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introduction: the genesis of blasphemy

In an increasingly fundamentalist world, the expression of a new belief is becoming progressively dangerous, especially if that new supposition challenges an already codified “truth.” New thinkers who boldly challenge the status quo come under severe scrutiny from both extremes: the praetorian right-wing and the liberal left ostensibly denounce and excommunicate any new expression as impudent, particularly if it challenges

contemporary world. A juxtaposition of each novel's major characters indicates shared themes and illustrates distinct degrees of successful Platonic artists and how they transcend the Platonic categorization.

Pushkin and Bulgakov see the artist as one who shakes up the status quo. Without the occasional contention, a society, or any institution—be it collective or individual—may become complacent and prone to tyranny. Pushkin and Bulgakov represent the rebellious, uncompromising artist as hero, and criticize and abuse the masses for their thoughtless acceptance of one man's, or government's, vision of the "truth." The artist offers a different truth, which usually relegates him to ridicule, abuse, and sometimes death, and provides an example of individuality for his observers. Pushkin and Bulgakov, therefore, admire the artist and his creation as representing an individual's truth, yet both despise a thoughtless devotion to his or her art by unthinking masses. These ideas are important to the lucid understanding of both novels and provide an example of the strength and devotion necessary to challenge general beliefs with creative and original thoughts; this is a lesson that Pushkin's own life exemplifies and makes thoughtful, sensitive people ask:

"What kind of idea is he? What kind am I?" (Verses 111

section one: a survey of criticism

ÒMost simply, the [Western] Canon is É the image of the individual thinking, whether it be Socrates thinking through his own dying, or Harold Bloom (5)

Plato, in his *Symposium*, states that Òall creation or passage of non-being into being is poetTj or Ômaking,Õ and the processes of all art are creative; and the masters of arts are all poets or makers. (Later he continues: Òthe greatest and fairest sort of wisdom by far is that which is concerned with the ordering of states and families, and which is called temperance and justice. (These two statements offer a synecdoche of PlatoÕs aesthetic philosophy and represent the foundation of jushdieÕs and BulgakovÕs look at the conception of two of the worldÕs major religions and their creators.

Both jushdie and Bulgakov examine and portray two artists who were alive much later than a hundred years before Jesus was condemned to die and almost a millennium before genesis

inspiration and possession are the subjects of sections of *Phaedrus* and *Ion*. The rational mind controls the use of *techné*, but only the power of the divine can produce true art. Finally, the *Symposium* shows the ladder that leads to beauty begins with erotic longing for the lover and ascends through stages to arrive at an understanding of Beauty.

The latter two aspects of Plato's aesthetic philosophy are the most germane to the present study. The ideas of poetic inspiration and possession through the converging with a divine source and the gradual climb to the truth through the merging with a lover constitute the basis of the aesthetics in both Bulgakov's and Jushdie's novels by uncovering evil, and allowing the protagonists access to the truth. Therefore, as Carol Aoenberg states, Bulgakov views the artist "as an inheritor of creative impulses which are, in origin, divine" (107). Bulgakov's point of view can then be seen as basically religious in that he sees the universe as holistic, where the sparks of inspired creativity exist eternally (Aoenberg 107)

poses Plato, denies the poet any claim to actual knowledge. The poet is dangerous, therefore, because he could dupe many into believing his flattering, ersatz verses are the truth, or actual knowledge.

If the poet's verses are not communicating knowledge, then what is it they are

answers this question in Ion: "the poet is a light and winged and holy being, and there is no invention in him until he has been inspired and is out of his senses, and the mind is no longer with him."

The force of inspiration, states Plato, is a "divinity" that attracts like a magnet. The magnet attracts metal and imparts to it some of its force of attraction; therefore, like the Muse inspiring first the poet, the poet subsequently inspires others. The poet has been possessed, not by art, but by a poetic madness inspired by divinity: "for not by art does the poet sing, but by power divine" (Ion 55

Three dangers are relevant here: the deification of the poet, lack of understanding, and temptation. The former danger manifests in a messiah complex. The followers impose upon the poet “the likeness ... of the god whom they honor” (*Phaedrus* 64). The poet

that other beauty, using these steps only, and from the one going on to two, and from two to all fair forms, and from fair forms to fair practices, and from fair practices to true beauty is. (*Symposium* 354)

Yet, it must be stated again, the message communicated here is not knowledge, but a wisdom, which Plato distinguishes from the common man's "truth" (*Ion* 53). Socrates tells Ion: "the poets whose verses you sing, are wise; whereas I am a common man, who only speaks the truth" (*Ion* 53). Perhaps there is no ambiguity present at all. What Plato calls "truth" or "knowledge" appears to represent an empirical, testable, quantifiable reality, while "wisdom" seems to be an existential and mystical understanding of the way the universe has been able to climb the ladder to glimpse true, immutable Beauty, that through communion only, beholding beauty with the eye of the mind, one will be enabled to bring forth, not images of beauty, but realities; for he has not an image. Would that be an ignoble life? (*Symposium* 355)

This quotation seems to suggest that wisdom could perhaps be gained through the voice of the poet. If "reality" can be equated with "truth," then surely the poet/prophet has

death must proceed any rebirth. If one clings to absolute views of existence, then nothing new can come into the world; old, tyrannical ideas must die before a newness can occur. its propensity to hell (Myers 147-8)

many academics gravitate toward an idea of the multiplicity of a fluid reality where absolutes do not exist and barriers between worlds are toppled. Consequently, reality and fantasy become con-

must also have attained that celestial sagacity which will enable him to effectively guide his community along a path to wisdom.

The statesman must be both knowledgeable and wise to effectively practice an art of community. Yet, many fall short of this goal and become obdurate tyrants, enslaved by power, wealth, or popularity. When this happens, the closure of citizens' minds is an inevitability, because the freedom to explore alternate paths to wisdom is necessarily outlawed and denounced as evil. Any other paths would be a threat to the established order and must be done away with quickly before citizens begin asking questions. This tyrant can be both literal and figurative; it is anything that closes one's mind to new and different possibilities. The tyrant tells people what is right and takes away their need to decide, their freedom to decide, and, in most cases, the choices themselves.

constitutes the only true evil for Rushdie and Bulgakov. In a true postmodern ideology, the individuals are ultimately responsible for their own action or inaction in trying to find meaning. The ideas of Plato and postmodernism are not mutually exclusive. The latter does not omit the possibility of absolutes, but makes them less-certain in an ostensibly quixotic reality. Ultimately, that question becomes irrelevant. Thoughtful and sensitive individuals believe in ideas because these ideas ring true to their thoughts and observations; humans still read Shakespeare because he still says something significant and pertinent about what it means to be human. All humans must come to realize their own truths, and art brings humanity as close to universals as we can get—at least in this reality. Nietzsche, in *A Will to Power*, sums up these ideas: the artist “instinctively gathers from what he sees, hears, experiences, what advances his main concern—he follows a principle of selection—he allows much to flow through; ... he tests a stimulus for its origin and its intentions, he does not submit” (520). Edmundson suggests that poets fail when they accept someone else's version of the truth, when they “execute a previously prepared program” (65). Compromise, for Profeceo however, does not represent the worst sin: she sees poets as failures when they cease creating altogether—beaten by their enemies (564).

The poet, then, creates truths. His job is to articulate what he sees as the truth. Arenberg sums up these ideas in a few lines:

In a general sense, the artist attempts to see beyond the artificial categories of good and evil and the chaos of happenstance to the underlying unity of life and death and to create it in a concrete form. In this way the artist imitates the role of God through the language of his art. He sets himself apart from ordinary human beings. (111).

Regardless of whether the “underlying unity” is a Form, chaos, or anything in between, the poet must do his best to represent the truth that he has gleaned from an intimate contact with Beauty. If there is a Truth, it remains outside time and space, and both Bulgakov’s and Rushdie’s novels manipulate time and space in their quest for Truth (Proffer 559). Rushdie and Bulgakov portray the artist in his struggle against the *resentement* and conformity of the masses to his individuality: “he is always in his *own* company” (Nietzsche 520). Harold Bloom elaborates further: “the individual self is the only means by which and the whole standard for apprehending aesthetic value. But ‘the individual self,’ I unhappily grant, is defined only against society, and part of its agon with the communal inevitably reflects of the conflict between social and economic classes” (23). The artist battles against “absolute truths,” societal temptations, and self doubt, but, in to defend his words, his creation; he must be willing, states Myers, to crucify “himself on

section two: divine contention

“To be born again, ... first you have to die” sings Gibreel Farishta as he and Saladin Chamcha hurdle toward earth at the beginning of *The Satanic Verses* (3). Indeed, in this literal and metaphorical fall from their previous lives, exploded along with flight 420 to London,³ they are linked, transformed, metamorphosed, reborn. Chamcha eventually repudiates his adopted, high-brow life as a true Englishman, and becomes bestial in both appearance and mannerisms, while Gibreel assumes a more angelic form, suiting his divine name: Gibreel the Angel. Equally fantastic is the outset of *The Master and Margarita*. A typical spring afternoon at Patriarch’s Ponds turns fatal for Berlioz and Bezdomny when Satan shows up to question their beliefs. The former literally loses his head, while the latter, like Farishta and Chamcha, becomes truly homeless having heard the tale of this mysterious stranger—a tale that passes doubt on the current communist thought sanctans. This story, like its narrator, begins a chain of fantastic events, not unlike surviving a fall

The heterodox sections of *Verses* are dreamed by Farishta, while the heterodox sections of *Master*

that the heterodox sections of both novels are fictions; nevertheless, that amamaization fails to diminish their impact upon the contemporary world both in the novels and in theam6er's amaity. The

The nature of fiction versus fact has been brought into question. hlato states that

wise up. What is the difference between a novel and a story? A story is a tale that is told to a group of people, and a novel is a tale that is told to a single person. The difference between a novel and a story is that a novel is a work of art, and a story is a work of fiction. The essence of the art. This amaity in fiction speaks to and about the hu- this p-ofundity come from, and how is it translated to the artist?

The mysterious stranger that visits Berothioz and Bezdomny at the beginning of *Master* is, states the master later, katan (136 . katan is also allu6 ed to at the beginning of *Verses*

the "meteor or othightning or vengeance of God5, (4, 3 . katan begins his work with a dis- rupting vtviolence in both novels: Berothioz dies just as Wooand p-edicts, and Chamcha and Farishta fall from an exploding airplane. His work is to reassert life by introducing the Haber

Ostensibly, the story of Pontius Pilate and Yeshua are the contents of the master's novel; Woland narrates the first installment, Ivan Bezdomny dreams the second, and Margarita reads the latter two from the master's restored manuscript. By using Satan as his narrator, Bulgakov suggests the authenticity of the master's novel, given that he was also present when Pilate interviewed Yeshua (Proffer 535). By having Bezdomny dream the second section of the Pilate story, Bulgakov shows the universality of the story; i.e. the truth in the story is present in nature waiting to be divined (Proffer 537-8). This provokes Carol Avins' question: "where, then, lies the text's origin—in the Master's [and Ivan's] mind or in Woland's experience?" (276).

Yet, if Woland is the corrupter of the present belief systems in justice, a, e.g. compulsory atheism and/or a secret orthodox Christianity, he has infected Bezdomny by his meeting with him and Berlioz in chapters one through three. Woland has given Bezdomny something to ponder, which precipitates homelessness: Bezdomny begins to wander away from the intellectual community that he had accepted willingly and ends up having his own dark night of the soul. He, like Farishta and Chamcha, has died to his previous existence by a satanic disruption, and is, thus, ostracized from his former community of writers at *massolit*. Later, when Bezdomny meets the master, the latter recognizes Satan's influence and concludes that "Both you and I are mad, there's no point in denying it. He gave you a shock and it sent you mad" (137). And, as Satan is the prince of Lies, one cannot trust him as a reliable narrator, as Proffer suggests (559). Yet the factual truth of his narrative becomes moot, its main purpose is to shake things up in atheist Moscow.

The master, however, confirms to Bezdomny that Satan's narrative is fact: "The man you were talking to *was* with Pontius Pilate, he did have breakfast with Kant and now he has paid a call on Moscow" (137). The master's proof is in his novel: it parallels Woland's narration about Pontius Pilate—a novel the master wrote *without* having met Woland. This leads one to speculate on the master's inspiration. How, as Gibreel will ask in *Verses*, did his voice get worked and by whom?

Similar to Bezdomny, in *The Satanic Verses*, Gibreel dreams the Mahound sections after his fall, and in so doing, he treads upon sacred ground. Gibreel, a person who has become psychotic after surviving a fall from an exploded airplane, imagines himself as God's postman, the angel Gabriel, who must deliver the word of God to his prophet on

earth, i.e. Muhammad (King 149). Yet, somehow his lines become confused and Satan interjects verses into Gibreel's head, leaving the latter, in a state of consternation, to ask: "if the dabba had the wrong markings and so went to the incorrect recipient, was the dab-bawalla to blame?" (

as artists who have no place within the ranks of a corrupt and depraved society, whether it is Russia of the 1920s or today's London.

Both "texts" have dubious origins; ytytytboth texts seem to exist beyond their earthly creators as being both true and sacred (Avins 276). Avins, in responseeey theseeis-sues and aaaopos to both novels, states that:

section three: yeshua and mahound

True revelation is not a process
Either of error or deception, nor does
The Prophet speak from himself as he desires.
It is God's inspiration, true, without doubt.
It is reality,—the inner reality
Of heaven as far as knowledge can reach,
Nor the false ideas and idols that men
Construct for themselves, names without truth
Behind them. The goal of all things is God,
AAHe is the One from whom starts Reality.
No one can e'er intercede except
AA He wills. He made us, and knows all
That we are. It is not for us to justify
Ourselves, but to offer ourselves as we are. (Ali 1442)

The role of the poet in telling the uncompromising truth as he sees it, a common

The ability to control one's identity begins with language. Yet words have always been dangerous and have, therefore, been strictly controlled by those who have little tolerance for blasphemy. Words have the ability to repress and rebel, mythologize and mystify, imprison and emancipate. Proffer suggests that myth can represent a powerful, nega-

her baby at her breast until her milk ran out. Then she climbed two hills, first Safa then Marwah, running from one to the other in her desperation, trying to sight a tent, a camel, a human being. She saw nothing. That was when he came to her, Gibreel, and showed her the waters of Zamzam. So Hagar survived; but why now do the pilgrims congregate? To celebrate her survival? No, no. They are celebrating the honour done the valley by the visit of, you've guessed it, Ibrahim. In that loving consort's name, they gather, worship, and above all, spend. (

The adjective “earthly” carries significant weight in each novel. Both Rushdie (Gibreel) and Bulgakov (the master)¹⁰ present Mahound and Yeshua simply as men who are capable of human error and doubt. Mahound is just a man, as H “keep your faith for God. The Messenger is just a man” (105). Indeed, the businessman, succumbs momentarily to temptation in his acceptance to acknowledge three other idols alongside Allah. Likewise, Frank states that he betrays Yeshua strictly as a man not above realizing fear and doubt, and not the Messiah of orthodoxy (292). This removal of Jesus and Muhammad from the divine¹¹ has several implications, two of which are particularly important: they are fallible, and they can empathize with humanity, sharing that common humanity. Ericson stipulates another reason for removing Jesus and Muhammad from the divine: it removes the trite and “stale doctrinal formulas” and lets the reader see the human way (22). In effect, Rushdie and Bulgakov demythologize Jesus and Muhammad, giving the reader an opportunity to reevaluate the men and not the myths. As Hart notes, “thoroughly human” (Hart 171). An all-too-common fault among theologians, “despite their theology, is to think of Christ as God but not to think of Jesus as man” (23). Woland said that Jesus, the man, did exist, and that was the proof. Both Bulgakov and Rushdie remove these artists from any list of the divine and present humanity with humans.

When Yeshua Ha-Notsri is first introduced in the chahuma, he has already been arrested and beaten for his simple vision that “there are no evil spirits, that all “will pass into the kingdom of truth and justice” (*Master 23*).

written, then it becomes official, Roman truth. Rome's truths are official "facts" and judgments that only need to be recited by those in power to secretaries to become truth: "It only remained to dictate this to the secretary" (30). Pilate's secretary is present throughout Yeshua's interrogation, writing down the conversation until it grows beyond what official Roman interrogations should sound like.¹²

In the middle of his inquisition, Yeshua uses his obviously honed intuitive powers to empathize with Pilate's headache, his thoughts about death, and his longing for his loyal dog (Haber 396):

At this the Procurator thought, Ye gods! This is a court of law and I am asking him an irrelevant question ... my mind no longer obeys me." Once more he had a vision of a goblet of dark liquid. "Poison, I need poison. ..."

And again he heard the voice:

"At this moment the truth is chiefly that your head is aching and aching so hard that you are having cowardly thoughts about death. Not only are you in no condition to talk to me, but it even hurts you to look at me. This makes me seem to be your torturer, which distresses me. You cannot

creature for whom you have any affection. But the pain will stop soon and your headache will go."

The secretary stared at the prisoner, his note-taking abandoned. (26).

the so called satanic verses, then a most probable narrator is Satan, implying a satanic element in Mahound's revelation. However this revelation is interpreted, artistic inspiration and epiphany remains a mystical experience that cannot, for just die, be explained absolutely, but that contains certain passionate, almost erotic, embraces, and hypnagogic states of consciousness resembling hlato's poetic madness.

Gibreel and the Prophet are wrestling, both naked, rolling over and over
... then he did his old trick, forcing my mouth open and making the voice,
the Voice, pour out of me once again, made it pour all over him, like sick.
(123

ideas of poets: “*What happens when you win? When your enemies are at your mercy: how will you act then?*” (*Verses 467*).

Mahound displays his magnanimity to those who embrace Allah and Submission, his new religion (*Verses 125*). Mahound leaves Jahilia after repudiating the satanic verses

section four: manuscripts

Jacques Derrida, in his book *Writing and Difference*, quotes Merleau-Ponty:

Communication in literature is not the simple appeal on the part of the writer to meanings which would be part of an a priori of the mind; rather, communication arouses these meanings in the mind through enticement and a kind of oblique action. The writer's thought does not control its language from without; the writer is himself a kind of new idiom, constructing itself. (11)

This quotation relates to the central concerns of both novels: “*What kind of idea are you?*” (*VerDi* 95) and “Manuscripts don't burn” (Bulgakov 281). Both of these quotations are pivotal to the idea of the artist's ontology and his relationship to and portrayal of the truth, i.e. the work of art, or in this case, the text. The followers of Maughlin and Yeshua—namely their tribes, Salman the heretic and Matthew the Levite—and the texts which they physically write, play a major role in the propagation of their masters' ideas for better or for

Avins propose that “texts that are literally destroyed still exist if they have made a mark on someone or have the potential of becoming known” (284). Arenberg carries this one step further by saying that a true “artistic creation stands on its own as an expression of a moment of eternal truth captured; ... every imaginative creation on this earth, whether by the artist, the prophet, or the martyr, has a permanent reality” (111). Both opinions are relevant to the present question of artistic creation. It must also be stated that if a manuscript or personal truth requires a reader to evaluate his metaphysical position in the universe, then it has fulfilled its ontological role and will remain with that person in some form or another throughout his life and the lives of those he intersects. Therefore the work and the artist must be able to stand up against the transience of the “*What kind of idea are you?*” question and provide that question at the same time.

“*What kind of idea are you?*” echoes prophetic language throughout both *Satanic Verses* and *lie Master and Margarita*. Rushdie's question, states Suleri, is primarily aimed at

himself hovering over Mahound on Mt. Cone. unsure of his dream identity, whether Gibriel or Shaitan, and excited by the ambiguity, kalman begins to change khound's recitation:

Little things at first. If khound recited a verse in which God was described as

Proffer suggests that Matthew never really understands Yeshua and, as Yeshua tells Pilate, inaccurately translates his words (538). Besides being a poor scribe, Matthew shows no compassion in his readiness to kill to avenge his deki master, further distorting Yeshua's teaching (Proffer 539). Proffer's observation about Matthew may also be applied to Salman the Persian. He cannot understand Mahound's compassion for his community; Mahound does not ignore his people's needs in the expression of his own truth. Couple this misunderstanding with his changing of Mahound's words, and it would seem that Salman represents *Submission*Cki 's first blasphemer.

CkWhile the circumstances are different, the essential question is the same: if it is not the word of God, then whose word is it? Aple sources seem to point to God's antithesis, the Ckarchetypal perverter of the word: Satan.

section five: disciples and the *felix culpa*

God's plan, avers Bulgakov, includes "evil" and the ability to choose. Evil is necessary for two reasons: Woland states that good needs a foil to remain good, for what is

voice. You spoke your words as though you denied the very existence of shadows or of evil. Think, now: where would your good be if there were no evil, and what would the world look like without shadow? Shadows are thrown by people and things. There's the shadow of my sword, for instance. But shadows are also cast by trees and living beings. Do you want to strip the whole globe by removing every tree and every creature to satisfy your fantasy of a bare world? You're stupid." (

and enters the peaceful haven of madness (177). The master, like Yeshua, shows his abilities in divining truth and his own voice to eschew the mediocrity of his day, but lacks the courage to remain true to his beliefs and defend them to the death (Haber 391, 399).

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 certainly part of his punishment, that he is ... without any fixed place, or space, allowed him to rest the sole of his foot upon.

Both characters estrange themselves in an attempt to adopt an alien identity: Ivan takes the name Bezdomy in his attempt to become to become an atheist, communist poet,

Similarly, after his fall from the *Bostan* with Gibreel, Chamcha begins to realize that he does not belong in his adopted country. He begins to assume the corporeal shape of evil, simultaneously stripped of his physical and social identity (Verstraete 329

This darkness embraced by Chamcha is focused on Gibreel in the form of verses. His change forces him to discard his Englishness—his wife and career—and focus all of his contempt toward the man that allowed him to be taken away and brutalized: Gibreel

vidual beliefs and societal values, takes courage to endure. He as a teacher may now influence the minds of a new generation to embrace their individual natures—to think and not blindly subscribe to another's narrative and vision of truth. He is now in a position to utter his own satanic verses which initially cause suffering, but ultimately emancipate.

Chamchawala's freedom begins with the reconciliation with his father, Changez. Indeed *changes* and multiplicity are symbolized by a wonderful lamp of wishes and possibilities—all he must do is rub the lamp and believe in its power. The atmosphere of India begins to affect Saladin:

McLauren submits that while “we freefall through the worlds of Rushdie’s imagination, we are forced to take the responsibility for our own readings, our own choices” (64). While Rushdie and Bulgakov may not offer readers any truth, they both stress the importance of community and empathy in composing one’s own truth. The artist, like Ivan, Chamchawala must see himself in relation to his community and his own humanity. The satanic element is part of that humanity and must not be ignored, but should be embraced and questioned and allowed to have a voice. This satanic element allows growth and change, both of which are integral to human life. For if an absolute truth is allowed to rule one’s life, change, growth, and history itself will come to an end, like in Rushdie’s nightmare vision of the Imam. If one knows *the absolute truth*, then what would be the point of living other than to convert heathens, to banish Satan, and stop thought alto-

God's heavy, or an aspect of God. Indeed, there seems to be a "dual Godhead" in both

This same evil is being battled in jushdie's *oeuvre*. Farishta has become a public figure, and has conformed to the lasciviousness and greed of society by the latter half of the book. He is a victim of Chamcha's satanic verses which represent him and his love, Alim Samchawala, with his love, Zeenat Vakil, is left free from a corrupting society to seek his own truth. A vision of London, similar to that of Bulgakov's Moscow, has been put through a time of oppression, minority population (612). Film makers, politicians, actors, lawyers, and writers are all victims to the scourge of the city and the depravity of jushdie's pen (King

Imam and the charismatic Ayesha, them. Only Mahound, the true prophet of truth, demands acceptance of the only a ptanic verses that repre-

conclusion: healthily blasphemous

Mahound and Yeshua, despite what many of the critics aver, are the true heroes of their respective novels. These archetypal artists positively influence all the novels' characters, including the reader, who hear their stories and attempt to relate to them to their individuality. Their struggle to be heard, their will to withstand temptation, and their courage to maintain their beliefs whatever the consequences make them figures to be admired and emulated more so than the product of their struggle. Rushdie admires those like Yeshua and Mahound who "attempt radical reformations of language, form and ideas, those that attempt to do what the word *novel* seems to insist upon: to see the world anew. I am well aware that this can be a hackle-raising, infuriating attempt" ("Faith" 393). Rushdie, like his character Mahound, has stood relatively firm in his expression of truth—even through a sentence of death—since 1989, and has only recently reemerged.

Suleri

The prophet's return [from his union with Gabriel] is creative. He returns

with someone who loves us and inspires us to reach for our own truths? The choice is every individual's to make—each of us just has to ask the question: “What kind of idea am I?”

The blind conformity to any notion, belief, or ideal without consulting the inner artist is truly the ultimate evil. Arenberg states that “the master demonstrates that each man's salvation lies within himself,” and “Bulgakov recognized that men follow the path of least resistance, denying their own imaginative capabilities in favor of institutionalized ideologies, organized religion, and conventional morality” (

end notes

¹ The first full and correct text was not published in the Soviet Union until 1973 (Proffer 530). Also see Johnson for publishing history.

² Proffer suggests that *Master* contains one truth which may be divined (537-8). While this position is supportable, it, nevertheless, suggests another absolute which would not lend credence to multiple interpretations of truth.

³ Aravamudan discusses the numerical implications of the number 420 in India: "the scope of 420 does not extend to the more significant villainy of politicians and businessmen" (7). He states that 420 represents a sort of Orwellian tyranny to those who experienced Indira Gandhi's political *régime* (8).

⁴ *The Satanic Verses* will be simply e a f t e

states Noor, “Rushdie has put to shame those who invented that disparaging name for the prophet” (). See also Myers and Nazareth.

¹⁵ Again the ambiguous “me” appears in the text. This time, however, the “me” is seemingly also being manipulated by some unseen force, perhaps God (cf. Section 5).

¹⁶ Alfred Guillaume states that Muhammad made a temporary but small concession to heathenism in sura 53:19: “Have you considered Al-Lat and al-'Uzza and Manat the third other? ... Verily they are the exalted maidens and their intercession is to be hoped for” (189).

¹⁷ Compare this passage to one in *Master's* heterodox section, when Pilate asks Yeshua: “Do you happen to know ... anyone called Dismas? Or Hestus? Or a third—Bar-Abba?” (

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