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## Margarita on the Wall

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**Sasha Senderovich**  
**“Margarita on the Wall”**

Moscow, Russia



## (Photo Caption)

“Она повернула с Тверской в переулок и тут обернулась. Ну, Тверскую вы знаете? По Тверской шли тысячи людей, но я вам ручаюсь, что увидела она меня одного и поглядела не то что тревожно, а даже как будто болезненно. И меня поразила не столько ее красота, сколько необыкновенное, никем не виданное одиночество в глазах!”

Михаил Булгаков  
“Мастер и Маргарита”

“She turned from Tverskaya street onto a side road, and then turned around. You know Tverskaya street, right? Thousands of people were walking along Tverskaya, but I guarantee you that she noticed only me and looked not so much worrisome, but as if even somewhat painfully. And I was struck not so much by her beauty, as by the extraordinary, incomparable loneliness in her eyes!”

Mikhail Bulgakov

### “Master and Margarita”

In Mikhail Bulgakov’s masterpiece *Master and Margarita*, Woland - the Devil himself - visits 1930s Moscow. Woland is akin to Goethe’s Mephistopheles who is “part of the force that always wills evil and always does good” by making people see their own stupidity and corruptness.

One cannot visit Moscow today without noticing that the books which are most widely sold

in an abundance of different editions, are Bulgakov's. His apartment – a space that is used for exhibitions and poetry readings of young artists and writers – and four flights of stairs leading to it, are a cult place for Moscow's youth. There, in writings scribbled all over walls, doors and ceilings, the deep conflict between Russia's past, present and future is evident. "Woland, please come back to Moscow! We need you very much!" "Why chase after something which is already over?" And, most simple, yet profound, "The main thing is to understand."

Why does a writer who died in 1940, and whose cruel world ended along with collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, seemingly in no further need of satirizing due to its non-existence, become such a powerful symbol for so many of Moscow's young who visit his apartment? Perhaps, they realize that contemporary mythmaking about a "happy and glorious" Soviet past tends to conveniently forget terror, breadlines and brainwashing. Perhaps, Russia's transition to a new social order creates a sense of difficulty, makes things uncertain, does not readily offer

everyone an appropriate niche. Or, perhaps, the new generation that is emerging at the uneasy crossroads of Russian-style democracy, rapid Westernization and nostalgia for the recent past, so wants Bulgakov's Devil to return and teach it how to keep the march of those, who wish to reverse the course of time, from turning into another unending parade

And only Margarita looks on from the wall of apartment house at the Patriarch's pond. Margarita. Writer's muse. Adulteress. Witch. Savior, who is willing to bargain away her soul. Queen Margot, the hostess of Satan's ball. Margarita, an eternal woman in whose silent gaze are the yellow flowers – the first ones that appear in gray Moscow at winter's end to foreshadow the coming of another spring.