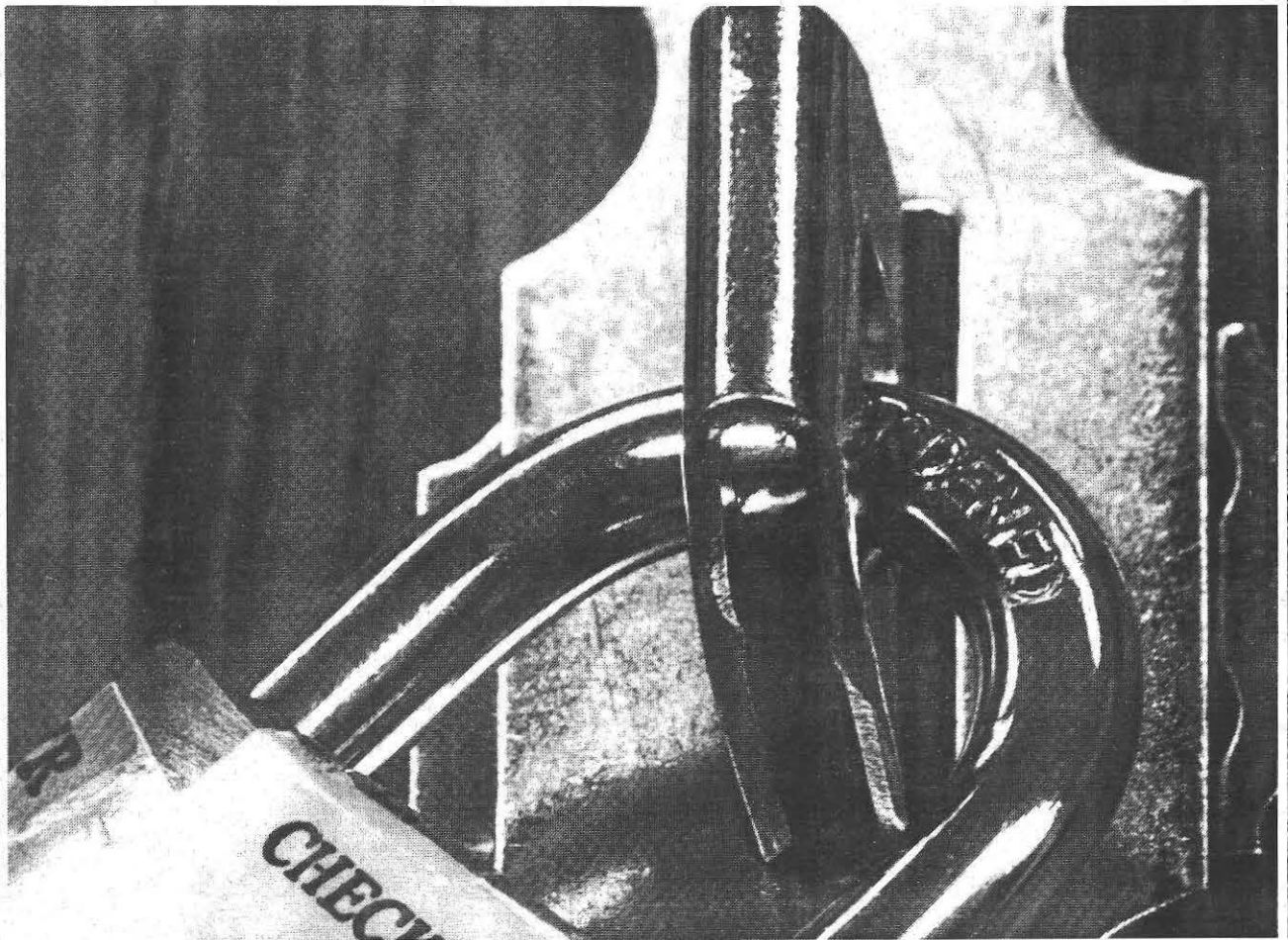


the Promethean

A Forum for Literature and Arts

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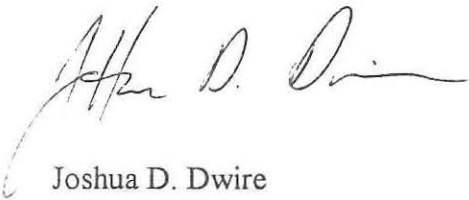
The Promethean
Joshua Dwire, *Editor-in-chief*
Steven Jackson, Chris Martin,
Andy Werth.

From the Editor...

I would like to thank all of *The Promethean* staff and Dr. Wright for their dedication towards this project. The deadlines were quick to come, but with the help of Steve Jackson, Chris Martin, Andrew Werth, and Dr. Wright, the 1995 Spring Term edition of *The Promethean* was able to be born.

Well, it's the end of another term, and summer vacation is creeping up on us fast. Not only is it the end of the year; this year is also the last year of Concordia College. Next year will be a turning point in the history of both *The Promethean* and Concordia College. I hope that you will enjoy flipping through the pages of this fine piece of work. It has been a long and difficult task to bring you the best literary work out there.

Again, I hope you enjoy the works enclosed within these pages. Look for the next edition of *The Promethean* from Concordia University's first Winter Semester.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Joshua D. Dwire', with a stylized, flowing script.

Joshua D. Dwire
Editor in Chief
1995 Spring

Mud

Man's nature is mud.
It's made up mostly of dirt.
A little water is mixed in.
He spends the rest of his existence
trying to clean off the dirt--
with at best, partial success.
The water tells us there is more,
But it sure takes a lot of water
To make our nature pure.

Dustin Kunkle

On the Life Cycle of the Australian Walking Stick

A cartoon, at first, born from a tiny marble egg
the baby practically runs through the new universe,
splay-legged, from the cramp
of being five months in its capsule.

When the running slows,
and at first molting and instantaneous
expansion of two or three times,
the eating begins, and never ends
for females, and pauses for the man only to mate.

These spiny, delicate creatures
are prone to accidents.

A female just emerges from her final molting
was mated over early by a mature male,
and her hind legs never did quite work right.

And when the males have been loving,
hanging on to their dear mates' shoulders,
long the hunger that consumes them
becomes a desire to eat the lover's antennae.

When the males are dead and gone,
for they wear out from constant loving,
and hundreds of eggs litter the forest floor,
the mothers, too, begin to die,
falling one by one from the thorny sky
to rest nearly like leaves on the ground.

Bennett Tracy Huffman

Evolution

An ape looks with the eyes in its head
at the thoughts behind the eyes of a man's head.

The ape asks the man,
"Is that you head amking those things,
or is that your Self?"

The man jumps up and down in his high chair
and chatters like a chimpanzee.

The ape is paralyzed with womder
and this continues through the Pleistocene Age.

Then the man's wife returns from the grocery and,
seeing her husband with the very eyes in her head,
asks the ape,

"What have you done to my child?"

"Nothing," says the ape. "It did it on its own,
sort of like an internal combustion engine
eating its own tail."

"Am I to believe that?" asks the man's wife.

"No," says the ape. "But would you be interested
in making some tiny monkeys?"

I have a pair of man-pants in my glove compartment.

We could do a kind of horizontal mamba
until evolution corrects itself."

The wife agrees,
and so they do until...

Bennett Tracy Huffman

Valley

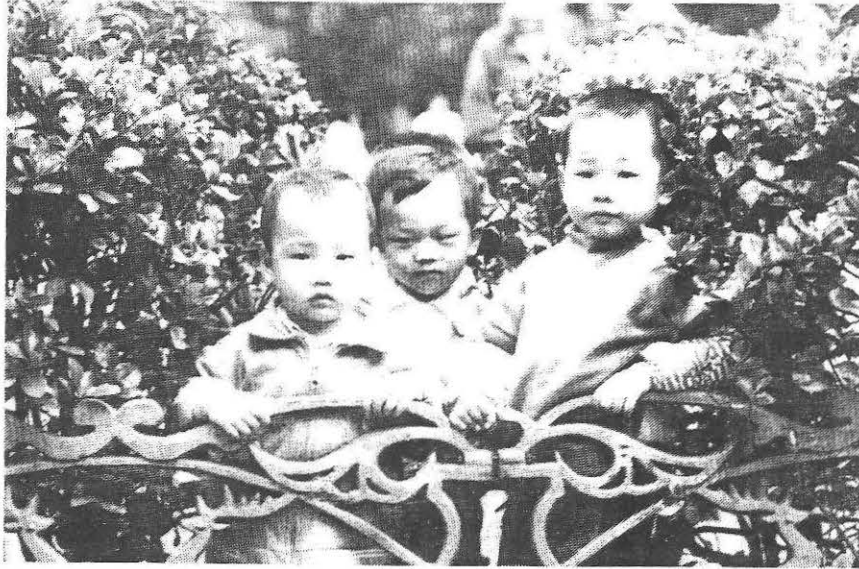
Somewhere...

In a valley of peacefulness I can relax, finally.
Where the lush green leaves are big, and the only sounds I hear
are of the winds tickling the trees, and of the birds laughing,
and of the water in a secret safe stream, content with its
rubbing the rocks in its bed.

If I were little again it would be okay...

I would play until dusk, picking dandelions and bleeding hearts
and making pretty bouquets, and climbing big oak trees until I
was swaying back and fourth while a breeze had its fun with me,
and rubbing ^{pine sap} ~~ant bath~~ on my hands and smelling them and then
patting them in the dirt until big clouds of dust came wafting
up, and then swinging until I thought I was higher than the
rainbows. And then I would come home the long way, through the
woods, picking on puzzle trees the whole way, I would walk in
and my day would be with me and everyone could tell by the smells
what I'd done.

Ashlin Bush



Erich Schneider

Fable

The Story Teller,
Speaks His tale.
Water dripping,
From his broken pail.

Words splash out,
On the golden sand;
Taking you--To a far off land.

He speaks of truth,
And living well,
If we chose wrong,
We'll burn in Hell.

As He speaks,
He rubs his hands.
Which are stained with blood,
From being damned.

His eyes show pain,
But he speaks with Honor,
He preaches about,
Praising the Father.

Now, the water is gone,
The story is done--
It's time to move on,
With our new wisdom.

Joshua Dwire

The Good Die Young

Murderers, thieves, there're others more deserving;
In a time where there seems so much evil,
God takes one of his few true servants.
Doesn't He know it's just as bad to steal?

Upon a stormy and thund'rous night
Coming from a social down a winding path,
The life of a close friend without a fight,
Was simply stolen by God's sudden wrath.

Maybe while innocence is young and pure
He picks out the best to save from all harm.
Hardly seems fair that I get a stone mirror,
And, no questions asked, He takes a friend afar.

It must be true that the good die young;
It's our times and friendship to which I've clung.

Chris Martin



Erich Schneider

Savior and Witch: Female Heroism in Bulgakov's *The Master & Margarita*

by Randy Bush

For the reader who hasn't just finished the novel's last page and set the book down, let me summarize: "Woland, master of the black arts," comes to Moscow in the nineteen-twenties to put on a magic show and to shake the place up with the most comically terrifying ride in history. He is, after all, the devil.

The Master and Margarita is two books, really, with the twentieth-century narrative running parallel to that of the trial and crucifixion of Yeshua as seen through the eyes of Pontius Pilate, Roman procurator. Pilate's story is being written by a Russian author, the Master (now imprisoned in an insane ward because of it). Every episode with Pilate finds him more tormented by the memory of Yeshua's final urging to not be a coward--advice he failed to take.

But the struggle uniting the distant ages takes place within the mind and heart of Margarita, the Master's lover. Her challenge, presented mysteriously by Azazello, angel of death, is ostensibly to become one of Woland's witches and officiate at his midnight ball. As it turns out, she will face the highest personal sacrifice--the laying down of her life for the Master. And then things start to get weird.

Yeshua, of the past? or of the present? reads the book, *Pontius Pilate*, and sends Matthew the tax-collector to instruct Woland to reward the Master for believing enough in truth to write it. And only then, as we learn at the end, can the Master write the ending that frees Pontius Pilate, doomed otherwise, to forever relive the moment of his cowardice.

Through the first hundred or so pages, Bulgakov's tale almost seems a dark sort of Marx Brothers film as the author makes grim fun of an empire that, Saturn-like, devours its own children. Why shouldn't Lucifer walk the streets of Moscow, dressed like a snappy "Eurocapitalist" and making wry conversation? Citizens vanish into nothing and wrong is right. When dangerous thoughts are verbalized, listeners clear their throats and become

loudly patriotic; they spew reprimands and demand a show of "papers!" (sounding more like nervous border guards than like Marx's "new men"). Yet I think Bulgakov's aim, if presented correctly, will reveal a study of the classical heroic fairy tale rather than the black, comic satire we might at first assume.

If dual relationships, hidden meanings, and new motives spring up in every chapter, the vital roles are played by Margarita and Yeshua, in that order. No others, found in either of the parallel times, so clearly meet the challenge of heroism raised by the story's real sorcerer, Bulgakov himself.

Max Hayward holds to the "hard-boiled," political satire angle. In his study of modern Russian literature, he says, "*The Master and Margarita* (published in Moscow in 1966-67, twenty-seven years after the author's death)... depicts Soviet 'reality' as something surely conjured up by a magician with the power and genius of Satan himself" (275). Indeed, if it weren't for the obviously serious novel within the novel, i.e., the account of Pontius Pilate and Yeshua, the story might be taken as an incredibly daring political farce with Stalin represented by Woland. Gary Paul Morson, writer and Russian scholar, concurs on one point: In a review, actually of another work--Andrei Sinyavsky's *Soviet civilization* (Little, Brown: \$24.95), he states, "Stalin resembles no one so much as Woland--the devil as cruel trickster..." (7).

Yet the story seems to me to be less about Stalin or Pilate or Yeshua than it is about Margarita. She alone embodies its real mythic structure and is its most compelling moral force.

To be honest, the peripheral literature hardly agrees; to be accurate, neither can the critics agree with each other. Like witnesses in an Agatha Christie novel, each writer suggests a different motive and arrives at a different conclusion. Ellendea Proffer explains, "There are so many proliferating parallels... that only the most indisputable seem worthy of comment. After a certain point the doubles and parallels cease to have meaning" (638). In

other words, *The Master and Margarita* is about as irresistible to interpreters as is the Bible. And if the other critics don't exactly support my (private?) notions, I may have to think something up.

Margarita, Bulgakov's witch who redeems, feels right for the role of Russian messiah because, for all their "otherness," the conflicting archetypes of witch and savior prove useful in illustrating the upside down nature of modern Soviet morality (at least in the age of Stalin). In the apt words of one writer, since "people were held to be entirely the product of economic conditions, socialism was expected to change human nature" (Morson 8). But it couldn't and didn't. Social heroism, in other words, the vital, elusive quality Woland looks for and doesn't find except in the persons of the Master and Margarita, is, unfortunately, not an automatic byproduct of Marxism-Leninism (or, for that matter, of Madisonian "democracy").

And speaking of Woland, since the two most interesting characters are easily himself and Margarita, the temptation is to split the space of this paper between them. While restricting myself to the witch, as the title suggests, I do want to mention a few points of interest on Woland's behalf.

Every writer but one (that I could find, anyway) seems to take for granted a similarity or bond between Woland and Goethe's Mephistopheles. I'm confused by that. To me they show little in common beyond the sense of dramatic expectation found in their company. Woland's role in Bulgakov's universe is more one of supernatural civil servant than of the dire, frothing-at-the-mouth monster present in so many American "devil" movies. Helen Muchnic comes the closest to agreeing with me:

Unlike Mephistopheles, Woland is neither a servant nor an opponent of the Lord, nor does he will evil while working good in spite of himself. When he works evil it is because he desires good; he achieves good through evil and is indeed a rationalist philosopher who believes that good and evil are inseparable (327).

Yet if the story is to work as heroic fairytale, we have to ask after its moral heart. Is it found in the Master, whose entry Bulgakov actually announces

with, "Enter the Hero," or in Margarita--unrepentant witch and willing servant of Woland?

The correct response, of course, is the witch. The bond between her and Yeshua is much the clearer one. I can in no way agree with Oja when he suggests that Margarita and Afranius (Pilate's military assistant) hold the strongest parallel relationship.

Margarita is the suffering servant of Woland's midnight ball of horrors: As Yeshua (the real one more than Bulgakov's, in this instance), lifted up on the cross, received humankind's sin and corruption and so became accursed, Margarita stands above them on the staircase, hour upon hour, and receives with pure, welcoming smile every vile, murderous walking corpse. Each touch brings new pain until the corruption becomes her own.

Including the point just mentioned, I can think of at least eight possible attributes of the "heroic savior": Margarita--

- 1) accepts beginning challenge from Azazello
- 2) applies magic salve of flight and invisibility
- 3) removes her clothing (mythic cleansing)
- 4) flies to Woland and crosses water (heroic journey)
- 5) receives new clothes (baptism, see Soelle, below)
- 6) accepts challenge to receive sin & rot on stairs (crucifixion image)
- 7) passes test--doesn't let Azazello kill Latunsky though she hates him (critic who ruined Master)
- 8) receives Woland's jeweled horse shoe (magic talisman)

And how telling is the moment when, in the heat of her insane vengeance upon the things of Latunsky, she pauses to comfort a panic-stricken child. The witch surely finds her own confusion and bewilderment reflected in the boy's pathetic, "Windows breaking . . . Mummy, I'm frightened" (Bulgakov 239).

But 'insane' is really too hasty a label to assign her. She is vengeful, but cautiously, intelligently so. Though her first intent is to render the

critic fierce bodily harm, her fury is only vented upon his furnishings, those symbols of the spiritual corruption of "approved" writers in Stalin's Russia. When the tenant from below comes to investigate the water and plaster falling into her apartment, Margarita doesn't wait around in hopes of "getting" Latunsky, which as an invisible attacker she could easily do. Instead, "Ah, somebody's ringing...time to go," she says. When demon Azazello later offers to slaughter Latunsky for her, she *pleads* for the critic's life.

Her quest to restore the Master is, again, a model mythic challenge, taken up in spite of having been offered several chances to "wimp out."

No [she tells Azazello] please wait....I know what I'm letting myself in for. I'm ready to go anywhere and do anything for his sake, only because I have no more hope left. But if you are planning to ruin me or destroy me, you will regret it. Because if I die for his sake I shall have died out of love (227).

And die she does; yet instead of finding the logical reward for her service to the devil, namely hell, in the end Woland (or Bulgakov?) sends her and her precious Master to a perfect Elysian replica of their old love nest.

What a rare pleasure to watch the real 'Master,' Bulgakov, at work, and to fall under the spell of this Da Vinci at full power.

A Note on Bulgakov's Utilization of Legend & History

It's worth noting that Bulgakov seems to have been fully aware of the mythic history behind his devil. The choice of "Woland" for one of Satan's names is no random act: the Old Icelandic "Volundarkvida" (The Lay of Volund the Smith) describes Volund as an irresistible force for vengeance--as the perfect soldier. As he moves from Icelandic into Southern Germanic legend, he becomes Wolund or Weland (Not to be mistaken for German Woden or Norse Odin), certainly more a magical trickster than the master daemon of Judeo-Christian history. By the time he is British/Celtic Wayland Drew the smith, he has mutated into the powerful, dangerous, and unpredictable trickster

god who might shoe your horse while you sleep or murder you and seduce your sister, wife, or mother.

One of the most enjoyable "borrowings" is found in the wonderful scene in which Margarita applies the mysterious ointment given her by Azazello (a.k.a. the Angel of Death). Moments after rubbing it in, she "youthens" several years and then finds she can both fly and become invisible. Bulgakov is reaching, here, back to the Somerset witch trials of 1664.

Regarding Margarita's Nakedness & Change of Clothes

As Dorothee Soelle explains in *Death by Bread Alone*,

The Christian symbol of baptism signifies vividly this experience of dying and being born again. The changing of clothes [in heroic fairy tales] is a symbol of denying and emptying oneself. The hero must exchange his princely garb for that of a beggar (54).

And this is precisely what Margarita does.

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Dorothee Soelle is poet-theologian-philosopher and her little book is a large treasure--Hans Kung by way of Huston Smith and Joseph Campbell. I may never finish with it.

Contributors' Notes:

Erich Schneider is a graduate of Concordia College and has contributed to many issues of *The Promethean*.

Dustin Kunkel has a knack for poetry, and he loves making sure Concordia stays beautiful by working hard for PPS.

Bennett Tracy Huffmann currently lectures in English here at Concordia, and he co-authored the novel *Caverns* with Ken Kesey.

Randy Bush runs Concordia's library--with Professor Bremer's assistance--and he writes for pleasure.

Ashlin Bush, daughter of Randy, is fourteen years old and already has her work in the literary world.

Chris Martin has worked on *The Promethean* staff for two years, and he enjoys writing poetry during his leisure time, which, according to Dr. Wright, appears to be about 23 1/2 hours of his day.

Joshua Dwire writes poetry for fun and to entice the hearts of women.

Dr. Dan Wright, Professor of English at Concordia College (and Shakespeare scholar *extraordinaire*), has been the Faculty Advisor, for *The Promethean*, since the first issue was created in 1992. We honor his hard work and dedication because this is the last issue of *The Promethean* from Concordia College. Due to the change to Concordia University, next year will bring on a new era to *The Promethean*, but Dr. Wright will continue to serve as Faculty Advisor for all the new issues to come.

