

Title: Telephones, Patephones, Radio: The Phonic World of Mikhail Bulgakov's *Master and Margarita*

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Abstract:

This paper examines the phonic world of Mikhail Bulgakov's *Master and Margarita* by focusing on new sound technologies, as they inflect the propagation, meaning, and ideology of sound in the Soviet 1920s-1930s. By studying the history of telephony in early twentieth-century Russian culture, the talk traces the progression between the earlier manual telephone exchange in Russia, reflected in the structure of Bulgakov's satirical play "Po telefonu," "On the Phone" (1924), and the newer mechanical automatic telephone systems, recast in Bulgakov's *Master and Margarita*. Unreliable and unpredictable, the telephone system creates a ghostly space where disembodied voices sound as if coming from beyond the grave. Dehumanizing and associated with death, Bulgakov's telephones become tools of both sorcery and Soviet power. Threats, libels, and lies are institutionally acceptable, not only in written form, but also in telephone calls, as seen, for instance, in Koroviev's phone denunciation of Nikanor Ivanovich Bosoi. Thus, black magic and Soviet power seem to coexist perfectly in the telephone medium as a valorized Soviet technology. The novel further coopts the new media of the patephone and the radio to transmit the imperial sound culture (Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*) into a new Soviet phonic world. Ultimately, new sound media magically, technologically, and ideologically conquer space and exert Soviet power in Bulgakov's fiction.