CHAPTER-IV

The Master and Margarita and The Tin Drum

A Comparative Analysis

Mikhail Bulgakov’s The Master and Margarita and Gunter Grass’ The Tin Drum reveal remarkable parallelism. Though both the works have different external colour, yet they display startling parallels and establish a pattern. On the outside, they appear deceptively different. The former is a fantastic story of Woland’s visits to Moscow along with his mates and the latter is shaped encyclopaedically and records a bleak family history of a three-year old drummer Oskar Matzerath. Bulgakov’s novel uses a complex version of the story-in-story structure. A historical narrative about Pontius Pilate and Yeshua-Ha-Nostri that deals with the latter’s crucifixion is interwoven with the more real story of Woland’s visit to Moscow during the rule of Stalin. Unlike the Moscow chapters, the four chapters about Pilate and Yeshua are continuous and coherent and spring from the minds of different characters. Chapter two is narrated by Woland to Berlioz and Ivan, chapter sixteen is dreamt by Margarita, and chapters twenty-five and twenty-six are excerpts from the Master’s novel. On the other hand, Grass’ novel questions the development of an individual from childhood to adulthood in a war-torn society. Here, Grass’ voyage to digest Nazism is as unsettled as the craziness of his hero Oskar. So, neither the plot seems particularly alike. The readers are also apprehensive about tagging the novels as magical realist works. Because Bulgakov and Grass tend to shy away from the more flamboyant juxtaposition of fantasy and reality as exploited by a few other staunchly
committed magical realist writers like Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Salman Rushdie, Angela Carter, Carlos Fuentes and others. But a close scrutiny of both the works will reveal an intimate interdependence between reality and fantasy in many pages of the novels which will consequently open up new vistas of interpretation in terms of theme, characterization, style and narrative technique, inherent in both the novels. The core part of both the works presents the negative aspects of human behaviour like power-worship, selfishness, cruelty, use of violence and terror, the exploitation of the commons etc. The present study throws light on their oneness of aim and interpretation.

**Magical Realism**

What drives Mikhail Bulgakov’s *The Master and Margarita* and Gunter Grass’ *The Tin Drum* into close proximity is the technique of magical realism that finds systematic expression in both the novels. It emerges from the stance and point of view taken by the authors and their narration. The authors mingle closely observed realistic elements and extravagant fantastic elements in their works. By taking the origins of the two novels into consideration, it emerges that Mikhail Bulgakov is the pioneer of this genre with his *The Master and Margarita* being written for twelve long years from 1928 to 1940 and Gunter Grass’ *The Tin Drum* saw the light of day in 1959. Though Grass’ novel was published earlier than Bulgakov’s, yet Bulgakov already finished several versions of his masterpiece before his death in 1940. Actually Russian magical realism was largely ignored in Western scholarship. Many Russian authors like Gogol, Viktor Pelevin, Venedikt Erofeev, Yevgeny Popov wrote in a style which had close affinity with Garcia Marquez’s magical realist technique of
narration, but these texts remained unexplored in terms of magical realism for a long period of time. Bulgakov’s popularity has attracted much critical attention in world literature, but his novel has hardly been cited as a seminal example of magical realism. It sets an excellent example as a major precursor to that modern literary movement. Grass is not directly influenced by Bulgakov, yet he unknowingly owes much to him and his novel shares the belief and optimism of Bulgakov for a healthy human society. Though not fully developed as magical realist novels, yet both the novels contain many passages where reality conflates with the supernatural. They use fantasy, abundantly and balance it with reality. Satan’s arrival to Moscow as Woland, Margarita’s transformation from a simple housewife to a witch as depicted in *The Master and Margarita* or Oskar’s refusal to grow beyond the age of three years, his “glass-slaying scream” (Grass *The Tin Drum* 213) mentioned in *The Tin Drum* are all manifestations of the fantastic imbibed into the mundane reality. The supernatural or magical is used to portray the individual’s power against the workings of politics. The characters fight against time, history and fate. In connection with *The Tin Drum*, Alfred D. White commented, “Grass’s novel, straddling realism and fantasy, goes beyond anything that can be achieved by purely realistic techniques” (91).

A magical realist text “contains an irreducible element of magic, something we cannot explain according to the laws of the universe as we know them” (Faris 167). It disrupts the ordinary logic of cause and effect. Satan’s arrival to Moscow as Woland, Margarita’s playing the role of a hostess in Woland’s midnight ball in Bulgakov’s *The Master and Margarita* or Oskar remaining an eternal three-year old drummer with clairvoyant power, his regular communication with Jesus and Satan, or
his applying fizz powder on Maria for sexual arousal in Grass' novel *The Tin Drum* are instances of obvious logical reversal.

Again, many magical realist fictions get engaged in creating idiosyncratic versions of the historical events which are firmly grounded in reality and they deviate from the officially sanctioned reality. What first appears as magic is sound justice and what seems to be reality is swindle, the demonic lie of an essentially distopic social structure. However, the material world is portrayed in a realistic and detailed manner. In these novels, there is transgression of genre boundaries and both the real and the magical world merge into each other. In many of these texts, as H. P. Duerr says, "...seeing takes place only if you smuggle yourself in between worlds, the world of ordinary people and that of the witches" (109). The boundaries between fact and fiction are blurred. In Bulgakov's novel, Woland and his retinue from the fantastic realm easily get assimilated to the real Moscow under Stalin. A simple housewife Margarita, who transforms into a witch, leads Master from a dingy apartment to eternal salvation. The mythical story of Jesus' crucifixion is delineated in a realistic tone. In *The Tin Drum*, Grass conflates the magical or mythical with the reality of Germany's fascist past. History is distorted into grotesque realities. Nazi crimes are literally represented with the aid of different manifestations of folk culture, myths and fairy-tale elements.

In magical realist texts, the readers experience a strange kind of verbal magic and it leads to linguistic nature of experience. Very often metaphors are made real. One striking example occurs in the very first chapter of *The Master and Margarita*. In that chapter, titled, "Never Talk to Strangers", Berlioz, Ivan and Woland are engaged in argumentative discussions regarding the existence of God. Berlioz negates the
existence of God, which Woland bluntly refutes. Woland again reiterates, "...man is mortal, but that's only half the problem. The trouble is that mortality sometimes comes to him so suddenly!" This comes true immediately after that scene, when Berlioz dies suddenly in an accident and his head is cut off by a speeding tram car. Another metaphorical expression that dominates the novel is, "manuscripts don't burn" (Bulgakov 22, 326). It suggests the indestructible power of literature over time. The Master burns the manuscripts of his unfinished novel in a frenzied moment, but later Woland reproduces it with his supernatural power and allows Master to finish it as well.

The Tin Drum is also not devoid of such verbal fantasy. One such example is cited here. Grass in his novel comments, "...Disaster can't be sealed in a cellar...it seeps into gas lines, invades every household..." (Grass, The Tin Drum 181). This means that the sense of guilt inflicts everybody. Like gas it enters into every household through the pipes and every German is implicated in the brutal extermination of the Jews in the gas chambers. After war, disaster is inevitable.

In these novels, the people exist in between the two worlds of life and death, magic and reality. Woland in Bulgakov's novel perfectly fits into this category. He belongs to the supernatural realm, but operates in the realistic world. He seems to be a ghost, devil, god or a Professor of Black Magic. Margarita is a simple housewife, but becomes a witch later. The Master is also on the threshold of life and death. Similarly in The Tin Drum, Oskar exhibits the dichotomies of life and death, Goethe and Rasputin, Apollo and Dionysus or Jesus and Satan. At one time, he is the eternal three-year old drummer and in the next, he becomes Jesus. He is a victim of Nazi atrocities as well as a perpetrator of Nazi ideologies. He is constantly traumatized by
the fear of Black Cook, which symbolizes collective guilt arising out of Germany’s horrific past. He frequently adapts to these conflicting roles in order to resolve all those mind-boggling ethical and moral issues. Thus in both the novels, metamorphoses are relatively common phenomena that embody the collision of the two different worlds. In Bulgakov’s novel it is more prominent than the other novel. Here, a series of metamorphoses take place. Apart from Woland and Margarita, the poet Ivan becomes a schizophrenic dreamer. At the end of the novel, the earthly Moscow turning into a kind of burning Hell is also metamorphic in spirit.

If we trace the history of magical realism, it becomes evident that magical realism flourished in all the troubled regions of the world, where only metaphorical language can save a writer from extreme censorship. Both Grass and Bulgakov made extensive use of metaphorical expressions in order to represent the naked, grim realities of life. They exposed the unrealities of the totalitarian regimes. Bulgakov wrote under the autocratic rule of Stalin. The extreme phase of Stalin’s terror saw the banning of Bulgakov’s several plays. Because he wrote about the terror of Stalin’s reign. Bulgakov knew that only metaphorical language can evade the readers and save him from persecution. Because, *The Master and Margarita* was a tool for him to attack Stalin’s government. So, magical realism made Bulgakov’s task easy. In the novel, the grotesque reality lurks beneath the pure fantasy. Lesley Milne, in this connection said, “...Bulgakov’s novel is a story about itself: the story of how a text, written against the spirit of the time in which it is composed, survives against all the odds in a fantastic realm that exists in parallel to the ‘real world’” (94). Similarly, Grass is tormented by the post-war guilty consciousness of Germany arising out of Hitler’s totalitarian Nazi rule. It attempts to recreate the chaotic real world during the
Second World War that puts a burden of guilt on each and every German for their total denial or silence about Nazi atrocities meted out to the Jews.

Like a true magical realist fiction, in The Master and Margarita, the readers can observe time displacement. The characters travel through space and time. Two worlds exist in parallel, one is the present world and the other is the eternal one. The idea that Yeshua could read Master’s novel is an obvious negation of time linearity. Woland walks freely through space and time. The Tin Drum also has two dominant time lines, representing a double progression of time: one deal with Oskar’s stay as an inmate in a mental asylum and the other deals with the actual historical events before, during and after the Second World War that Oskar documents in his memoir. Thus the narratives of both the novels are not linear, but labyrinthine with ample digressions, references and monologues.

Panoramic View of Society

In terms of theme, the two books mirror each other almost exactly. There lies a deeper similarity in the approach the writers, Bulgakov and Grass take up in their two societies. Both the novels are biting satire on socio-political scenario of their times. They convey bitter messages about the moral compromises made by ordinary people in times of political turmoil. The novels criticize the emptiness of modern society. They are the guardians of objective truths. Facts are facts no matter how awkward or unwanted they are and both the writers set up bulwark against the political extremity of totalitarianism. They are not afraid of embracing the awkward truths of life. In The Master and Margarita, Russia under the totalitarian leadership of Stalin and in The Tin Drum, Nazi dehumanization and postwar prosperities of Germany are sharply
satirized for their fakes, frauds and complacencies. Peter Arnds comments about Bulgakov and Grass' intention, "Grass connects, not through influence but as part of a closely knit universe of texts, with Michel Tournier and Mikhail Bulgakov and their use of myth to approach the literary representation of totalitarianism" (53). Grass opines that a contemporary writer is one who:

exposes himself to vicissitudes, gets involved, and takes sides. The dangers of such involvement and side-taking are known: the writer's objectivity may be lost; his language is tempted to live from hand to mouth; the narrowness of present circumstances may prove confining to his imaginative powers. (Grass, Two States 118)

Despite these dangers, both Bulgakov and Grass take sides against political authoritarianism in their respective novels. Due to their outspoken social criticism, Bulgakov's several works were banned and Grass was also labelled as traitor in his own country. Although Oskar's grotesque story-telling shocks readers, yet the readers soon realize that his amorality, his manipulative power, and his pursuit of money reflect the true nature of other Germans during the Third Reich and the post-war years.

*The Master and Margarita* is a store house of stinging satirical passages. Laura D. Weeks writes about the novel, "It is certainly topical, that is, it reflects the purely Russian conditions of the twenties and thirties-the housing crisis, the state-controlled economy, the early years of terror under Stalin" (5). Bulgakov's targets in his novel are Stalin, his corrupt bureaucrats, officials, anti-religious government agenda, fake litterateurs and selfish Muscovites, who made Moscow a modern hell.
The city was plagued with numerous problems like housing shortages, kidnapping, extortion and so on. Stalinist Moscow and the city’s cannibalized literary circles victimized the common people and acted as tools to suppress art and the people’s consciousness. It’s an allegory of Russian intellectual history in the 20th century. The novel is rather pitiless in its exposure of the greed, corruption and mendacity of human nature with the aid of fantasy and supernatural elements. It draws inspiration from Gogol’s treatment of social reality through fantasy and this stylistic trait of the novel encourages Ellendea Proffer to comment:

_Only in the 1960’s did works offering a combination of fantasy and satire come into fashion again in the West- along with witches, astrology, flowers, and black humorists. Barth’s Giles Goat-Boy, Heller’s Catch-22, Vonnegut’s Player Piano, and Grass’s Tin Drum all have something of the spirit of The Master and Margarita.... (390)_

In _The Tin Drum_, Grass is engaged in finding cure for the German conscience burdened with memories of Holocaust initiated by Hitler. Saul Friedlander observes in this respect, “For the last forty years, Germans belonging to at least two generations have been caught between the impossibility of remembering and the impossibility of forgetting Nazism and the Holocaust” (2). Grass endeavours to demystify the past in his novel.

**Criteria of Bildungsroman**

Both the novels contain elements of Kunstlerroman, a sub-genre of Bildungsroman and this aspect can yield many other important insights into the novels. Kunstlerromans are artist novels. _The Master and Margarita_ can be
interpreted as a Kunstlerroman if the novel is analyzed as a dream experienced by Ivan Bezdomny. From that angle, the novel becomes a literary journey of Ivan from immaturity to spiritual maturity, through a series of schizophrenic dream sequences.

Ivan is another artist like Oskar. He is a struggling poet. According to Judith Mills, the novel is a metaphor of Ivan's own story. It is “the tale of how he comes to deal with creativity, solves the problem of coping with Stalinist society, reconciles himself to reality... and then works out a self-justification for his accommodation” (306).

Initially, Ivan is projected as a parody of the Fools in Christ. He appears untidy, confused and always stumbling on the truth. After his baptism in the Moscow River, he appears clothed in rags and warns his colleagues in the Gribovedov House about Satan's arrival to the city. Later he is arrested and put in a psychiatric clinic. Being traumatized by Berlioz's death or being unable to convince his fellow poets about the arrival of Woland to Moscow, Ivan finally finds himself confined to a mental clinic. His situation becomes deplorable and he relentlessly cries. Storm and lightning torment him. But slowly he regains his mental stability as he intimates with the Master. In the chapter, Time to Go, Ivan is not crying and is in a much jovial mood. When the Master and Margarita come to bid him farewell before their journey to the spiritual realm, he says joyfully, “Oh, it's you! I've been waiting for you! It's you, my neighbor!” His mental horizon widens. His perception of the world in and around him undergoes drastic change. He again says, “I have come to understand a lot of things since I've been lying here.” Poetry no longer fascinates him and he renounces his former vocation of writing poetry. He is now a man of greater moral integrity than most of the Muscovites. He tells Master, “I want to write something quite different.” Feeling encouraged by Ivan's positivity, the Master requests him to write the sequel
of his novel. Later, from a minor poet, Ivan becomes a Professor in the Institute of History and Philosophy. He gradually matures. Being a Professor, he "...knows and understands everything" (Bulgakov 420, 420, 420, 441).

Similarly, The Tin Drum is also a typical example of Kunstlerroman. It narrates the story of Oskar's development from immaturity to growth and development. He is an artist; a drummer, who drums away the horrors of Nazi brutality in order to confront it in a guiltless way. Patricia Merivale in her essay "Saleem Fathered by Oskar: Midnight's Children, Magic Realism, and The Tin Drum" opined, "The Tin Drum and Midnight's Children are, of course, both Bildungsromans—indeed Kunstlerromans—as well as genealogical allegorizings of historical and metatextual particularities" (332). But Grass' novel is a Kunstlerromans with a twist. The novel primarily appears as a part parodic antibildungsroman. Because, the hero Oskar resolves to remain the three-year old drummer without any prospect of development and maturity. Alexander Gelley terms it as a, "Bildungsroman in reverse" (124). However, in the chapter, titled, "Should I or Shouldn't I", Oskar welcomes a new facet of his personality. During the burial of Alfred Matzerath, he relinquishes his earlier self and opts for growth. He throws the drum into the grave of Matzerath. It is mentioned in the novel, "...the sand covered that too with more sand, with more and more sand, sand gathered on my drum, piled higher, and grew—and I too began to grow, which was announced by a violent nosebleed" (387). Critic Edward Diller thus concludes, "This all signifies rebirth for Oskar, who is described as covered with blood, seized in trauma, growing rapidly, shocked with pain, and taken by fever" (95). Oskar's wild and convoluted exploits expand ever outward in a labyrinthine way in the novel and he grows in remarkable...
ways giving the readers a prismatic view of life and world events not simply restricted
to a child’s outlook for life. He grows and discovers what is it that makes up life. At
the end, Oskar ruminates about his own mental self, “... he’s older, more mature”
(560).

The growth of the heroes from immaturity to maturity is not complete and
inconclusive in both the novels. There is still something that is beyond the control of
both Ivan and Oskar. At the end of *The Master and Margarita*, Ivan is still tormented
by the appearance of full moon and he grows uneasy and irritable and *The Tin Drum*
also ends with the total nervous breakdown experienced by Oskar on his thirtieth
birthday as he is totally weakened by his fear of Black Cook and these put a question
mark on the overall impression of the novels as *Kunstlerromans*. Actually both
Bulgakov and Grass bore witness to the horrors of their own historical age and to
sweep those horrors away was almost impossible for them. It lingered on and on.
There was no respite from these horrific experiences arising out of the totalitarian
atrocities of Stalin and Hitler respectively. Both Ivan and Oskar failed to negate that
lingering threat from their own individual psyche. They suffered because they tried to
live both in the worlds of their imagination and in the more real earthly world. Edythe
Haber presents the most appropriate assessment of Ivan’s character that mirrors
Oskar’s predicament too. Haber writes:

> On the surface it appears that the former poet, now professor of
> History and Philosophy, Prof. Ponyrev, has been cured of his earlier
> schizophrenia. In other words, he has become an acceptable member
> of Soviet society....But his normalcy is more apparent than real. For
during the spring full moon Ivan Nikolaevich’s reason loses its power;
he grows restless and dreams strange dreams. In other words, the schizophrenia is still in force. Indeed, it seems that such an illness is inevitable in one who has visions of higher truth and yet is striving to survive in the earthly sunlit world. In the person of Ivan Homeless, Bulgakov seems to be suggesting that the Pilate-like double life is bound to appear in the Soviet artist or intellectual who tries to live both in the world of his imagination and in the atheistic and oppressive everyday world. (407)

**Religious Significance**

The two novels discuss certain religious issues with satirical tone. Like *The Master and Margarita*, *The Tin Drum* also parodies God and installs Satan as the central figure. But there is definite purpose for that. The novels correspond to one of the central ideas of Goethe’s *Faust* that the devil is necessary to keep man striving. Immorality and amorality are the two sides of the same coin. The forces of Christ and Satan are entirely coequal. Ellenda Proffer views, “...*unless a man is presented with the opportunity of doing evil, good cannot triumph. Untested goodness is merely inertia*”(410). That’s why Woland, in spite of being the devil, always a force for good and Oskar also oscillates between the role of Jesus and Satan and negotiates between rationalism and irrationalism. In this connection, Peter Arnds reviews *The Tin Drum*:

Grass’s book aims for a union between Apollo and Dionysus, between rationalism in the tradition of Socrates and the Enlightenment and an irrationalism steeped in myth, in marked contrast to the monologous
pseudo-scientific rationalism as Vernunft ("reason") in the Adenauer period, which interpreted Nazism solely as irrational. (164)

Stalin was an atheist. He believed that religion was an opiate that should be removed in order to construct the ideal communist society. Anti-religious propaganda was totally encouraged during his time in Moscow. Many people were non-believers of God. But Bulgakov’s worldview is different from that. He believes that God and Devil coexist. Unlike the traditional Christian view, good and evil are not forever battling it out until the final reckoning. There is a balance of power of these two aspects in the universe. Woland brings this balance. He is modelled on Satan. He does not play the role of a devil, but is a purveyor of truth. Contradiction is at the heart of all aspects of life like, attraction and repulsion, creation and destruction and these aspects appear as good or bad to men. Moral concepts are only one facet of the whole. What is more necessary is activity, which is the ultimate surge of life. Woland himself represents immorality and amorality equally in the novel. He says to Matthew the Levite:

You spoke your words as though you denied the very existence of the shadows or of evil. Think, now: where would your good be if there were no evil and what would the world look like without shadow? Shadows are thrown by people and things. There’s the shadow of my sword, for instance. But shadows are also cast by trees and living things. Do you want to strip the whole globe by removing every tree and every creature to satisfy your fantasy of a bare world? You’re stupid. (405)
Similarly, in *The Tin Drum*, Oskar directs his insanity against the church. His situation lacks a centre and he continually moves between the poles-between Satan and Jesus. Oskar himself confirms that in the novel, when he says, "...I am at home in neither the sacred nor the profane, and in consequence am housed on the fringes..." (Grass, *The Tin Drum* 133). Oskar believes that he is Jesus but he constantly communicates with Satan too and thereby resists the full-blown reenactment of Jesus. This way, like Bulgakov, Grass too uses the combination of incompatible elements in order to bring into forefront the inner workings of a person's mind in a repressed society. Both good and bad aspects are necessary in order to understand each other's significance.

*Autobiographical Note*

In both the novels, Bulgakov and Grass relived their eventful past. The novels are poignantly personal and autobiographical in certain passages. Elements of both Bulgakov and Grass's life are incorporated in their respective novels. In *The Master and Margarita*, Bulgakov accurately presents the picture of Moscow of the thirties with its people and problems. It is his familiar, beloved and fully explored native place. Bulgakov pays poetic tribute to Moscow in his novel. He creates the urban topography of Moscow so reliably that even today a reader can easily find the bench on which both Berlioz and Bezdomny sat with "their backs to Bronnaya Street" (14) in the very first chapter, "Never Talk to Strangers" or can follow Ivan over the entire route of his chase after the devil's party from Patriarch's Street through Nikita's Gate to Arbat Square and then finally to Griboyedov House as described in the chapter, "The Pursuit". The novel reflects the literary adversities of Bulgakov in a tragic way.
Master's character is the most notable for its autobiographical traits. Like Bulgakov, Master is also a symbol of persecuted artist in the Soviet state. Like Bulgakov, he too was subjected to intense feeling of alienation and entrapment in a repressed environment.

Similarly, Grass's fictional work is set in his native city Danzig. He knows Danzig inside out. He imposes upon the readers an enormous reservoir of historical information or geographical specifications pertaining to that city. Oskar's multiple parentage reflects Danzig's own confused and topsy-turvy socio-political situations. Along with The Tin Drum, Cat and Mouse and Dog Years are termed as Danzig Trilogy of Grass and they deal with the interwar and postwar period in the free city of Danzig, which is now known as Gdansk.

**Art vs. Society**

An underlying theme that pervades both the novels is the ultimate triumph of genuine art over every aspect of life. Art and literature can withstand the onslaught of time and are eternal. These cannot be controlled or obliterated forever. Bulgakov died believing the indestructible power of art. In The Master and Margarita, only the Master's novel makes it till the end. Even after being destroyed, it reemerges like a phoenix. Initially it fails to get recognition from the literary circle and Master destroys it. But at the end, he is able to finish his masterpiece. The work transcends the material world and belongs only to the metaphysical world, where only Master and Margarita can have access to that. Bulgakov's portrayal of the artist's role in society is to an extent influenced by the Romantic heritage. J. A. E. Curtis writes in this connection:
The Romantic artist, however, is also frequently portrayed as the victim of an uncomprehending society, persecuted in the idealistic pursuit of his vision, and doomed for the sake of his art. His sacred ideal is often in the end unattainable, which is why so many portrayals of Romantic heroes seem to verge on the ironic. The Romantic concern is with noble failures rather than heroic successes. (196)

In *The Tin Drum*, art has the power to defeat all evils in human society. Here, art is primarily contrasted with war. The protagonist Oskar is a musician and a true artist. He perceives everything artistically and aesthetically. Even his mother’s coffin impresses him for its exquisite taper. He finds his metal bed in the mental asylum really fascinating because of its ideal whiteness. He escapes war by devoting himself to drumming. He even manages to disrupt the Nazi rallies by drumming that sets the audience dancing. In order to prove himself innocent and to recapture the Nazi realities authentically, he later gets engaged in memoir writing. Art provides him the means to escape from the grim realities of the Second World War and the Holocaust and gives real solace. Though Oskar engages himself in different artistic pursuits like a tombstone carver, a model of Madonna 49, yet it is as drummer and writer that he finds his real artistic fulfillment. He evokes the rebellion of real art. True art embodies free spirit and this quality makes art all powerful. So, from the very beginning, the Nazis burnt books and degenerated art. Oskar’s drumming brilliantly captures the true conscience of the war-torn German society. Alexander Gelley aptly remarks, "[...] the novel as a whole becomes a critique of art, an allegory of its problematic life in this age, and a search for what is still possible" (123).
Novel about Novel

From another angle, both the novels are critical discourse on creating literature or writing novels. The Master and Margarita is a novel about writing novel. It records the heroic struggle of a writer to write a novel amidst strict censorship and oppression. Despite rejection and mockery, Master creates a powerful picture of reality. Despite his burning of the manuscript, the story of Pontius Pilate refuses to die. The details of Master’s creative process as well as the story he creates are presented throughout Bulgakov’s novel as powerful and greater than material reality. The novel within a novel motif creates a metaphorized version of the struggles of all authors. It is no longer clear which story is taking place within which, as the boundaries between the two texts are very often blurred. Because Master’s story about Pontius Pilate frequently comes from others-Woland narrates it, Ivan remembers it and becomes a parallel reality with Moscow story. Similarly in the very first chapter of Grass’s novel, Oskar is preoccupied with giving shape to his memoir. He is ready with his ream of paper, “I lifted the resilient stack for a moment and tested its weight. Then I counted off ten sheets and stored the rest in my bedside table. I found the fountain pen by my photo album in the drawer: it’s full, it won’t fail for lack of ink; how shall I begin?” He records his life-story in his memoir in a detailed manner. Even when Oskar is mentally disturbed, his inner voice never fails to push him this way, “Keep on writing, Oskar....” Occasionally, he discourses upon his skill of writing and the relaxations he enjoys in the process. Oskar says, “even if I’m not satisfied, Oskar’s pen has every right to be, for in its succinct summary it has managed, as succinctly summarising treatises often do, to embellish now and then, if not to lie” (Grass, The
Throughout the novel, Oskar meditates on the creation of his memoir. Thus, in a sense *The Tin Drum* is also a novel about writing memoir.

**Rhythm of Jazz**

Both the authors illustrate well that Jazz has a liberating function from oppression. Jazz gives tragicomic hope amidst fascist ideologies. In *The Master and Margarita*, the jazz music acts as a carnivalesque form of resistance to the autocracy of Stalin. In the Griboyedov House, Jazz roars loudly:

> On the stroke of midnight the first of these rooms suddenly woke up and leaped into life with a crash and a roar. A thin male voice gave a desperate shriek of 'Alleluia!!' Music. It was the famous Griboyedov jazz band striking up. Sweat-covered faces lit up, the painted horses on the ceiling came to life, the lamps seemed to shine brighter. Suddenly, as though bursting their chains, everybody in the two rooms started dancing, followed by everybody on the verandah. (74)

Later, in the famous restaurant of Griboyedov House, Woland gives his satanic ball and there the incredibly loud music of the jazz band roars through its vaults, which is reminiscent of Grass’ nightclub Onion Cellar with its own jazz band. Margarita witnesses that:

> in a gap in the wall of roses was a man bouncing up and down on a ‘stage in a red swallow-tail coat, conducting an unbearably loud jazz band. As soon as he saw Margarita he bent down in front of her until
his hands touched the floor, then straightened up and said in a piercing yell:

'Alleluia! (Emphasis added) (300)

In the postwar era, Oskar first becomes a stonemason, then an artist's model and eventually a jazz percussionist at the nightclub Onion Cellar where the Germans come to mourn by forcefully crying over onions for their acute sense of guilt. Oskar's drumming has an Orpheus-like power that affects the people's souls and induces them to cry openly. There “People wept. At long last, people wept again. Wept openly, wept without restraint, wept honestly. The tears flowed and washed everything away.” Oskar, along with his fellow musicians Klepp and Scholle lead the guests to true orgies with their music. Their drumming helps the ladies and gentlemen to spontaneous outburst of their emotions and to shed, “... big, round, children's tears.” It liberates them from every kind of emotional oppression. Ultimately, they beg Oskar for “mercy, so that to comfort them, and helped them back into their clothes, their underwear, their silk and satin....” (Grass, The Tin Drum 503, 510, 510). In the chapter, “The Grandstand”, Oskar single-handedly disperses a Nazi party rally from inside a rostrum by drumming to the rhythm of a Charleston ‘Jimmy the Tiger’ and dissolves every form of uniformity. So, Jazz has the potential to resist the stifling of democracy and to give carnivalesque and tragicomic hope in the face of anarchy and totalitarianism.

**Narrative Style and Technique**

Both the novels are characterized by great narrative complexity. The Master and Margarita primarily employs a third-person narrative, whereas, Grass tells a first-
person episodic story. Nevertheless, the narrators, very often, alternate between the first person and third person. The authors move back and forth from a more omniscient third-person narrator to a more personal first-person narrator. The first-person narrative is used as a way to directly convey the deeply internal, otherwise unspoken thoughts of the narrator. The third-person narrator provides greatest flexibility to the author as he or she can comment on any topic in anywhere and at any time. In *The Master and Margarita*, the narrator makes himself visible and starts talking directly to the readers and refers to himself in first person. The following piece of conversation from the very first chapter of the novel has exchange of dialogues from the perspectives of both the first-person and third-person narrators. It takes place when Woland makes appearance before Berlioz and Ivan at Patriarch’s Ponds:

'Excuse me, please,' said the stranger with a foreign accent, although in correct Russian, 'for permitting myself, without an introduction...but the subject of your learned conversation was so interesting that...'

Here he politely took off his beret and the two friends had no alternative but to rise and bow.

'No, probably a Frenchman....' thought Berlioz.

'A Pole,' thought Bezdomny.

*I should add that the poet had found the stranger repulsive from first sight, although Berlioz had liked the look of him, or rather not exactly liked him but, well...been interested by him.* (Bulgakov 17)
In Gunter Grass’s *The Tin Drum* too Oskar, primarily being a first-person narrator tries to be more objective by employing the third-person narrative mode for those important scenes in which he is not present to have viewed the events in first person. The following paragraphs from the second chapter of the novel, titled *Under the Raft* will substantiate the above point:

*IT’S NOT SO EASY,* lying here in the scrubbed metal bed of a mental institution, within range of a glazed peephole armed with Bruno’s eye... If I didn’t have my drum, which, when handled properly and patiently, recalls all the little details...and if I didn’t have the institute’s permission to let my drum speak...I would be a poor fellow with no known grandparents.

*At any rate my drum says:* *On that October afternoon in eighteen ninety-nine...beneath four skirts of a single colour...short but stout Joseph Koljaiczek begot my mother Agnes.\*

*Anna Bronski, my grandmother, changed her name under cover of that very night’s darkness, transformed herself...into Anna Koljaiczek, and followed Joseph...to the provincial capital on the Mottlau, where Joseph found work as a raftsman and temporary respite from the rural police.*

*Just to heighten the suspense somewhat, I won’t name that city at the mouth of the Mottlau just yet, though as my mother’s birthplace it would certainly deserve mention at this point. At the end of July nineteen hundred-they were deciding to double the construction plans*
Here, Oskar becomes an omniscient narrator assuming an all knowing perspective on the story, engages in private thoughts, narrating secrets or hidden truths and jumping between space and time. As a result, omniscient narrative mode enhances the sense of objective reliability and truthfulness of the plot. The free and abrupt shift from the autobiographical first person to the third person creates an "ironic distance" (Ireland 339) between the narrator and the narration as well as between the narrator and the readers. Thus, both the authors tactfully employ pseudo-objective narrative voice in many passages of the novels and provide many clues to the themes of the novels. They also use lunatics as commentators who say something cogent to the supposedly sane world. Ivan and Master in The Master and Margarita are inmates in a mental institution where they are treated for schizophrenia. Grass's Oskar is also a lunatic child and thoroughly unreliable. In fact, a madman's different views about reality can transform the world into his own delusional version of reality but in the process end up telling things in a defamiliarized way that a sane man with vested interest may very likely ignore, repress or bluntly deny. They create fluidity of perspective which is an inherent quality of magical realist fictions. The narrators confront horrific reality with insane delusion and grotesque shifts of perspectives enable them to fuse the historical with the marvellous.

Last but not the least; the novels resist closure and leave the readers in uncertainty. In The Master and Margarita, why Ivan still suffers during full moon, even after the departure of Woland and his party has no logical answer. How Master and Margarita are rewarded with eternal rest without light is doubtful at the end. In
The Tin Drum, the ultimate fate of Oskar is not known to the readers. Whether, he is released from the mental hospital or not remains questionable till the end. The readers desperately seek the explanations for these arguments at the end of the novels. The novels remain open-ended in a true postmodern fashion.

In sum, both Bulgakov and Grass' backgrounds or approaches differ considerably, but certain key aspects remain in common. They do not abandon the task of sending ideological messages. They seem determined to write about their tragic and horrific past arising out of authoritarianism and make the readers see the transcendental view of reality behind the magical veil of concealment. They are equally concerned with the relations of the visible world to the invisible meanings and finally their magical realism reinvigorates the realistic modes of narration.
Works Cited


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