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Radha Balasubramanian

University of Nebraska - Lincoln, rbalasub@unlnotes.unl.edu

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The Similarities Between Mikahil Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita* and Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*

Radha Balasubramanian, University of Nebraska-Lincoln

After more than a year of silence and hiding since the publication of *The Satanic Verses*, Salman Rushdie spoke out in a 1990 article appearing in *Newsweek*: "*The Master and Margarita* and its author were persecuted by Soviet totalitarianism. It is extraordinary to find my novel's life echoing that of one of its greatest models."¹ In this surprising claim, Rushdie not only links his novel with Bulgakov's masterpiece, but also joins his fate with that of the Russian author. For Rushdie, there is a clear parallel between Bulgakov's suffering under Stalinism and his own situation vis-a-vis the Muslim world. Concretely, Bulgakov survived in the dark basement in his Moscow apartment while Rushdie hides out in London.

Furthermore, both novels have been subject to banning and attempts were made to keep them out of the hands of their intended readers. *The Master and Margarita*² was not published for nearly thirty years since after its writing in the former Soviet Union, *The Satanic Verses*³ has been banned in India because the Indian government does not want to risk hurting the sensibilities of its Muslim population and its neighbors. Although an explanation of these parallels could motivate an entire article, I intend to treat specifically Rushdie's enigmatic claim that Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita* serves as one of the "greatest models" for *The Satanic Verses*.

At the outset, one understands that both authors focus on the problem of personal identity in a new, alien culture, Bulgakov begins *The Master and Margarita* by presenting a scene in which two representatives of the newly formed Soviet Union debate the acceptable ideas for contemporary literature. *The Satanic Verses* opens with two Indian immigrants trying to assimilate into present-day London. It is not by chance that the main characters (Ivan and the Master in *The Master and Margarita*, Gibreel and Saladin in *The Satanic Verses*) are artists involved in self-creation, whether as poets, writers, or actors. The authors especially place their heroes in unfamiliar circumstances, which allows an examination of the present culture in the context of the past.

In *The Master and Margarita* the poet Ivan's difficulties in imbibing atheistic beliefs and transmitting them to the readers in his poetry raise the issue of the existence of God, while in *The Satanic Verses* Gibreel's interest in Islam and its scrip-

¹ Salman Rushdie, "In Good Faith," *Newsweek* 12 February 1990: 56.

² Mikhail Bulgakov, *The Master and Margarita*, trans. Mirra Ginsburg (New York: Grove Press, 1967) 300. Subsequent references are to this edition and will appear in the text after the abbreviation MM.

³ Salman Rushdie, *The Satanic Verses* (New York: Viking, 1989). Subsequent references will appear in the text after the abbreviation SV.

tures, and his vocation of playing gods on the large screen, brings to the forefront the nature of the divine revelations in the Koran. These two characters link the biblical and Koranic past with the present through their adventures, hallucinations, and dreams. Consequently, a reexamination of the legends and myths from the past (Christian and Islamic) from a new angle becomes also a searchlight on the absurdities of the present.

In *The Master and Margarita*, written in the 1930s, Bulgakov deals with the newly formed Soviet society and its new ideology of state communism. The initial debate of the novel poses the primary question in writing the work. Berlioz, the editor of a well-known journal, and Ivan Bezdomny (literally, "Ivan The Homeless"), a poet are sitting before Patriarch's Pond in the center of Moscow, arguing about the poem that Ivan has been commissioned to write. The poet was supposed to dispel the illusion of Jesus Christ, but in so doing, the editor thinks that the poet actually makes Jesus appear real, which is not palatable to the editor's notion of atheism. During their heated debate, they are confronted by a strange man named Woland, who is not only able to read their thoughts but also predict their future; he tells them of the imminent accidental death of the editor. Dominating the discussion, Woland tries to prove to them that Christ does exist, and, in doing so, he admits that he, the Devil, had seen him. It seems strange to Ivan that the Devil should want to prove God's existence, but before Ivan can inquire, Woland disappears. A minute later, exactly as Woland had predicted, the editor is killed by a tram, and Ivan starts his pursuit of the Devil who, so Ivan believes, possesses the truth about God's existence.

In the novel, Ivan's questions are answered, not by Woland, but by the Master. Ivan is taken for a madman and put in an asylum. He is placed in a neighboring cell to the Master, who is the author of a novel about Pilate; not incidentally, the novel about Pilate is spliced into Bulgakov's work. Ivan dreams of Christ's last days, while Woland in the meantime spends three days in Moscow, and through his magic satirically exposes the greedy and corrupt Moscow society. He also befriends Margarita (the lover of the Master), who agrees to be the mistress for Satan's ball on Jesus Christ's last days in the hope of being rewarded with the return of the Master's burned manuscript and rejoining the Master forever. Paradoxically, by bringing the Devil to Moscow, Bulgakov restores faith in those who were forced to relinquish it, and by bringing Margarita and the Master together, he reiterates that goodness and truth will never die. Bulgakov shows that the changes in Soviet society are not fixed and permanent, but rather transient and superficial. They are made by man and not God.

Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* depicts two young men from Bombay living in London, Gibreel Farishta and Saladin Chamcha, who are trying to ascertain for themselves their identity in a mixed cultural environment while retaining an awareness of their Indian origins. Both are artists: Gibreel is an actor in blockbuster Indian movies with religious themes, while Saladin plays various roles in radio and television commercials in England. The protagonists are introduced at the beginning as the only survivors of an Air India jet which was hijacked and later blown up over the English Channel by Sikh terrorists—alluding to the mysterious crash of an Air India liner in 1988. Together, embracing each other, they fall to earth unharmed, but feel, as if reincarnated and take on new

roles. These roles are manifested physically: a halo that encircles Gibreel's head, while Saladin's body (in a Kafkaesque sort of metamorphosis) enlarges, grows hairier, and acquires a tail and horns.

During their metamorphosis we are informed of their past. Gibreel, the son of poor parents, is orphaned young. He is brought up by an employer of his father, Babasaheb Mhatre, who introduces him to the concept of reincarnation and the existence of God and the Devil. Mhatre's appealing narrations about the omnipresent God and the Devil, and Gibreel's own childhood memories of his mother's stories of the Prophet, often grip Gibreel in his sleep causing him to dream that he is the prophet. Mhatre manages to have Gibreel introduced to a film magnate, D.W. Rama (reminiscent of the Indian actor, producer and politician, N.T. Rama Rao, known for playing Lord Vishnu on the screen), who hires him. During the first four years of his film career—that is, until the time that Gibreel emerges as a movie superstar—he becomes a voracious reader of myths and legends from various religions. It is then that Gibreel also reads about the "incident of the Satanic verses in the early career of the Prophet, and the politics of Muhammad's harem after his return to Mecca in triumph" (SV 24). Later in the novel he also dreams of the Prophet Muhammad, his harem and his revelations.

By contrast, Saladin Chamcha is the son of a wealthy Bombay businessman who has sent him to England for his education. Since the father and son never get along well, and Saladin has only "contempt for his kind" (SV 45), he decides to settle in England, hoping to become a part of English society which he worships. He marries Pamela, a "bloody Britannia" (SV 175), and settles into the life of an actor. He is described as "the Man of Thousand Voices and a Voice" (SV 60), able to play thirty-seven roles in a radio play, or be the voice for a ketchup bottle, a packet of garlic-flavored crisps, or a roll of carpet in various television commercials.

The heroes, Gibreel and Saladin, continue to metamorphose into their various roles as the media project their images to an unseen audience. Their condition as a result of the initial fall from the aircraft continues to develop, and now Gibreel is an angel and Saladin is a devil. In these guises the two men struggle to reconcile their past and present lives. Gibreel soon realizes that he is expected to play different roles in order to fulfill the wishes of the people he meets. In contrast, Saladin, hounded by the police as an illegal immigrant, is unable to win back his wife's love in his transformed state. These masks serve as a mirror of the outside world as well. Saladin's devilish guise becomes a symbol of the way Indian immigrants are viewed by the native British. He realizes that he and other immigrants like him have to live the uprooted life of an alien, always aloof and apart from the British majority.

At the novel's end both heroes decide to return to India. Gibreel wants to continue his acting career, and Saladin wants to reintegrate himself into the Indian society which he abandoned. Saladin (the Devil incarnate) reconciles with his father and finds an Indian lover, and Gibreel (the Angel) feels like a failure and commits suicide. The reversals have taken their final turn.

On one level, *The Satanic Verses* treats the mixing of cultures, East and West, emphasizing the psychology of the Eastern minorities. Certainly, Rushdie desires to "give voice and fictional flesh to the immigrant culture."⁴ Thus the heroes exhibit their weaknesses in not standing up for their beliefs, and at the same time expose the prejudices of the Western world. On another abstract level, the novel attempts to explore the nature of divine revelation from the perspective of a secular person, which entails, in turn, an examination of religious faith versus religious doubt. The author deals with the question of defining good and evil and differentiating the real from the unreal. In order to get to the core of these issues, he not only has his heroes play the roles of Angel and Devil, but also raises issues from the Koran, since Islam is the religion he knows best. Salman Rushdie has not been the first writer to investigate such religious-mythological problems. He follows in the footsteps of many great writers, like Dante, Goethe, Garcia Márquez, Joyce, and Bulgakov (who also definitely, as it will become clear, belongs to the above-mentioned group).

Bulgakov and Rushdie satirize modern societies through a reexamination of a religious past which has shaped their heroes' lives. Bulgakov takes up life in the Moscow of his own time in the context of Jerusalem at the time of Christ, while Rushdie presents the life of Indian Muslim immigrants of his time in London with the Prophet Muhammad's life and recitations as a backdrop. Their goal is to explore: (1) the nature of art and the role of the artist; (2) the validity of religion; and (3) the underlying goodness of man. In order to examine these themes they begin by stating the good and evil are one and the same through past literary traditions. Bulgakov scholars have noted in this context that the novel contains an updated inversion of the Faust legend.⁵ As if to prompt the readers to see this relationship, *The Master and Margarita* opens with an epigraph from Goethe's *Faust*: "Who art thou then? Part of that Power, not understood, Which always wills the Bad and always works the Good." And the same lines are quoted by the author of *The Satanic Verses* as Saladin Chamcha finds himself acquiring devilish features and becoming transformed into a goat—also a representation of the devil. *The Satanic Verses*, like *The Master and Margarita*, confirms its relationship to past literatures and opens with a quotation from Daniel Defoe's *The History of the Devil* on the diabolic nature of the devil: "Satan, being thus confined to a vagabond, wandering, unsettled condition, is without any certain abode; for though he has, in consequence of his angelic nature, a kind of empire in the liquid waste of air, yet this is part of his punishment, that he is . . . without any fixed place, or space, allowed him to rest the sole of his foot upon." When looking closely at the epigraphs of the two novels, one notices that both authors emphasize the angelic quality of the devil and show him to be unrecognized and misunderstood. Thus, both writers take up the task of going against the expected norms of portraying the Devil as unredeemably evil and wicked. They depict him as someone who, while acting the role of an evildoer, does good or brings out the goodness in others. That is, their

⁴ Salman Rushdie, "The Book Burning," *New York Review of Books* 2 March 1989: 26.

⁵ M.O. Chudakova, "Tvorcheskaya istoriya romana M. Bulgakova *Master i Margarita*," *Voprosy literatury* 1 (1976): 218-53; E. Proffer, "The Master and Margarita," *Major Soviet Writers*, ed. E.J. Brown (London: Oxford University Press, 1973) 388-411; E. Stenbock-Fermor, "Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita* and Goethe's *Faust*," *The Slavic and East European Journal* 13.3 (Fall 1969): 309-25; Michael Glenny, "Existential Thought in Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita*," *Canadian-American Slavic Studies* 15.2-3 (Summer-Fall 1981): 239; Andrew Barratt *Between the Two Worlds* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987) 268-302.

depiction contradicts the traditional beliefs of Christianity and Islam. The novels complicate the matter further by concentrating on the nature of the Devil, raising questions as to who the Devil is, and how he came out being angelic. He is a wanderer, without a name and without a home? Does he also resemble God? Are they the same? Do devils exist as a contrast to God? Are they two sides of the same coin? These are some of the basic questions that both novels try to answer. They do so by choosing artists as their heroes. Artists are outside the norms of society, and as visionaries they have special access to truth.

Bulgakov and Rushdie search through their heroes' metamorphosed states for clues to the true nature of God and the Devil. They also humanize Christ and the Prophet Muhammad, and portray them as messengers of God; they examine the chief events surrounding their lives (i.e., Christ's crucifixion and the Prophet's revelation) through dreams of characters who acquire angelic qualities (Ivan Besdomny in *The Master and Margarita* and Gibreel Farishta in *The Satanic Verses*). The writers connect the questions of mythological past to the present-day reality through the use of magic realism. Fantastic events are framed in references to real places and people who are easily identifiable by their readers.

The novels begin in medias res. In *The Master and Margarita* the editor of Massolit and the poet Ivan Bezdomny appear in the Patriarchs' Ponds Park in Moscow. The phrase "two citizens appeared" (MM 3) brings to our attention that they together (emphasized in Russian by "dvoe," i.e., "twosome"), singled out as one whole, just appeared, that is, did not come from anywhere. Similarly, in *The Satanic Verses*, the two Indian movie actors, Gibreel Farishta and Saladin Chamcha, "fell like titbits of tobacco from a broken cigar" (SV 4) from heaven (or so it seems at the very beginning). Bulgakov's "twosome" is further stressed by Rushdie when he makes one name out of their names: "Gibreelsaladin Farishtachamcha" (SV 5). The characters in both the novels carry angelic and devilish qualities. Rushdie alludes to this duality at the beginning when he characterizes their fall from the aircraft as "angelicdevilish" (SV 5). So it is not unexpected when Gibreel turns out to be angelic, while Saladin acquires devilish attributes. But neither of them is purely the one or the other. For example, Gibreel Farishta, whose name literary means "Gibriel the Angel," was as a boy endearingly called "Shaitan" (SV 91) by his foster mother for his pranks, like switching Hindu and Muslim lunch boxes when he worked as a "dabbawalla" (i.e., "deliverer of lunch pails to office workers"). "Shaitan" means "Satan" in Hindi.

In *The Master and Margarita* the devil wants to atheists to believe in God's existence. At the beginning the poet Ivan and the editor Berlioz are arguing about an antireligious poem that Ivan has written for the State. The argument stems from the fact that Ivan's Jesus, although negative, appears to be alive, while Berlioz wants Jesus to be totally nonexistent. It is then that they are confronted by the Devil, who ironically wants to assure them that God does exist, so as to confirm his own—the Devil's—existence. The two characters with whom the story opens meet different fates. Berlioz, the editor who denies the existence of Christ, is killed as the devil predicted; and Ivan the poet goes in search of the truth about the existence of God and the Devil. Ivan is the only one who meets the Master and is the only one in the story to be blessed by Margarita with a kiss. He is also supposed to continue the Master's work in the world. Similarly, in *The Satanic Verses*,

Gibreel Farishta commits suicide, whereas Saladin Chamcha gets back to India and becomes reintegrated into the Indian society, reinstated with his Indian lover, and reconciled with his dying father.

In *The master and Margarita* the two men find themselves in the heart of the city which, for some reason, seems deserted. There is an eeriness to the place. The apricot soda that they drink is warm. A yellow foam combined with the stench from the soda pervade the atmosphere and unveils before Berlioz an elongated citizen who "swayed before his eyes, to left and right, without touching the ground" (MM 5). Although frightened by the phenomenon, Berlioz decides that it was only an apparition. He continues to concentrate on instructing the poet on how to write an antireligious poem denying the existence of Jesus, and proving that the stories about him are mere myths and legends. *The Satanic Verses*, on the other hand, begins with the song lyrics one of which is translated into English from the movie *Shri Charsawbees* (Mr. 420) where the ex-matinee idol, Raj Kapoor, sings "O, my shoes are Japanese . . . These trousers English, if you please. On my head, red Russian hat; my heart's Indian for all that" (SV 5). Singing thus, the two men, Gibreel and Saladin, fall from the aircraft, which is numbered coincidentally, Air India Flight 420! The fall is from 29,002 feet, which is the precise height of Mount Everest. As the Moscow street Malaya Bronnaya is strange and deserted in Bulgakov's story, the aircraft's number 420 and the movie name *Mr. 420* suggests that something is wrong in Rushdie's story, because Section 420 is the penal code number that is given to a "cheat." It is often used colloquially in India to characterize a swindler and to warn against an imminent disaster when dealing with a "420." Hence the aircraft's hijacking, or its later fall, is foreshadowed.

After the brief, miraculous adventures of the heroes in the introductions we follow them as, in a transformed state and totally shaken up, they grope for truth. In *The Master and Margarita* Ivan Besdomny makes it his mission to go in search of Professor Woland. Being certain that the professor is at the Moskva river, he goes there. He takes off his clothes, leaves them in the care of a bearded man and plunges into the water. When he comes out of water he finds that the man is gone with his clothes and his Massolit identification. Ivan is left with his stripped underpants, a peasant blouse to wear and no identification. He dresses himself in this outfit, picks up the icon (which he later pins on his blouse with a diaper pin), the candle, and the box of matches that he had with him. Presenting an image of a person of childlike innocence with a deep religious bent, and appearing to be a harmless madman blabbering about his meeting with the stranger-professor who killed Berlioz, Ivan proceeds in pursuit of the professor Woland—the Devil.

In *The Satanic Verses* the two heroes go through a total metamorphosis during their fall into the city of London, Gibreel (like Ivan) takes up angelic qualities, while Saladin (reminiscent of Woland), becomes goatish and devilish. Saladin stinks, breathes yellow smoke through one nostril and black through the other (note that Woland in *The Master and Margarita* has eyes of different colors: the right one is black and the left is green), grows thick black hair all over his body, becomes taller, and grows a tail while something else inside his loose pants gets "a little smaller" (SV 273-74, 291).

Metamorphosis is not limited to the heroes of the novels. In *The Master and Margarita*, the Moscow population as a whole is under the grip of the Devil arrived in the guise of the stranger, Woland. His black magic and pranks, described in the chapter "Black Magic and Its Full Exposé" (MM 133-47) expose the greed, pettiness, and problems of the Moscow population. A similar large scale metamorphosis is encountered by Saladin Chamcha when he is taken to the detention center for illegal immigrants. There he meets someone with an elderly human body, the head of a ferocious tiger and three rows of teeth. He sees a creature that is part woman, part water buffalo. Businessmen from Nigeria appear to have sturdy tails, and holiday-makers from Senegal have been turned into slippery snakes. The reason for the metamorphoses is because the English people "have the power of description, and we succumb to the pictures they construct" (SV 168). That is, "such metamorphoses are symbolic of the power of suggestion, and in particular of the way racial prejudice works as a self-fulfilling prophecy."⁶

It is the Master's lover, Margarita, who enters into a pact with the Devil and transforms herself into a witch who plays hostess at Satan's ball. For her services Margarita has her wishes fulfilled—she rejoins her Master and recovers his manuscript, which is the story of Pontius Pilate. Bulgakov ends his novel with the same words the Master uses to end his: "And this was how the dawn of the fifteenth day of Nisan was met by the fifth Procurator of Judea, the horseman Pontius Pilate" (MM 155, 402). The Master in the novel becomes the author, Bulgakov, of the whole novel or of the part dealing with Christ's crucifixion, or Bulgakov indeed is the Master. The complex relationship of the author and hero becomes more interesting when we realize that both the hero, the Master, in the novel and Bulgakov in real life were punished for writing their novels. The works themselves were not published in their lifetimes.

In *The Satanic Verses*, too, Rushdie, the author/narrator of the novel and one of the heroes, Gibreel Farishta, assume a similar complex relationship. Gibreel, the popular film actor, is interested in various theological scriptures. Among them are "the incident of Satanic Verses in the early career of Prophet, and the politics of Mohammad's harem after his return to Mecca in triumph" (SV 24). Some of the chapters titles—"The Parting of the Arabian Sea" and "Mahound,"—are also the titles of Gibreel's films (SV 511) where he himself plays the archangel. Other films—"Gibreel in Jahila," "Gibreel Meets the Imam," and "Gibreel with the Butterfly Girl" (SV 345)—describe parts of chapters where many of those incidents are given as Gibreel's dreams. And any reader familiar with popular multi-star Hindi movies can envision the whole book as a movie script, with its short, action-based sections of chapters, and improbable sequences of events held together by the adventures of heroes who have humble beginnings in Bombay. Many popular Hindi movies, including *Shri 420*, feature a young boy who goes on from a very poor beginning to become a respected hero. But the path from childhood to manhood is always filled with twists and turns relating to his past, present, and future. The most disparate elements in the movies are linked through dreams, recollections rendered in flashbacks, and/or melodramatic scenes unraveling secrets. Thus, it is easy to see how *The Satanic Verses* follows the format of a Hindi movie. Like Bul-

⁶ James Harrison, *Salman Rushdie* (New York: Twayne Publishers: 1992) 92.

gakov's novel within a novel, Rushdie's book is also in part, or as a whole, a film by his character, Gibreel Farishta, the angelic half of Saladin Chamcha.

Both the novels raise the question: who is the narrator? Bulgakov? the Master? Ivan? the Devil? Or Rushdie? Salman, the scribe? Gibreel? Saladin? And they make one wonder about the source: are the novels transmitted from God? Satan? History? or Fiction?

This "fantastic" quality of the novels is achieved through complex structures and the mixing of different narrations. The most striking "aspect of the narrative structure of *The Master and Margarita* is the side-by side presence of two spatially and temporally distanced stories separated by their different protagonists."⁷ The first one is set in Moscow in the 1920s and 1930s, while the second one deals with a reinterpretation of the biblical story of Christ and Pontius Pilate. In *The Satanic Verses* the two narratives about the life of Indian immigrants in London of the 1980s are interwoven with the seventh century rise of the Muslim religion. Legends from religious writings are presented as facts, while facts about the contemporary world are made fantasy. In both novels history is made fiction. As a result "fact and legend have changed places."⁸ It has been argued that the Devil, Woland, is attributed divinity in *The Master and Margarita* and is presented as a parody of Jesus. The theory that Pilate cannot be held responsible for the crucifixion as he was merely the instrument of God and should be redeemed is taken from legends about the Procurator. Christ's story is defamiliarized by transposing narrative points of view from the apostles to the devil.

The relationship of *The Satanic Verses* to the Koran is also problematic. The Devil plays the central role in *The Satanic Verses* and alludes to himself as the author of this text (SV 95, 318, 408-09). Even the title *The Satanic Verses* refers not only to the incident of the mysterious verses revealed in Muhammad's dreams but also to the whole novel. If Muhammad's verse is "Divine Verses," then the Devil's "revelations" about life are *The Satanic Verses*—the novel by Salman Rushdie—which might explain why Muslims condemn the book even by its title. One of the most objectionable passages in the book deals with the disputed image of the goddesses "Al-Lat, Manat, and Uzza." Al-lat in particular was at one point considered to be an intermediary of Allah, but was later dismissed by the orthodox view now given in Sura 53 of the Koran because she and the other two goddesses are females. Rushdie takes these pagan goddesses from apocryphal sources and resurrects them in the chapter titled "Mahound," where a biography of Muhammad is given in an irreverent, chatty Bombay-style narration interspersed with a factual narration of a third person chronicler. In the chapter "Ayesha," the female character with the same name, who is also Muhammad's favorite wife, is parodied. Her unsuccessful military campaign against the Prophet's son-in-law after Muhammad's death is often cited as unacceptable by Islamic fundamentalists. But in this novel she leads a group of Indian Muslims, which includes a cancer-stricken wealthy woman, to Mecca (through the parting of the Arabian Sea) on foot. The

⁷ Vida Taranovski, "The Thematic Function of the Narrator in *The Master and Margarita*," *Canadian-American Slavic Studies* 15.2-3 (Summer-Fall 1981): 273.

⁸ Donald B. Pruitt, "St. John and Bulgakov: The Models of a Parody of Christ," *Canadian-American Slavic Studies* 15.2-3 (Summer-Fall 1981): 314.

book suggests that some pilgrims could have drowned and some could have miraculously made it to the other side.

A character named Salman (possibly Salman Rushdie himself), a Persian scribe for Mahound of Mohammed (SV 366-90), tampers with the revelations by changing some key words and phrases in them, aware that this "shaitan-like" act might cause his death. When his satirist poet and friend asks: "Why are you sure he will kill you?" Salman answers: "It's his Word against mine" (SV 368). This of course anticipates Rushdie's real-life drama with Khomeini.

Clearly the novels are written with the authors hiding behind the masks of their characters (the Master in *The Master and Margarita* and Salman in *The Satanic Verses*) who put to test some of the touchy questions from the Gospels and the Koran. Bulgakov and Rushdie choose to reevaluate the facts in the religious texts in the context of their own contemporaneity. The intermingling of accounts distanced temporally and spatially presents a hodgepodge of narratives.

Since the novels deal with the literary and film worlds, they are in a position to satirize the plight of the artists. In this novel Bulgakov is making a dig at Soviet society, exposing its limitations in creating anything with artistic merit because of the imposed policies and restrictions on writers. Through Woland's magic people are found missing suddenly, some have their heads cut off, others lose their sanity, many believe in the magical, miraculous betterment of life. Such unexplainable acts allude to the atrocities of Stalinist times. The hard life of the Master as a writer, his quest for truth, and the sad fate meted out to him for not adhering to the norms of the ideological restrictions, are narrated in the manuscript retrieved by Margarita, with the devil's help.

In India, although there is comparatively more artistic freedom, the film world adheres to strict conventions in order to make box-office hits. In addition, Hindi movies are made for a larger audience which includes millions of non-Hindi speakers. This is done by making Hindi films using very familiar symbols and clichés. So the making of a popular Hindi movie imposes a kind of restriction on the actors and the artists, who are looking for quick fame and wealth. Even the introduction of Gibreel into the film world and his rise are absurd, but true to the Indian reality. Gibreel's first important roles are as Lord Ganesh (a very popular image of God) with the trunk and ears on. These become such a hit with the public that he becomes a superstar, but only in Ganesh disguise. His next successful roles are that of the monkey king (that is, Hanuman—a favorite character from the epic *Ramayana*) with a long hairy tail. The popularity he enjoys with his female costars in the monkey attire (they ask him to wear it when he goes to have sex) is ridiculous and typecasts him into playing godly roles. Actually it is blasphemous for Gibreel (Angel), the Muslim, to play the roles of different Hindu gods.

In *The Master and Margarita*, God is immortalized and freed from earthy sufferings by Pontius Pilate; in *The Satanic Verses* Gibreel, the Angel, liberates Saladin from the isolation and reunites him with his Indian past. Both novels reaffirm that evil or the devil has to exist in order that goodness or God be recognized. During their existence both God and the Devil suffer. They are often in close proximity—almost one and the same, like Gibreel and Saladin. Thus the hybrid quality

of humans is highlighted by bringing to our attention their mixing and their constant metamorphoses.

The novels are about bringing different cultures together. In the Soviet Union the newly formed atheistic, communist society is forced upon the common man. An outside artificial force cannot overnight, or as history has shown, through decades, change people's way of thinking and their life. For example, the greed of the Soviets to get rich is exposed through Woland's magic show, in spite of the fact that the Soviets are supposed to be socialists and to share their wealth equally. In *The Satanic Verses* there is a hybridization of the East and West. For Gibreel and Saladin, being in England or "capital of *vilayet*" (i.e., capital of the foreign land; SV 4) is a cherished dream. They survive the worst conditions, even a fall from an aircraft, in order to be alive. From the way he and his other Indian friends live in London, it is clear that the English do not mingle with the Indians. The ethnic groups form their own mini-world, supporting and shielding each other from the reality of the life outside. Still the Indians are enamored by "vilayet" and do not complain about their standard of life there. On the other hand, when they return home, they would like to be respected as having returned from "vilayet."

The two novels deal with the questions of East and West (Jerusalem—Moscow, Bombay—London), past and present, imperatives of time and space, and the battle between good and evil. The presentation of most of the issues is similar. That commonality affirms that Bulgakov is one of Rushdie's major influences in writing this complex novel, and that *The Satanic Verses* is continuing traditions established in *The Master and Margarita*.