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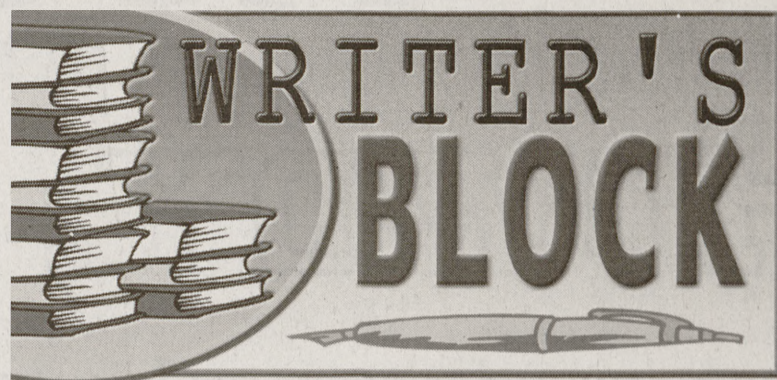
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Marquis DeSade

Justine, Philosophy in the Bedroom, & other writings
Published by General Publishing Company

The Marquis DeSade is best known for his namesake — sadism. However, DeSade was also a prolific writer who produced thousands of pages of letters, political treatises and works of fiction. This compilation, contains his most famous novel — a piece Napoleon Bonaparte once described as "the most abominable work ever engendered by the most depraved imagination."

Depraved, perhaps, but DeSade's works are also some of the best fiction of Romantic France. Unlike other great French writers, Voltaire especially, DeSade's works do not simply skip from topic to topic, but expand and develop plots like modern novels. Not unexpectedly, every work centers on depravity and libidinous pursuits, so this book is not for the faint of heart. Justine describes rape, murder and kidnapping in a blinding and extremely graphic whirlwind. It is unsettling at best and outright nauseating at

worst. But like any horrific car wreck, it attracts a crowd.

The best work, and the most underrated in this compilation, is Philosophy in the Bedroom. This is a faster read than Justine and combines far more palatable philosophical views on the nature and responsibilities of mankind.

This piece centers on the sexual and political "liberation" of a teenage girl by a trio of aristocratic sadists. Through conversation and graphic sexual exploration, they transform her from a typical teenager into a sadistic predator. The journey climaxes with one of the most graphic and torturous rape scenes ever written perpetrated upon the girl's mother, with the girl's help.

The compilation also contains a collection of DeSade's letters and a time line of his life. The time line actually reveals one of the great mysteries of DeSade's life because one must wonder, given his perpetual arrests and sexual escapades, how he managed to escape the guillotine as a member of the aristocracy. This book is a must for every Neitsche enthusiast and churchgoer. (Grade: A)



MARQUIS DE SADE

Justine, Philosophy in the Bedroom, & Other Writings

—Jason Bennyhoff



Neil Gaiman and Terry Pratchett
Good Omens
Published by Workman Publishing

It is the end of time, and the world is in the hands of the Antichrist. The only problem is the Antichrist is a little boy in Tadfield, England, who would rather play with his dog (which is really a demon hound from hell) than bring about the final battle between heaven and hell.

Good Omens takes a humorous look at the apocalypse in a manner that would make Douglas Adams proud. The story revolves around an angel and a demon who, through the millennia, have developed an "unnatural" liking for the human race and seek to defy heaven's hell's intentions to bring about its untimely demise.

The novel, set in England (although one might be more inclined to believe that the end of the world would happen in America) takes on some of the more charming style characteristics of The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy series, such as dry, British humor and an intrinsic need for comedic irony.

The authors show a definite familiarity with the mythology of Catholicism, but they do not hesitate to put their own spin on some of its more popular players. For example, the Four Horsemen in Revelations become the four bikers, with pollution substituting for pestilence.

Overall, the book deserves the minor cult following it has developed (no pun intended) and is a must read for anyone looking for a new spin on the end of the world. (Grade: A)

—Stuart Huse

Mikhail Bulgakov
The Master and Margarita
Published by Grove Press

A talking cat, a knife-throwing lackey and a conversation with the devil combine to make The Master and Margarita one of the great classics of Russian literature. Bulgakov's opus was written at the height of Soviet power in the '50s and was banned in the Soviet Union due to its religious content. However, this book is not about religious preaching or demagoguery — it is a fanciful ride through the writer's imagination where the devil is the ultimate practical joker.

The novel opens with two Russian intellectuals conversing about the existence of God — a taboo subject in the Soviet Union. The conversation takes a decidedly noncreational view of history when a tall stranger approaches. He joins the conversation by stating the existence of God and the truth of the Bible as historical fact,

first person. This is our first introduction to the devil. While the assertion of creationism as pure fact probably got this book banned, the wondrous antics of the devil make this book the brilliant piece of literature it is.

From the moment of the conversation to the very last page, the devil makes theater conductors, the city of Leningrad's citizens' clothes and literary critics disappear. In a hilarious series of practical jokes, the devil single-handedly turns the city upside down.

The surprise in this novel is that the devil is not evil — his main goal in the book is to reunite two lovers separated by the caprices of the paranoid Soviet regime. The finale comes in the most fantastic setting imaginable — a masquerade ball with all the powers of the devil as the decor.

The beauty of this novel is that its page-to-page events are so riveting that anyone can read and enjoy for its surface value alone. However, after the wonder has faded, a scathing social commentary of the Soviet regime remains. Unlike books by other Russian contemporaries, Solzhenitsyn especially, Bulgakov's novel is entertaining from start to finish and still slips in a protest. (Grade: A+)

—Jason Bennyhoff

- A = Literary classic
- B = A cut above
- C = Passable reading
- D = Don't buy it
- F = Waste of paper



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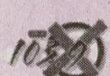
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