

What defines
protagonist's identity
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Mikhail Bulgakov's *Master and Margarita* and Manuel Puig's *Kiss of the Spider Woman* are concentrated with developing humans' identities, through ambiguous speeches and culpable actions. Conversely to Puig's protagonist Molina who sacrifices himself for love, Bulgakov creates the master whose egocentric desires for public recognition leads to loss of inspiration and eventually to self-destruction, which as a result makes him apathetic towards the world. These modernist texts were written during regime period, therefore all the characters suffer from despotism of others - in more control. Manuel Puig who didn't support Juan Peron, the president of Argentina in 1970s, was oppressed in his home county, and forced to leave it. Similarly to Puig, Mikhail Bulgakov suffered from Soviet regime in Russia; by 1927 he experienced hard criticism that he was too anti-Soviet, thus by 1930s he couldn't get his works published, due to censorship.

Therefore both works portray protagonists in jeopardy, hence helping the reader to examine protagonists' human weaknesses and victories over others. In both works the characters within the texts are challenged on their faith and desires, to show the strength and abilities of human kind. The titles and character's names in each novel hints to the reader of the enigmatic characters' identities and conflict with society. The opening lines contrast Bulgakov's exactness (minuteness) and Puig's narrative flow. Unlike to Puig's work, *The Master and Margarita's* title concentrates on the love story of two protagonists, whereas *Kiss of the Spider Woman* suggests (insinuates) a contradictory meaning, which doesn't, become clear until the end. Moreover every name in *The Master and Margarita* clues the reader of that character's qualities.

For example, Bulgakov names the protagonist "the master" his name is never capitalized, hence it's not a name, this generalization demonstrates that he's an everyman artist. Like Bulgakov, the master suffers from government regime and censorship, hence is forced to hide his identity. The external conflict with society is present in both novels, therefore all characters are forced to adapt to the new rules set by the government, which makes them oppressed in the society. Also Bulgakov made the master nameless to foreshadow his internal conflict of not recognition, when he abandons his name "I am a master... I no longer have a name..

. I have renounced life itself" (159), exemplifies his carelessness towards life without approbation from society that he "renounced it" and desires to be separated from the society. Furthermore author's heroine gave him this name as an attempt to praise his work by naming him Master, which is ironic because only she liked his work. That contrasts with Puig's (obscure) unclear title which foreshadows the element of passion.

Similarly to first movie told by Molina "The Panther Women", the spider woman's kiss leads to death. Therefore conveys author's motif of dangerous love. In the first chapter, the author presents the panther woman, Irina, whose name means peaceful, which is ironic because she eventually kills her lover. The panther woman is forced to hide her identity, which is similar to Molina's inner conflict " - who do you identify with?.

. Always with the heroine. " (25) he's a women that is trapped in men's body. Consequently this quote builds suspense and emphasizes his eccentric characteristic, which is the result of his inner conflict. Every movie heroine in

this novel parallels Molina feeling and attitude toward Valentin, hence creates a unique personality, which contrasts with master's apathy. Both characters are developed in unique manner by writers of these works to demonstrate protagonist's hidden conflicts and struggles; however, in contrast to Molina's faithfulness towards Valentin, Master loses his devotion and interest towards art and existence.

By convention these characters' identities depend on their endeavors, both good and bad. Each text has an unconventional turning point of each character's identity that defines them as human beings, however in *The Master and Margarita* the story is told by the master himself, hence its climax happens before the novel begins. In Bulgakov's novel, the climax occurs in the first appearance of master, immediately emphasizing protagonist's pessimism towards world and love for example, " Love leaped up out at us like a murderer jumping out of a dark alley"(162) the use of simile and anthropomorphism demonstrates love as noxious and sudden, hence it has negative connotation which demonstrates pessimism.

Bulgakov's uses story telling when describes turning point in Master's past, when he burns manuscripts, this unconventional approach is done to emphasize the injustice towards art and expressions, in the setting. To demonstrate this " the appalling failure of my novel seemed to have withered part of my soul" (167), this metaphor demonstrates the loss of master's identity through the destroyed soul.

The importance of public recognition is prevailing in this novel. The alternative turning point in *Kiss of the spider woman* is chapter eight, when the reader finds out about Molina's betrayal, creates new dimension to the <https://assignbuster.com/what-defines-protagonists-identity-in-the-master-and-margarita-and-kiss-of-the-spider-woman/>

novel, hence builds suspense and makes all Molina's speeches ambiguous. For instance " You'll see. One of these days you'll be the sick one and I'll get even" (104), it foreshadows of Valenin's sickness, which builds suspense. In chapter five, Puig emphasizes that Molina knows more when talks about his sickness " someday this could happen to you, then you'll see how it feels..." (97).

However the sudden shift in the novel, leads to role reversal, when Molina tries to get food for Valentin, when he gets sick from poisoned rice, thus leading the male role of savior. This is similar to Bulgakov's intrepid heroine Margarita when she fights with Woland for the master's freedom. However, in contrast to the master's egoism and apathy, Valentin becomes more sensual and caring. The climax of two texts in sudden and unpredictable, that shapes the entire narrative and builds suspense. Each text proves that self-sacrifice is essential quality of each identity, Bulgakov demonstrates on the example of his protagonist that apathy towards others leads to loss of character.

Bulgakov's heroine sells her soul to find master, " I'd sell my soul to devil to know whether he's alive or not" (256), this foreshadows to her transformation to witch, furthermore the motif of self-sacrifice demonstrates her desire to see the master. Ironically it contrasts with him, whose egoism prevails over other human qualities, because he stops trying and relies on destiny; hence it leads to loss of identity and any interest towards others. For instance the master isn't interested in Ivan after finds that he was a poet, which demonstrates his lethargy towards others who succeeded in their works. Contrary to Puig's character, Molina, who " sacrifice(s) anything for <https://assignbuster.com/what-defines-protagonists-identity-in-the-master-and-margarita-and-kiss-of-the-spider-woman/>

that ... (to) be able to care for mom" (253), illustrating his feminine roots and portrays him as a passionate and brave character, which is similar to Margarita. Furthermore, in chapter fourteen, Molina sacrifices himself for Valentin " you have to give me all the information.

.. You have to tell me everything I have to do" (263) his reverence toward Valentin, is a form of atonement for his earlier betrayal of friendship. To exemplify this: " Warden: Was it helpful to have him weakened physically or no? (150), Molina mends his lover, after he poisons him, this device leads to role reversal. The motif of self-sacrifice prevails in both novels, however only Molina and Margarita sacrifice themselves for others, hence they have strong identities, in opposition to Master.

+ valentine Both authors demonstrate devout and sinful characters, however only the feminine characters in both texts, are the ones who fight for justice and love, in contrast to masculine protagonist that stay static. Bulgakov's protagonist loses human qualities and becomes apathetic to the world. When Master burns his novel " I took the heavy typescript copies of the novel ... and started to burn them" (169), he burns all negative emotions that are associated with this book; hence he loses a part of himself, his faith and becomes indifferent. Therefore in last chapter author emphasizes that Master " has not earned light but has earned rest" (406), it demonstrates Master's only sin is despondency and lassitude, because he stops trying. It contrasts with Margarita and her successful attempt to save Master from the mental hospital. Master suffers meaningless life without recognition and when publishers reject his work he becomes indifferent to everything.

In contrast to Puig's protagonists, Master doesn't create any devout actions, which is used widely in this novel and builds suspense. Both these characters demonstrate the oppression in society, one is oppressed for his beliefs, other for being sexually different. Bulgakov created Master character to represent the artistic society in Soviet Russia, because it suffered from a hard totalitarian regime the most; he's an unknown character with no definitive nature, he embodies aristocratic artists, without definite pursuit. Both texts repeatedly demonstrate that all actions are meaningful and lead to some major events, the exception is the Master who becomes reserved and just waits for something to happen. In Bulgakov's novel, Margarita plays the role of a leader and creates a contrast to powerless lover.

In both of these novels the individuals in the setting are oppressed and powerless, hence all protagonists suffer government regime. Similarly to Molina, Bulgakov's heroine demonstrates strong character and passion for her lover. These modernist texts illustrate character's identities, when characters are in jeopardy. Similarly to Master and Margarita, both characters in *Kiss of the Spider Woman* stay loyal to their sexual partner. Furthermore all the characters in the novels stay faithful to their partners and pursuits, with an exception of Master, who burns everything he believed in.

In both works the characters within the text are challenged on their faith and desires, hence this determines their identity.