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Title: "Proiskhodiati novye chudesa": The New Soviet Miracle in *Master i Margarita*

Abstract:

This paper examines the use of the word "chudo" in Mikhail Bulgakov's novel *Master i Margarita*, and attempts to trace and reconcile two competing definitions of the concept within it. Although the word "chudo" appears more than fifteen times throughout the text, only two of these uses occur in the Pilate chapters, where a reader might expect to find religious content. Instead, "miracles" seem to be a feature of the Moscow landscape, and "chudo" is rarely used to indicate supernatural events. The first definition "chudo" takes on in the novel seems synonymous with the official Soviet policy on miracles, which were considered to be frauds perpetuated by the church. In these instances, the word "chudo" is deployed ironically, often describing a mundane situation which is juxtaposed with events that are actually miraculous by comparison. For example, the trapeze act at the Variety is called a miracle even though it is clear that the real miracle is Woland's magic show. Alternately, the word is used to describe charlatanism, such as Pilate's release of Varravvan. The second definition "chudo" acquires over the course of the novel also describes ordinary events, but in these cases the events are coping mechanisms Muscovites use to deal with specific Soviet problems, such as the "apartment question." The use of the word "miracle" in these contexts seems serious, and the label is typically applied by members of Woland's retinue, who appear to be putting human resourcefulness on the same plane as their magic.

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