of the Russian character is its being primarily marked by a highly synthetic ability of an all embracing tolerance and

74 For China’s criticisms of some “unhealthy elements” (*bu jiankang de sixiang* 不健康的思想) peculiar to DOSTOEVSKY’S work, of his Orthodox belief among other things, which were expressed by Chinese intellectuals prior to the opening reforms, see pp. 48–49 of TIAN Quanjin 田全金 and WANG Shengsi 王圣思: “Tuosituoyefusiji de san fu miankong: Dui Zhongguo Tuoshi yanjiu de pipanxing kaocha” 陀思妥耶夫斯基的三副面孔——对中国陀氏研究的批判性考察 (Three Faces of DOSTOEVSKY: A Critical Examination of Chinese Studies on DOSTOEVSKY). In: *Wuhan keji daxue xuebao* 武汉科技大学学报 (Journal of Wuhan University of Science and Technology) vol. 8 no. 2, 2006, pp. 46–51.

75 GENG Jizhi 耿济之 (tr.): *Kalamazuofu xiongdí* 卡拉马佐夫兄弟, Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe 1981.

76 Fedor DOSTOEVSKIĪ: *Riád stateĭ o ruskoi literature* (1978), p. 55.

universal humanism. There is nothing of European clumsiness, impenetrability or rigidity in a Russian. He agrees with everyone and comes to terms with everything. He sympathizes with everything that is humane regardless of nationality, blood, and origin. He admits the rationality of all that bears at least some traces of a universal human concern. He possesses an instinct of universal humanism.

DOSTOEVSKY'S discussion of national issues displays, as it shall be illustrated later, the same methodology as the discussion of evil: in both cases he heavily relies on antinomies, i.e. such logical operations in which contradictions are not only conceded but regarded as a necessary precondition of knowledge; a thesis and an antithesis are not eventually resolved in a synthesis but constitute a logical continuum without any neutralization (*Aufheben*). As for the above problem of Russian national character, it is evident that the "universal humanism" which he regards as *the* general aspiration of Russians is being opposed to something which is quite recognizable for any reader: qualities associated with the West, Western rationalism, as well as Western Christianity. What is claimed to be universally humane is thus simultaneously counterbalanced against those aspects of humanity treated as the aim of an open critique and thought of as an antithesis. The thesis (the Russian instinct for what is universally humane) cannot be formulated without the existence of its opposite counterpart. Neither is the case with DOSTOEVSKY'S theory of freedom and evil. In his famous work on the worldview of DOSTOEVSKY, BERDYAEV (Nikolaï BERDIĀEV, 1874–1948) begins his discussion of *The Poem on the Grand Inquisitor* by observing that it was more than unusual of the author to make no one but Iwan KARAMAZOV (Ivan KARAMAZOV), an outspoken atheist, pronounce this poem which is *an unprecedented praise of Christ* (nebyvaluū po silē khvalu Khristu⁷⁷) and the peak of DOSTOEVSKY'S entire literary career (vershina tvorchestva Dostoevskogo⁷⁸). BERDYAEV himself interprets this contradiction dialectically: "Light is being brought forth in darkness" (svet vozgoraetsiā vo t'me).⁷⁹ Exactly just as the highest possible goodness is brought forward by the force of a dialectical principle (out of darkness) the nature of radical evil which is personified in the figure of the Grand Inquisitor follows similar intricate dialectics: "Light is being brought forth in darkness" (svet vozgoraetsiā vo t'me).⁸⁰ Exactly just as the highest possible goodness is brought forward by the force of a dialectical principle (out of darkness) the nature of radical evil which is personified in the figure of the Grand Inquisitor follows similar intricate dialectics:

77 Nikolaï BERDIĀEV: *Mirosozertsanie Dostoevskogo* (The Worldview of DOSTOEVSKY), Moskva: Iskusstvo 1994, p. 124.

78 Ibid.

79 Ibid.

80 Ibid.

On soblaznen zlom, priniāvshim oblich'e dobra. Takova priroda antikhristova soblazna. Antikhristovo nachalo ne est' staroe, gruboe, srazu vidimoe zlo. Èto — novoe, utonchennoe i soblazniāiushchee zlo, ono vseгда iāvliāetsiā v oblich'e dobra. V antikhristovom zle vseгда est' podobie khristianskomu dobru, vseгда ostaetsiā opasnost' smesheniā i podmeny. Obraz dobra nachinaet dvoit'siā. Obraz Khrista perestaet iāsno vosprinimat'siā, on smeshivaetsiā s obrazom antikhrista.⁸¹

He is being tempted by evil that has taken the appearance of goodness. It is such a nature of the temptations by the Antichrist. This is not the old, crude, immediately visible evil. This is rather a new, sophisticated, and tempting evil that always appears as goodness. The Antichrist's evil always displays a similarity to Christian goodness. The danger of mixing up good and evil is ever present. The picture of what is good becomes blurred. The figure of Christ can no longer be perceived clearly and merges with the figure of the Antichrist.

The sophisticated nature of radical evil manifests itself in the concern about man's happiness which is made possible by depriving man of God and freedom. The worldly power over the *happy formicary*⁸² is founded on nothing but these two deprivations. One of the most prominent features of the Grand Inquisitor which he shares with all the happy inhabitants of the formicary is the absence of faith. Just like Iwan who pronounces the Poem, the Inquisitor is an atheist: he believes neither in God nor man. In his philosophical analysis of the Poem, BERDYAEV admits how important it is for the Inquisitor that man should be deprived of the freedom of will while freedom would imply a possibility of a way to God but simultaneously would be a way across sin and suffering. It is only by virtue of an immense effort that man can display his greatness in overcoming evil. This is the antinomic quality of freedom, that it offers a way to God through the experience of evil. The eventual success in finding one's own way to God is possible only for great personalities; it cannot be promised to everyone, but everyone who is free has access to it.⁸³

Most relevant Chinese bibliographies make references to BERDYAEV even if they sometimes are not explicit about which passages from his work have been taken to be revealing in approaching DOSTOEVSKY. The following essay by JING Jianfeng 景剑峰 may serve as an illustration: “Yi ‘Zongjiao Dafaguan’ san zhang wei ju tanxi Tuosituoyefusiji de ziyou sixiang” 以“宗教大法官”三章为据探

81 Ibid., p. 133.

82 “The common happy formicary” (*obshchii soglasnyi muraveinik*) – one of the central metaphors used by the Grand Inquisitor for the man's world under his power, a world without God and freedom. Fedor DOSTOEVSKIĪ: *Brat'ia KARAMAZOVY*. In: *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* vol. 14, Leningrad: Nauka 1976, p. 235.

83 BERDYAEV's most detailed analysis of the concepts of freedom and evil in DOSTOEVSKY's work is provided in Chapters III “Svoboda” (Freedom) and IV “Zlo” (Evil) of his “The Worldview of DOSTOEVSKY” (*Mirosozertsanie Dostoevskogo*).

析陀思妥耶夫斯基的自由思想 (An Analysis of the Freedom-Idea in DOSTOEVSKY's Work on the Material of Three Great-Inquisitor Chapters.)⁸⁴ In this study, the author relies on two works by BERDYAEV: *Novoe religioznoe soznanie i obshchestvennost'* (The New Religious Consciousness and the Public, 1907) and *Mirosozertsanie Dostoevskogo* (The Worldview of DOSTOEVSKY, 1923).

The analysis is introduced by pointing out significant contradictions pertaining to DOSTOEVSKY's idea of freedom as they are observed in the latter work by BERDYAEV: she reproduces BERDYAEV's interpretation according to which freedom of will that makes man able to choose between good and evil is given to him by God, but being confronted with evil makes man raise the question about God's existence, because, as far as Iwan KARAMAZOV's idea of ethics is concerned, it cannot be accepted that God concedes evil and lets innocent children suffer.⁸⁵ In *The Poem of the Grand Inquisitor*, the Inquisitor is given the role played by the Devil in the Bible and exposes Christ to three temptations⁸⁶ by asking him to turn stones into bread, to perform miracles, and to gain power over the world. The great value of freedom of will which makes it possible to overcome suffering is seen by the fact that Christ could withstand all temptations:

陀思妥耶夫斯基的自由(Свобода)依然在基督教神学家的理解范围之内，需要放置到自我和上帝的关系中来理解，是自我趋向于全知全能全善的上帝，既是一种内在的驱动力又是这种趋向上帝的精神轨迹图示。⁸⁷

DOSTOEVSKY's concept of *freedom* (svoboda) remains within the framework of Christian theology and has to be understood within a personal relationship between an individual self and God, as a self in its striving for an omniscient, almighty, absolutely good God, both as an inner moving force and as a spirit looking for God.

Yet on the other hand, the idea of freedom suggests that – as Iwan puts it – “everything is allowed” (*yi qie dou keyi* 一切都可以), which in turn is an effect of the original sin, of the ability to tell fair from evil and of an alienation from God. The Grand Inquisitor divests man of freedom and constructs a godless kingdom of alleged happiness:

84 JING Jianfeng 景剑峰: “Yi ‘Zongjiao Dafaguan’ san zhang wei ju tanxi Tuosituoyefusiji de ziyou sixiang” 以“宗教大法官”三章为据探析陀思妥耶夫斯基的自由思想 (An Analysis of the Freedom-Idea in DOSTOEVSKY's Work on the Material of Three Great-Inquisitor Chapters). In: *Shijie wenxue pinglun* 世界文学评论 (*The World Literature Criticism*) no. 2, 2010, pp. 162–166. The number “three” refers here to Chapter V (“The Grand Inquisitor”) of Book V (Pro and Contra) as well as to the two preceding Chapters III (“The Brothers Meet”) and IV (“Rebellion”).

85 JING Jianfeng: “Yi ‘Zongjiao Dafaguan’ san zhang” (2010), p. 163.

86 MATTHEW 4; LUKE 4 (“Jesus is Tested in the Wilderness”).

87 JING Jianfeng: “Yi ‘Zongjiao Dafaguan’ san zhang” (2010), p. 164.

在《宗教大法官》一章中，人们听从于专制主义代表的大法官，就是因为大法官那里有面包、奇迹、神秘、权威等所谓的幸福，这样他们宁肯不要自由，甚至会把能为他们带来真正自由的基督放置到‘艳丽夺目的火堆上’，并争先恐后地去添柴。...那么一切都交给教皇，交给大法官是人类的理想状态吗？⁸⁸

In the chapter ‘The Grand Inquisitor’, people take orders from the absolutist inquisitor because he provides the joys of bread, miracles, mysticism, and power; doing so, they prefer to have no freedom, are even ready to throw Jesus who can make them really free into a blazing fire and rush on to be the first to put more firewood on to it...Is it the ideal state of humanity that everything is given over to the Pope and to the Grand Inquisitor?

In the novel which JING Jianfeng traces in the light of the contradictory nature of freedom, the major opposition is that which exists between “a Man-God” (*renshen* 人神 *chelovekobog*), i.e. a titanic man who is dependent entirely on himself because of his denial of God, and a really free “Man-in-God” (*shenren* 神人 *bo-gochelovek*).⁸⁹ The first is the Inquisitor himself; the second is Christ who is listening to him in *The Poem*. This observation, too, is in line with BERDYAEV.⁹⁰ One substantial difference from BERDYAEV, however, is her extension of the above opposition to that between Catholicism (*tianzhujiao* 天主教, Inquisitor) and Orthodoxy (*dongzhengjiao* 东正教, Jesus).⁹¹

While JING Jianfeng is certainly correct in stating DOSTOEVSKY’s critical attitude to Catholicism and in perceiving a projection of this critique on the figure of the Grand Inquisitor, she seems to pose a great simplification by equating the figure of Christ in *The Poem* with the Orthodox Church. In my opinion, this last figure was not conceived by DOSTOEVSKY to reproduce any positive religious dogma but rather represents that *instinct of universal humanism* which he discusses in the abovementioned *Lectures*: as an ideal construction and God’s sacred gift of freedom to all humanity. In other words, the novel does not reproduce a confrontation between two confessions, but rather attests to a personal inner confrontation of the writer with Catholicism, a Western belief which in his opinion usurped the freedom of man in order to exert power over the world. The following passage from *Idiot* (The Idiot, 1867–1869) may illustrate the prominence of this theme in DOSTOEVSKY’s work:

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 165.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Nikolai BERDYAEV: *Mirosozertsanie Dostoevskogo* (1994), pp. 133–134.

⁹¹ JING Jianfeng: “Yi ‘Zongjiao Dafaguan’ san zhang” (2010), p. 165.

Katolichestvo – vse ravno chto vera nekhristianskaia!...katolichestvo rimskoe dazhe khuzhe samogo ateizma. Ateizm tol'ko propoveduet nul', a katolitsizm idet dal'she: on iskazhennogo Khrista propoveduet, im zhe obolgannogo i porugannogo...On antikhrista propoveduet.⁹²

Catholicism is as good as an unchristian religion! ...Roman Catholicism is even worse than atheism itself, in my opinion! Yes, that's my opinion! Atheism only preaches zero, but Catholicism goes further: it preaches a distorted Christ, a Christ calumniated and defamed by itself, the opposite of Christ! It preaches the Antichrist, I swear. I assure you!⁹³

For DOSTOEVSKY, Catholicism is a Christian faith which was unable to withstand the third temptation of Christ by Satan, i.e. power. This was the reason for the establishment of the Vatican state as well as for the institution of the Inquisition as a special group within the Church to control its power and condemn dissidents. Even if Orthodoxy has never resorted to such radical forms of control and punishment as the Catholic Inquisition, it does not mean that it denies direct relations with state power. The problem may be illustrated by consulting the official site of the Russian Orthodox Church where the following is said:

Тсерков' ne tol'ko predpisyvaet svoim chadam povinovat'sia gosudarstvennoĭ vlasti, nezavisimo ot ubezheniĭ i veroispovedaniĭ ee nositelei, no i molit'sia za nee, «daby provodit' nam zhizn' tikhuiu i bezmiatezhnuiu vo vsiakom blagochestii i chistote» (1 Tim. 2. 2).⁹⁴

The Church does not only prescribe the obedience to state power for its children, regardless of the convictions and confessions of its (i.e. state power's) possessors, but also prays for it “so that we may have a calm and quiet life in all fear of God and serious behavior.” (I Timothy 2/2)

BERDYAEV must have had similar official statements in mind when he wrote:

Dlia chisto pravoslavnogo soznaniĭa on, konechno, bolee priemlem, chem dlia soznaniĭa katolicheskogo, no i konservativnoe pravoslavie dolzhna pugat' dykhovnaĭa revoliutsionnost' Dostoevskogo, ego bezmernaĭa svoboda dukha.⁹⁵

92 Fedor DOSTOEVSKIĭ: *Idiot*. In: *Polnoe sobranie sochineniĭ* vol. 8, Leningrad: Nauka 1973, p. 450.

93 Fyodor DOSTOEVSKY: *The Idiot*, tr. by Constance GARNETT, New York: The Heritage Press 1956, p. 485.

94 Emphasis by bold characters as in original, see <https://mospat.ru/ru/documents/social-concepts/iii/> (last access 2020, May 25).

95 Nikolai BERDIAEV: *Mirosozertsanie Dostoevskogo* (1994), p. 131.

To a purely Orthodox mind, he (DOSTOEVSKY) is certainly much more acceptable than to a Catholic one, but the conservative Orthodoxy should also be alert to the spiritual revolutionary character of DOSTOEVSKY as well as to the infinite freedom of his spirit.

Despite some seeming simplifications in the analysis by JING Jianfeng, in general her essay provides a careful study of DOSTOEVSKY's religious thought and of the close and contradictory relationship between freedom and evil within his ethical theory. Her study may be considered exemplary of a large number of works produced by Chinese intellectuals in the last twenty years.⁹⁶ They often draw on BERDYAEV as an expert who approaches DOSTOEVSKY from the standpoint of Russian religious philosophy. Another important authority in what specifically regards DOSTOEVSKY's aesthetics is Mikhail BAKHTIN (1895–1975), the author of *Problemy poëtiki Dostoevskogo* (The Poetics of DOSTOEVSKY, 1929) and of the theory of *dialogism* (dialogizm) or *polyphony of voices* (polifoniia golosov) in DOSTOEVSKY's work. In China, too, BAKHTIN's theories belong to the standard instrumental set in approaching DOSTOEVSKY. The *polyphony of voices* is occasionally also part of the discussions of the problem of evil, as is the case with the above-mentioned essay by WU Shan 吴珊 “*Yuebo ji dui Tuosituoyefusiji wenxue guan de yingxiang*” 《约伯记》对陀思妥耶夫斯基文学观的影响 (On the Influence of *The Book of Job* on DOSTOEVSKY's Literary Thought)⁹⁷ which interprets Iwan's “soliloquy”, i.e. the dialogue with the Devil in his own possession who is a part of Iwan's own self, from Book XI/xi “The Devil. Iwan's Nightmare” as an example of “polyphonic words” (“*fudiao*” *xing de yuyan* “复调”性的语言). The polyphony is said to be a perfect means of auto-reflections of a character whose inner self is split

96 Among other in-depth studies of DOSTOEVSKY's religious thought and the problem of evil which have been recently produced in China are WANG Manli's 王曼利 “Zhiyi yu zhuixun: lun Tuosituoyefusiji chuanguo zhong de yuanzui yu jiushu” 质疑与追寻：论陀思妥耶夫斯基创作中的原罪与救赎 (Questioning and Pursuing: The Original Sin and Salvation in DOSTOEVSKY's Work). In: *Zhejiang gongshang daxue xuebao* 浙江工商大学学报 (*Journal of Zhejiang Gongshang University*) no. 144, May 2017, pp. 49–56; WANG Zhigeng's 王志耕 “Zongjiao renbenzhuyi shiye zhong de Tuosituoyefusiji” 宗教人本主义视野中的陀思妥耶夫斯基 (DOSTOEVSKY from the Perspective of Religious Humanism). In: *Jilin shifan daxue xuebao* 吉林师范大学学报 (*Jilin Normal University Journal*) no. 6, Dec. 2005, pp. 21–26; HE Lihua's 贺立华, JIANG Guixu's 姜桂栩 “Ren de youxianxing, shangdi de kenengxing: Lun Tuosituoyefusiji fudiao xiaoshuo de zhengjiu zhuti” 人的有限性与上帝的可能性——论陀思妥耶夫斯基复调小说的拯救主题 (On the Limits of Man and the Possibility of God: On the Salvation Motif in Polyphonic Novels by DOSTOEVSKY). In: *Qilu xuekan* 齐鲁学刊 (*Qilu Journal*) no. 5, 2007, pp. 106–110.

97 *Henan keji xueyuan xuebao* 河南科技学院学报 (*Journal of Henan Institute of Science and Technology*) no. 7, 2012, pp. 70–73.

(*xin zhong ling yi ge ziji* 心中另一个自己) and represents a reproduction of one voice by means of another (*jilu shengyin de shengyin* 记录声音中的声).⁹⁸

In a broader frame, BAKHTIN's theory of dialogism is discussed by SHA Mei 沙湄 in her essay "Zongjiao Dafaguan yu Bachejin de shixue wenti" 《宗教大法官》与巴赫金的诗学问题 (*The Grand Inquisitor and the Problems of Poetics Discussed by BAKHTIN*)⁹⁹ in which the motif of evil in the novel is interpreted as participating in a multi-layered dialogue and takes on quite different identities: Catholicism, Socialism, and Western Rationalism.¹⁰⁰ As a product of the Antichrist, who divests humanity of freedom, Socialism is also investigated in one of SHA Mei's further studies, where it receives the following explanation: "他(宗教大法官)“修正”了基督的事业,接管了人的自由并将世界建造为一个幸福的、无争议的蚁窝。"(He (the Grand Inquisitor) 'corrected' the work of Jesus, brought the freedom of men under his own influence and constructed a happy harmonious formicary.)¹⁰¹ In this study, SHA Mei's main concern is the dialogical quality of evil in the novel, i.e. its appearance as an opposition, primarily directed against faith, which allows her to come up with a complex psychological portrait of atheism and of motivation behind its metaphysical revolt:

形而上学反叛者也不是无神论者,而是渎神者,以人类生存秩序的名义辱骂神明者,正如宗教大法官和伊凡所作。¹⁰²

98 WU Shan: "Yuebo ji dui Tuosituoyefusiji wenxue guan de yingxiang" (2012), p. 72. The author relies in her study on the following translation of BAKHTIN: Bahejin 巴赫金: *Tuosituoyefusiji shixue wenti* 陀思妥耶夫斯基诗学问题 (*The Poetics of DOSTOEVSKY*), Shanghai: Sanlian shudian 1988.

99 SHA Mei 沙湄: "Zongjiao Dafaguan yu Bachejin de shixue wenti" 《宗教大法官》与巴赫金的诗学问题 (*The Grand Inquisitor and the Problems of Poetics Discussed by BAKHTIN*). In: *Wenxue pinglun* 文学评论 (*Literature Review*) no. 3, 2004, pp. 47–55.

100 The deconstruction of these great ideological enemies of DOSTOEVSKY is indebted to Romano GUARDINI's essay "The Legend of the Great Inquisitor". In: *CrossCurrents* vol. 3 no. 1, Fall 1952, pp. 58–86. A study which focusses of DOSTOEVSKY's critical attitude to Western rationality and in particular to the philosophy of the Enlightenment is provided by HUANG Ruijie 黄锐杰: "Qimeng ji qi xiandu: 'Kalamazuofu xiongdi' zhong Yiwang de san-chong mianxiang" 启蒙及其限度:《卡拉马佐夫兄弟》中伊万的三重面相 (*On the Limits of Enlightenment: Three Portraits of Iwan in The Brothers KARAMAZOV*). In: *Changjiang xueshu* 长江学术 (*Yangtze River Academic*) vol. 43 no. 3, 2014, pp. 83–90.

101 SHA Mei 沙湄: "Xinyang qishilu: Qian xi Tuosituoyefusiji *Kalamazuofu xiongdi* 'Zongjiao Dafaguan'" 信仰启示录: 浅析陀思妥耶夫斯基《卡拉马佐夫兄弟: 宗教大法官》 (*An Apocalypse of Faith: A Preliminary Study of 'The Grand Inquisitor' Chapter from The Brothers KARAMAZOV*). In: *Xinan minzu xueyuan xuebao, Zhexue shehui kexue ban* 西南民族学院学报. 哲学社会科学版 (*Journal of Southwest Institute for Ethnic Groups. Philosophy and Social Sciences*) vol. 19 no. 1, 1998, pp. 77–101, 140, here p. 99.

102 SHA Mei: "Xinyang qishilu" (1998), p. 100.

Metaphysical rebels are not atheists, they are rather blasphemers who offend God in the name of the human life order (literally: the life order of the human race, *renlei*). That is exactly what the Grand Inquisitor and Iwan are doing.

A similar psychological study on the atheism in *The Brothers KARAMAZOV* was produced in LI Junjun's 李君君 "Lun Tuosituoyefusiji zuopin zhong de gete xiaoshuo yinsu" 论陀思妥耶夫斯基作品中的哥特小说因素 (On Some Gothic Features in DOSTOEVSKY's Work):¹⁰³ in the study, Iwan's doubts about God's existence are said to result in a negation of God, which makes him represent a very special kind of atheism because he has recognized that religious worship (*chongbai* 崇拜) counts among the eternal perplexities of the human race (*renlei yongheng de kunhuo* 人类永恒的困惑).¹⁰⁴

Such explicit psychological studies on DOSTOEVSKY's aesthetics display one common feature in terms of the analysis of evil as an ethical problem in which they all are engaged in closely examining his religious concepts and they all link these concepts with that of *humanity* (*renlei* 人类). Even if it is not made explicit, the authors of the above essays are in general quite sensible of the antinomic quality peculiar to DOSTOEVSKY's international problematics: the search for what is *universally human* (freedom, the nature of evil, and ways in which to overcome it) is embedded in a critical dialogue with a civilization which has generated the Grand Inquisitor, the West, its Church, and its rationality.

BULGAKOV

As mentioned in the introduction, from the standpoint of literary tradition, BULGAKOV plays a very specific role both in regard to the modifications of the motif of evil, its symbolic positive reversal in a force which punishes men for evil doing, and in regard to his overall overtly more positive attitude to the West than that found in the work of GOGOL and DOSTOEVSKY. From the perspective of political and cultural history, however, he must have posed a very specific case for Chinese readers as well: the direct butt of mockery in his satire is not simply a pettish man who commits himself to evil but one who is representative of ideas of a political

103 LI Junjun 李君君: "Lun Tuosituoyefusiji zuopin zhong de gete xiaoshuo yinsu" 论陀思妥耶夫斯基作品中的哥特小说因素 (On Some Gothic Features in DOSTOEVSKY's Work). In: *Yuxi shifan xueyuan xuebao* 玉溪师范学院学报 (Journal of Yuxi Normal University) vol. 32 no. 2, 2016, pp. 29–34.

104 Ibid., p. 33.

regime (socialism) with which China herself was more than familiar. Other than DOSTOEVSKY, who interpreted socialism as one of the most terrible possible manifestations of evil (the happy fornicary), for BULGAKOV socialism was not a vision but evil reality with which he was directly and tragically confronted. Therefore, *Master i Margarita* (The Master and Margarita, 1928–1940) may be seen for Chinese readers as suggestive of two oppositional schemes: a classical one, in which a gentleman appears alongside petty men (this would correspond to classical Chinese opposition between a *junzi* 君子 and a *xiao ren* 小人), and a modern one: between universal humanism and ethical abuses prevailing within a society which identifies itself with socialism.

Chinese translations as well as Chinese readings and interpretations of *The Master and Margarita* show continuity and changes in the intellectual atmosphere between 1980s and the present time. One of the earliest Chinese publications on BULGAKOV's novel was the essay by TONG Daoming 童道明 from 1977: "Sulian zuojia Buerjiakofu ji qi *Dashi he Majialita*" 苏联作家布尔加科夫及其《大师和玛加丽塔》 (The Soviet writer BULGAKOV and his *The Master and Margarita*).¹⁰⁵ Tong approaches BULGAKOV's work as follows:

它不能在无产阶级专制的苏联出版，而只能在资本主义全面复辟的苏联出笼。容许《大师和玛加丽塔》出笼，就等于承认对列宁斯大林时代进行恶毒攻击是正当的，就等于承认丑化、诬蔑十月革命的反动宣传是合理的。¹⁰⁶

(The novel) could not be published in the Soviet Union of proletarian dictatorship; it could only come out after a comprehensive restoration of capitalism by Soviet revisionists. The permission to publish this novel is tantamount to the recognition that vicious attacks against the epoch of LENIN and STALIN are justified; that the reactionary propaganda of vilifying the October Revolution is reasonable.

In TONG's essay, sharp criticism of BULGAKOV's work is accompanied by that against the first officially permitted public performance of the novel on the Taganka stage in 1977. TONG relies on the review of it issued on the pages of the official periodical of the communist party in the Soviet Union: the newspaper *Pravda* on 25 May 1977 under the title "Seans chjornoj magii na Taganke" (Performing Black Magic on the Taganka Stage). One of the critical points within this relatively positive review by Nikolai POTAPOV (Nikolai POTAPOV) referred to the historical atmosphere of the 1920s which he had missed in the theatrical

105 TONG Daoming 童道明: "Sulian zuojia Buerjiakofu ji qi *Dashi he Majialita*" 苏联作家布尔加科夫及其《大师和玛加丽塔》 (The Soviet writer BULGAKOV and his *The Master and Margarita*). In: *Waiguo wenxue dongtai* 外国文学动态 (World Literature Recent Developments) no. 8, 1977, pp. 1–11.

106 TONG Daoming: "Sulian zuojia Buerjiakofu ji qi *Dashi he Majialita*" (1977), p. 10.

presentation; its stage director Yuri LUBIMOV (ŪUrii LiŪBIMOV) created instead an atmosphere which reminded the audience of the contemporary times (1977, the 60th anniversary of the October Revolution). On his side, TONG Daoming accuses the author of the review of not having demonstrated clearly enough that BULGAKOV's novel was imbued with shameless aggression (*wuchi gongji* 无耻攻击) and defamation (*feibang* 诽谤); the novel was nothing but an assault on the very essence of the October Revolution (*geming de benzhi* 革命的本质).¹⁰⁷

This critique, largely inspired by the righteous indignation of a communist ideologist, appeared ten years before the first Chinese translations of the novel. The political changes during these ten years that ushered in the “Chinese thaw period” appear visually sharp if the critique by TONG is compared with the corresponding judgment by the first translators of the novel. In the year 1987, two translations were published in China: QIAN Cheng's 钱诚 *Dashi he Magelite* 大师和玛格丽特 and XU Changhan's 徐昌翰 *Mosike guiying: Dashi he Magelite* 莫斯科鬼影: 大师和玛格丽特. QIAN's preface¹⁰⁸ and XU's afterword¹⁰⁹ contain pieces of information ranging from the complexities in BULGAKOV's career and his dramatic conflict with the existing totalitarian regime, through STALIN's political play with the uneasy dissident BULGAKOV to the official prohibition to publish and perform BULGAKOV's dramatic works. All of these serve for Chinese readers' better understanding of the novel as well as the political and cultural background in which it was created. On the other hand, they certainly called to mind events from the history of the Chinese totalitarian regime, not only in terms of parallels (the sad lot of intellectuals under the dictatorship of the party), but also in terms of contrasts with the Soviet past: for instance, references to the fact that the first Russian edition of the novel appeared in 1966,¹¹⁰ after a long-term period of the “Soviet thaw”, were very likely to remind Chinese readers of the outbreak of the Great Cultural Revolution in the same year.

The commentaries on BULGAKOV's text are not only free from ideological criticism peculiar to TONG Daoming's essay but also display a deep sympathy with the Russian writer. XU Changhan explains the great difficulties confronted with the first Russian edition and accompanies it by a complete Chinese translation of

107 Ibid., p. 11.

108 QIAN Cheng 钱诚: “Yizhe xu” 译者序 (Translator's Preface). In: QIAN Cheng (tr.), *Dashi he Magelite* 大师和玛格丽特 (The Master and Margarita), Beijing: Waiguo wenxue chubanshe 1987, pp. 1–15.

109 XU Changhan 徐昌翰: “Yi hou” 译后 (Translator's Postface). In: XU Changhan (tr.), *Mosike guiying: Dashi he Magelite* 莫斯科鬼影: 大师和玛格丽特 (Moscow ghost: The Master and Margarita), Shenyang: Chunfeng wenyi chubanshe 1987, pp. 467–469.

110 QIAN Cheng: “Yizhe xu” (1987), p. 8.

Konstantin SIMONOV's Russian preface¹¹¹ to it. SIMONOV's name deserves to be mentioned for at least two reasons: his preface to the first Russian edition of the novel in the journal *Moskva* had made it possible in the first place that it could be published under the regime of that time. SIMONOV exercised the necessary authority among Soviet literati to persuade the censorship that a publication would mean no threat to the Soviet ideology. However, his eventual victory over the apparatus was not without its price: the first edition of the novel is also the one that is marked by enormous omissions. All the passages which might have appeared ideologically unsafe had been cancelled.¹¹² SIMONOV's preface was marked by considerable caution in regard to the fantastic and the satirical in the novel:

Trudno skazat', kak by vygl'adel' ètot roman, esli by i tak rastianuvshaiasia na dvenadtsat' let rabota dilias' eshche i eshche. Mozhet byt', v romane byli by ispravleny nekotorye nesovershenstva, mozhet byt', bylo by dodumano chto-to eshche ne do kontsa dodumannoe ili vycherknuto chto-to iz togo, chto neset na sebe seichas pechat' neumerennoi, izbytochnoi shchedrosti fantazii.¹¹³

It is hard to say what this novel would have looked like if the work on it, which lasted for twelve years, had continued. Maybe some of the shortcomings of the novel would have been omitted, maybe the author could have thought to the end something he had not managed to do, maybe something would have been cancelled, which in its present form bears the mark of an unrestrained and superfluous generosity of imagination.

These words anticipate quite probable reactions of many Soviet readers whose commitment to the communist ideals would make them feel very much like TONG Daoming while reading the work of a dissident, even in this shortened form. The preface was therefore an expression of SIMONOV's good command of Soviet psychology. XU's decision to translate this preface may have originated in the same editorial tactics. His version as one of the first two Chinese translations¹¹⁴ of the

111 XU Changhan (tr.): "Ximengnuofu xu" 西蒙诺夫序 (Preface by SIMONOV). In: XU Changhan (tr.): *Mosike guiying*, pp. 1–4.

112 This first publication appeared in the journal *Moskva* (1966 no. 11 and 1967 no. 1). The commentary by Irina BELOBROVTSEVA (Irina BELOBROVTSEVA) and Svetlana KULJUS (Svetlana KUL'ŪS) reports about 159 text passages left out of the original which is equal to 12% of the whole text. (See their *Roman Bulgakova Master i Margarita: Kommentarii* (BULGAKOV's Novel *The Master and Margarita*: A Commentary), Tallinn: Argo 2006, p. 27.) The first complete edition of the novel was issued in Paris, at the YMCA-Press in 1967.

113 Konstantin SIMONOV: "Predislovie k romanu Master i Margarita" (Preface to the novel *The Master and Margarita*). In: *Moskva* no. 11, 1966, pp. 6–7, here p. 7. Preface to the novel. In: *Moskva* no. 11, 1966, p. 7.

114 Among later complete translations of the novel into Chinese, there are: HAN Qing's 寒青 *Sadan qiwu* 撒旦起舞 (Satanic Dance), Beijing: Zuoqia chubanshe 1997 and GAO

novel is automatically the more cautious one in regard to its fantastic satire and political critique. QIAN's version, on the contrary, was not only complete, but also a translation that documented a desire to reveal the maximum of its symbolic meaning, among other things the nature of Voland and the relationship of good and evil. The following lines from QIAN's preface may serve as an illustration:

他认为，可恶而又可怕的并不在于相信耶稣和撒旦的存在与否，而在于不应由此得出结论：既然没有上帝和魔鬼，人便可以为所欲为，并从而否定一切文化传统、精神价值和人们心中的‘上帝’—最根本的善恶观念。¹¹⁵

According to the author, the worst and the most horrible thing is not the question of whether one believes in the existence of Jesus and Devil or not but in the inferences one draws from (discussing) these questions: as neither God nor Devil exists, man can act just as he likes and therefore he denies altogether the cultural tradition, spiritual values and God within his own heart; the most fundamental notions of good and evil.

In QIAN's view, the significant difference between GOETHE's Mephistopheles and BULGAKOV's Voland is that Voland does not defend the evil, nor does he tempt people to commit evil deeds. Instead, he observes actions of evil people and administers their destiny which he has to do because of the division of labor between God and himself.¹¹⁶ Thus, Voland is not opposing the good but supports the coordinate system of ethics in which everyone gains a chance to approach God, to develop necessary spiritual and creative forces within themselves for approaching God and to withstand all the petty vulgar materialistic impulses that would impede this approach.

Few studies on BULGAKOV refrain from providing interpretations of parallels between him and his predecessors in the elaboration of the Mephistopheles motif. A study which focuses on connections between BULGAKOV and GOETHE is, for example, XU Zhiqiang's 许志强 "Buerjiakefu 'Hei Misa' dui Gede *Fushide* de jicheng yu gaizao" 布尔加科夫“黑弥撒”对歌德《浮士德》的继承与改造 (BULGAKOV's 'Black Mass' and GOETHE's *Faust*: Continuities and Transformations).¹¹⁷ The author concentrates on the first five chapters of the second part

Huiqun's 高惠群 *Dashi he Majialita* 大师和玛加丽塔 (The Master and Margarita), Shanghai: Shanghai yuwen chubanshe 2007.

115 QIAN Cheng: "Yizhe xu" (1987), p. 10.

116 Ibid., p. 11.

117 XU Zhiqiang 许志强: "Buerjiakefu 'Hei Misa' dui Gede *Fushide* de jicheng yu gaizao" 布尔加科夫“黑弥撒”对歌德《浮士德》的继承与改造 (BULGAKOV's 'Black Mass' and GOETHE's *Faust*: Continuities and Transformations).¹¹⁷. In: *Waiguo wenxue* 外国文学 (Foreign Literature) no. 4, 2013, pp. 69–75.

of *The Master and Margarita*, specifically the Margarita plot line in which she transforms into a witch and attends the ball of Satan. These developments are compared with the Walpurgis Night from the first part of *Faust*. Among differences between these works, XU observes BULGAKOV's refusal to provide any rational explanation of Margarita's transformations. Another difference refers to the relationship between fiction and reality which merge in BULGAKOV's novel (*xianshi he shenhua huxiang ronghe* 现实和神话互相融合). According to XU, this merge results in the fact that the whole of the Margarita plot should be interpreted as an allegory (*fengyu* 讽喻.) Nevertheless, still the more striking difference from GOETHE's elaboration of the pact with the Devil is said to be the absence of a clear positioning of Margarita within the realm of religion:

玛格丽特没有照浮士德传统公开否认基督教信仰，鉴于苏联社会的无神论背景也是解释得通的，以此确认她的基督教象征性似乎显得较为牵强。魔鬼以‘玛戈王后’的名义为玛格丽特加冕，这就清楚地表明其象征世俗权能的身份。
118

Margarita does not follow the Faustian tradition in openly rejecting Christian faith, which is quite understandable in view of the atheist background of the Soviet society. For this reason, it seems too farfetched to affirm her symbolic adherence to Christianity. The Satan crowns her in the name of ‘Queen Margo’, which quite clearly displays the secular character of the symbolism.

XU's comparative study seems to ignore the fact that the whole of the Moscow plot, including the ball of Satan, represents a direct counterpart to the Jeshua-plot and that it is nobody else but Voland who – similarly to the Master – is able (and willing) to reproduce events which culminated in the execution of Christ. In BULGAKOV's novel, the religious meanings are greatly different from those in GOETHE's *Faust*: BULGAKOV's hero is not an aspiring mind ready to scarify everything including his faith in order to attain the ability of an all-encompassing experience of being but one who regards the faith as a chance of which he has been once robbed by the state and which he ironically regains through the Devil's help. The ideal atheist background of the Soviet society to which XU is referring here can hardly explain anything about Voland's and Margarita's attitude toward religion exactly because both of them directly oppose the realities of the atheist state.

A more convincing examination of parallels between BULGAKOV and GOETHE was provided by ZOU Hongjin 邹洪锦 in his “Fushide ticaide bianyi: *Fushide yu Dashi he Magelita duochong shijiao yanjiu*” 浮士德题材的变异 ——《浮士德》与《大师和玛格丽塔》多重视角研究 (Transformations of the Faust-

118 Ibid., p. 73.

Theme: A Multi-Perspective Analysis of *Faust* and *The Master and Margarita*).¹¹⁹ According to ZOU, the Faustian theme continues throughout the whole of BULGAKOV's novel: beginning with the epigraph which is taken from the self-presentation of Mephistopheles in *Faust* up to the last conversation between the Master and Voland in which Voland describes the charms of the life in the afterworld that awaits the heroes after leaving the horrors of the Soviet reality: "Can it be that you do not want to hear SCHUBERT's music at night? Wouldn't you enjoy writing with a goose-feather in the light of candles? Wouldn't you wish to be like Faust, sit over a test tube and hope to produce a new homunculus?"¹²⁰ In spite of all the obvious parallels, ZOU states that both works display different ideals: whereas *Faust* represents man's untiring spiritual search for a complete self-realization, for BULGAKOV it is the idea of *salvation* (*zhengjiu* 拯救) which is central to the novel:

玛格丽塔愿意接受魔鬼的考验既是出于他对大师的拯救，也是出于对自己无爱婚姻的拯救；大师写小说是出于对社会的道德沦丧而实施的内心的自我拯救，而小说《本丢·彼拉多》中总督杀死出卖耶稣的犹太...也可看作是对自己杀死耶稣的愧疚的赎罪和拯救。¹²¹

Margarita is willing to accept the test of the Devil because he can save the Master, but also because of her own escape from a marriage without love; the Master writes his novel because he wants to save the fulfilment of his inner self in spite of the moral crisis of the society. The procurator from the novel *Pontius Pilatus* gets Juda killed for having betrayed Jesus, which can also be interpreted as a desire of salvation and atonement for his own execution of Jesus.

It is true that salvation is also one of the themes of *Faust* (Faust is eventually taken by angels into the paradise and thus escapes Mephistopheles' powers), but BULGAKOV's elaboration of this theme is more complex and serves as a constant perspective for reflections on good and evil. According to ZOU, GOETHE's distribution of roles in the coordinate system of good and evil is made completely unequivocal, but such a clear distinction is not characteristic of BULGAKOV. Making these observations, ZOU continues a relatively young tradition of deep psychological analysis of the motif of evil in BULGAKOV's work which began with the

119 ZOU Hongjin 邹洪锦: "Fushide ticaide bianyi: *Fushide yu Dashi he Magelita duochong shijiao yanjiu*" 浮士德题材的变异 —— 《浮士德》与《大师和玛格丽塔》多重视角研究 (Transformations of the Faust-Theme: A Multi-Perspective Analysis of *Faust* and *The Master and Margarita*). In: *Suihua xueyuan xuebao* 绥化学院学报 (Journal of Suihua University) vol. 33 no. 2, 2013, pp. 72–76.

120 BULGAKOV: *Master i Margarita*, p. 510; quoted by ZOU Hongjin: "Fushide ticaide bianyi" (2013), p. 72.

121 Ibid., p. 73.

abovementioned preface by QIAN Cheng in the first complete Chinese translation of *The Master and Margarita*. The psychological perceptiveness is accompanied by a historical analysis which opposes a spiritual crisis of the socialist society of the early 20th century to the optimistic humanism of the early 19th century as it is documented in GOETHE's work.¹²²

One of direct manifestations of the described crisis may be seen in the life of intellectuals who would not sacrifice their individual will to the reigning regime. BULGAKOV himself was beyond any doubt among these intellectuals, and one of his direct experiences of evil was the impossibility to publish most of his works. QIAN Cheng was among the first to point out a personal communication which had taken place between BULGAKOV and STALIN. He mentions the famous letter of BULGAKOV from 28 March 1930 in which he asked STALIN for permission either to work and realize himself freely in Soviet Russia or to emigrate, as well as the telephone call from STALIN that ensued upon this letter.¹²³

Being more than uneasy, the relations between BULGAKOV and power holders in the Soviet Union were also subject of examination in various studies by TANG Yihong 唐逸红, among others in her essays “Buerjiakofu he Sidalin” 布尔加科夫和斯大林 (BULGAKOV and STALIN)¹²⁴ and “Qian xi Dashi he Magelite zhong de zhishi fenzi xingxiang” 浅析《大师和玛格丽特》中的知识分子形象 (A Preliminary Analysis of the Image of Intellectuals in *The Master and Margarita*).¹²⁵ Here I will limit myself to a short discussion of the latter essay as it vividly reproduces the links between the motif of evil and the lot of intellectuals. She begins with clearing the meaning of the term *intelligenzija* (*intelligentśiia*, *zhishi fenzi* 知识分子), its Russian origin and its reference to a country's spiritual elite: having specialized knowledge or working as an intellectual did not qualify a person to be part of it. Belonging to *intelligenzija* suggested rather a leading critical role in society and the ability to perceive the origins of its problems and openly proposing means for overcoming them. TANG traces the history of this phenomenon in Russia back to the *dekabristy* (Decembrists) of the 19th century. BULGAKOV is said not only to be situated in the same tradition (like other dissidents such as Boris PASTERNAK, 1890–1960), the deep cultural and political role of the *intelligenzija* is also a central motif of his work. In *The Master and Margarita*, the literal society

122 Ibid., p. 75.

123 QIAN Cheng: “Yizhe xu” (1987), p. 5–6.

124 TANG Yihong 唐逸红: “Buerjiakofu he Sidalin” 布尔加科夫和斯大林 (BULGAKOV and STALIN). In: *Eluosi wenyi* 俄罗斯文艺 (Russian Literature) no. 3, 1999, pp. 69–71.

125 TANG Yihong and LI Zhe 李哲: “Qian xi Dashi he Magelite zhong de zhishi fenzi xingxiang” 浅析《大师和玛格丽特》中的知识分子形象 (A Preliminary Analysis of the Image of Intellectuals in *The Master and Margarita*). In: *Wenhua xuekan* 文化学刊 (Culture Journal) no. 6, Nov. 2011, pp. 139–142.

Mossolit may be regarded as the caricature of *intelligenzija* displaying all the possible vices of greed, vanity, gluttony, etc.; these intellectuals represent an exact opposite of what real *intelligenzija* should be like. Among figures discussed by TANG as its real representatives are on the other hand the Master, Margarita, Pontius Pilatus, but an especially prominent position among this group is given in her study to the *most peculiar intellectual (zui guaidan de zhishi fenzi xingxiang 最怪诞的知识分子形象*¹²⁶) Voland. She examines him in detail as the first in the group: he is the professor of black magic who is invested with the role of a just punisher (*zhenli chengfazhe de juese 真理惩罚者的角色*) and of doing good works by open denial (*tongguo gongkai de fouding lai chengjiu shan 通过公开的否定来成就善*)¹²⁷. Besides these ethical functions, one of the primary duties of Voland is seen in his religious mission of restoring the faith of which people have been divested:

沃兰德这一形象就是要告诉无知的人们，如果抛弃了信仰，丧失了精神支柱，那么价值观将被颠覆。所以作为一名知识分子，沃兰德不仅坚持自己的精神追求，充分利用其话语权来证明上帝的存在，甚至以极端的手段维护其道德的纯洁性...¹²⁸

Voland's message to those ignorant men is that if the faith is rejected, and the spiritual foundations lost, then all values will be ruined. This is the reason why Voland as an intellectual does not only stick to the pursuit of his own moral principles and fully uses the power of his words to prove God's existence but also takes extreme measures to defend the moral purity.

TANG Yihong refrains from any direct observations on the possible relevance of Voland's religious ethical mission for Chinese readers, as all other above examinations of BULGAKOV do, but all of them provide their studies with suggestive callsigns that are likely to evoke in readers' consciousness associations with their own cultural past and present. For example, in the quoted essay by TANG Yihong, as the analysis of evil accompanies the theme of Voland's punishment of atheism and materialism¹²⁹ which is one of the central themes in BULGAKOV's work, this is more than suggestive of the experiences which China and Chinese *intelligenzija* went through in the recent past: the dangers of losing one's cultural values and the

126 TANG Yihong, LI Zhe: "Qian xi *Dashi he Magelite* zhong de zhishi fenzi xingxiang" (2011), p. 140.

127 Ibid.

128 Ibid.

129 TANG Yihong: "Buerjiakofu bi xia de mogui xingxiang" 布尔加科夫笔下的魔鬼形象 (The Devil in BULGAKOV's Work). In: *Eluosi wenyi* no. 3, 1997, pp. 54-56, here p. 56.

eventual realization of one's full dependence on oneself within a complete spiritual vacuum.

Conclusion

The major purpose of the present study was to trace prevailing tendencies in Chinese interpretations of the motif of evil within the work of three Russian classical writers as well as to illustrate them by some representative examples. In the original discourse, which is outlined in the introduction, Western ideas on absolute evil were usually met with suspicion by Chinese literati and up to now continue to fuel studies focusing on cultural differences between China and the West (for example in Adrian CHAN's ironical treatment of the West as the place of origin of Created people), whereas the transformations that have developed within this discourse in the last hundred years attest to a considerable mutual rapprochement of these cultures.

The selection of Russian classics for discussing these rapprochement processes was motivated by the fact that in the history of contacts with the West, Russia played for China an ambivalent specific position: on the one hand it was one of the powers of the West which identified directly with Western philosophy, science, and Christian faith, but on the other hand also one that critically distanced itself from the West in many crucial instances at the same time. All the complexities pertaining to Russia's construction of her own cultural identity was an experience which proved to be of unique importance for Chinese intellectuals. However, from the standpoint of political history, the Russian experience of evil was also of great significance for China: the success of socialism, the construction of a totalitarian state, the abolishment of the traditional scale of values, the eventual crisis of socialist ideas, and the beginning of a positive reevaluation of traditional values; with all these epochal transformations China was more than familiar, and her interest for this shared historical experience is easily explained. GOGOL, DOSTOEVSKY, and BULGAKOV were among the authors who either had a strong intuition of the aforementioned ideological shifts – an intuition which caused GOGOL's need to defend the sacred nature of Russian monarchy and was responsible for DOSTOEVSKY's critique of *the happy formicary* (socialism) – or experienced them directly (BULGAKOV). They all closely associated these historical shifts with the ideas of absolute evil which they elaborated in their literary works.

In relevant studies produced by Chinese intellectuals, three general ways of approaching the idea of evil could be observed. First, it was a welcoming gesture for ideological import from the West which rested mainly on an acutely perceived necessity of social, political, and cultural reforms as well as intuitions of great utility of the authors discussed for these reforms but not on an active direct analysis of the texts discussed. This way of a rather superficial literary reception was characteristic of the May Fourth era. The present study illustrated this with reference to LU Xun's discussions of GOGOL within a large group of the so-called Satanic writers, but it was by no means LU Xun alone who occasionally displayed insufficient knowledge of primary sources: the same occurred in the case with generally praising discussions of DANTE, GOETHE, and LUTHER as the symbolical figures. Used as slogans, their names were often automatically associated with successes of social reforms and the necessities of abandoning one's cultural past. Close reading of their works was not meant to be the prerequisite for achieving these aims. A different way in coming to terms with the ideas of evil was demonstrated in the studies which illustrate a much better grasp of primary sources and an overall positive attitude to the classics discussed but are extremely cautious at the same time in regard to some central ideas of these works. This approach was characteristic of reading GOGOL and DOSTOEVSKY between the May Fourth and roughly the 1990s. Both classics were regarded as grand literary figures, but the strong religious component of their thought was not in the spirit of the time and therefore remained either tacitly ignored, explicitly avoided, or openly criticized. Finally, the third way of literary approach to discussions of evil manifests itself in free and thorough readings of texts in all their complexity. This method is characteristic of the last thirty years of ideas exchanged between China and the West. Even in view of the fact that not all of them display the same high quality of literary examination, they all testify to one great achievement of our time: the freedom of raising questions and searching for answers which is equally free of any ideological constraint.

