

The Gothic-postmodernist “Waste Land” of Ellowen Deeowen: Salman Rushdie’s Nightmarish Visions of a Postmodern Metropolis.

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To consider *The Satanic Verses* as a Gothic-postmodernist text, it is necessary to begin with a re-conceptualisation of both the Gothic and postmodernism, and to initially see that as a hybridised novel it does not conventionally operate as a schema of fantastic themes and devices which encapsulate the postmodern, postcolonial condition. Instead, as is clear from the perspective of this study, it challenges all attempts at ideological categorisation, in its own hybridity and in its own self-perception which blends the forms of the Gothic and postmodernist text to materialise its own individual style of literature. In this, it also challenges certain Western cultural ideologies based on wholeness and unity in relation to both perception and subjectivity. However, its central intelligence is in its appropriation of the Gothic mode to try to represent the violence and terror of postmodernity and this will be the focus of this essay, which will analyse the text parallel to T.S Eliot’s *The Waste Land*, which can be regarded as a prototype of this type of literature.

Leading critic of the Gothic, Fred Botting has commented that throughout post-enlightenment literary history ‘[t]he Gothic existed in excess of and often within [contemporary] realist forms, both inhabiting and excluded from [their] homogenising representations of the world’ (Botting 1996, 13). The liminal position of the genre can thus be identified as making some definitive moves toward literary centrality with the emergence of the chaotic and fabulous landscapes of postmodern fiction and the general movement in art away from concepts of ‘reality’ and toward ephemerality. This is supported by the commonly held view that the essence of postmodernism is in its pioneering attempt at putting forward the ‘unrepresentable’, referring to the disturbance of the subject in response to the Kantian notion of the sublime. The condition is one of exultation (as reason perceives totality) and terror (as the imagination fails to represent it). Jean Francois Lyotard extended this theory of the ‘unrepresentable’ by indicating that the faculties of reason and imagination are irreconcilable. Postmodernist art, according to

this theory, has an ‘obligation’ to the ‘unrepresentable’, whereby it should celebrate the sublime and its effects of genuine heterogeneity on the subject (Lyotard 1991, 210). Salman Rushdie’s *The Satanic Verses* is an illuminating example of postmodernism in this sense and its Gothic undertones and nuances serve to intensify this preoccupation with the unspeakable and therefore unimaginable terrors of postmodernity.

The Gothic concentration on the sublime faculty of the imagination as it stumbles upon the super-real or supernatural has long been the focus of interest for critics. According to Vijay Mishra ‘[t]he Gothic sublime brought a dangerous negative principle of nontranscendental subjectivity’ (Mishra 1994, 4), noting how ‘[t]he mind turns inward and regresses into the labyrinths of unconscious’ (Mishra 1994, 255) and hence the hallucinogenic feel and the mood of melancholy, mourning anxiety. I allude to Mishra because everything in the Gothic world of literature, as in the postmodernist, including the human and the monstrous is *both real and fictional*. This may be taken as the starting point of this analysis.

This realisation, to use the most ironic of terms was encountered by modernist writers early in the century, leading to the anguish of the fragmented subjects whose ghostly voices are heard in T.S Eliot’s *The Waste Land*, and the ‘Horror!’ and ‘unspeakable rites’ of Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*. Moving forward from subsequent struggles with subjectivity and scientific rationality, postmodernist literature intensified the situation to the extremity of negation. This study posits to analyse Salman Rushdie’s novel *The Satanic Verses*, in order to explore the Gothic and postmodernist aspects of this negation, primarily because as a complex work, it can be regarded as articulating a celebration of terror and chaos in its refutation of modernism’s return to wholeness and unity through the grande narratives of mythology, history and religion. However, as Rushdie maintains this articulation via the familiar nightmare or ‘waste land’ vision of contemporary modernity, his novel can be seen as a step forward in the generic evolution of the Gothic. From the springboard of Gothic modernist literature, it shifts toward a position in literature where it can attempt to voice the unspeakable terrors of metamorphosis in the postmodern subjective sphere of endless and beginningless nothings in which our existence is reduced to imagination and emotion.

In the context of the hyperreal, subjectivity is no longer a struggle. It is negated. It is impossible. I say this with reference to ‘the impossible thing’ that is detailed in *The Satanic Verses*:

It was a figure out of a nightmare or a late-night TV movie, a figure covered in mud and ice and blood, the hairiest creature you ever saw, with the shanks and hoofs of a giant goat, a man’s torso covered in goat’s hair, human arms, and a horned, but otherwise human head covered in muck and grime and the beginnings of a beard. Alone and unobserved, the impossible thing pitched forward on to the floor and lay still (Rushdie 1998, 188).

At this early stage in Rushdie’s narrative it is possible for the reader to understand that this ‘impossible thing’ is the demonised Saladin Chamcha, one of the many ‘protagonists’ in the novel. He is both human and monster as the description tells us, and a figure of fancy ‘out of a nightmare or a late-night TV movie’. But he remains to be seen as the character we *know* as ‘Spoon’, ‘Chamcha’ from the early chapters that outlined his actual life, before the terrors that befell his poor soul after surviving the ‘echo of tragedy’ that is falling from a hi-jacked plane.

On one of its most salient levels this novel is an exploration of the creation and subsequent loss of self in the context of a postmodern world in which existence ‘means’ guilt; transience; evanescence and heterogeneous identity; fragmentation, and the deconstruction of individual cultural moral standards. On many occasions direct philosophical references are made to the questions of self that arise out of Saladin Chamcha’s demonisation. ‘The question of the mutability of the essence of the self’ is the central problem according to the wise but moderate to the extreme Haji Sufyan, who quotes from Lucretius: ‘*Quodcumque suis mutatum finibus exit, continuo hoc mors est illius quod fuitante*, translated as: ‘Whatever by its changing goes out of its frontiers... by doing so brings immediate death to its old self’ (Rushdie 1998, 288). As a counterpoint to his initial argument he then poses a challenge from Ovid’s *Metamorphosis*: ‘[a]s yielding wax... is stamped with new designs /And changes shape and seems not still the same /Yet it is indeed the same, even so our souls... Are still the same forever but adopt in their migrations ever-varying forms’ (Rushdie 1998, 288). We can see in this a kind of

existentialist philosophy whereby the ontology of self is the first and most significant problem. According to Paul Brians,

one could derive from the book a sort of existentialist morality: there are no absolutes, but we are responsible for the choices we make, the alliances we forge, the relationships we enter into. Our choices define us. We cannot shift the responsibility of our actions to God or history. "What kind of an idea are you?" is a question addressed not only to immigrants, but to all of us. (Brians 2004, 89)

For Sufyan it is always Ovid over Lucretious, but '[h]e [Saladin] chose Lucretious over Ovid. The inconstant soul, the mutability of everything, das Ich, every last speck. A being going through life can become so other to himself as to *be another*, discrete, severed from history' (Rushdie 1998, 288). What results from this 'choice' to 'enter into his new self... to 'be what he had become' (Rushdie 1998, 289), is that Saladin achieves 'other' perspectives on reality than were previously available to him. He is afforded a condition of liminality and arguably occupies a concept of self that is mongrelised and uncontrollable. His old self is gone, and its loss is Hell for Saladin.

What is significant is that firstly, this preoccupation with the destruction of the subject and secondly, his new perspective on his own subjectivity is essentially Gothic, in many respects akin to that of Eliot in his poem *The Waste Land*. The 'reality' of death that concerns Eliot is not physical as much as spiritual and emotional. According to George Williamson '[d]eath is the ultimate meaning of *The Waste Land* for a people for whom its explanation is only a myth, for whom death is destructive rather than creative, and in whom the will to believe is frustrated by the fear of life' (Williamson 1974, 129). Death in Rushdie's kaleidoscopic textual universe is much the same. The 'unreal city' in which Saladin struggles to define himself impossibly is 'visible but unseen'; is effectively 'a city of ghosts and not men' as John Peter describes *The Waste Land* (Peter 1990, 249). As in *The Waste Land* the inhabitants are not truly awake to life; not aware of the cruelty of the modern world or of 'a dead sound on the final stroke of nine' (68). And so in this context we see that the demonised Saladin's new Gothic vision of self and of 'reality' is chaotic and disturbing. What he conceives as 'self' is now the 'Devil's mirror-self' and what he perceives as 'other' is Gibreel, transformed into the simulacrum of an angel' (Rushdie 1998, 294).

Looking in the mirror at his altered face, Chamcha attempted to remind himself of himself. I am a real man, he told the mirror, with a real history and a planned out future. I am a man to whom certain things are of importance: rigour; self-discipline; reason, the pursuit of what is noble without recourse to that old crutch, God. The ideal of beauty; the possibility of exaltation, the mind. I am: a married man. But in spite of his litany, perverse thoughts insisted on visiting him. A for instance: that the world did not exist beyond that beach down there, and, now, this house. That if he weren't careful, if he rushed matters, he would fall off the edge into clouds (Rushdie 1998, 136).

The illusion of self in psychoanalytic terms has long been a central concern of Gothic fiction. We might keep in mind Count Dracula's transcendence of the mirror stage¹ in having no reflection in this respect and also Dorian Gray's mysterious connection with his visual representation in the haunted painting of his artist-friend's creation. In this case, we see that Saladin is uncannily aware of the distortions of the mirror and tries to break the illusion by convincing himself that he is a real man: the ideal of beauty. It is quite interesting however that the mirror-stage is here reversed and that the mirror is offering him a monstrous and fragmented self-image, which he is struggling to conceive as whole. Unfortunately, in this struggle he is without success and it subsequently becomes clear that his vision of the world is an extension of his vision of self. *Ellowen Deeowen*, where he once saw 'attractively faded grandeur' (Rushdie 1998, 270), 'a refuge... without any of the self-congratulatory huddled masses rhetoric of the 'nation of immigrants' across the ocean.' (Rushdie 1998, 399), becomes 'transformed into Jahannum, Gehenna, Muspellheim', for '[y]es, this was Hell alright' (ibid.).

From beneath the earth came tremors denoting the passage of huge subterranean worms that devoured and regurgitated human beings, and from the skies the thrum of choppers and the screech of higher, gleaming birds (Rushdie 1998, 254).

¹ Psychoanalytic theorist Jacques Lacan holds that the human ego is a fictive creation of 'the Mirror Stage'; that stage in the development of the young subject when it first sees its image reflected in a mirror. 'The mirror stage is a drama whose internal thrust precipitated from insufficiency to anticipation – and which manufactures for the subject... the succession of phantasies that extends from a fragmented body image to a form of its totality' (Lacan 1995, 5).

Saladin's *Waste Land* vision of the humanity of which he was a part but exists now on the borders of, is one entirely defined by metamorphosis. His friend Hyacinth Phillips has transformed into a vampire with the hair of Medusa and the body of a skeleton. Through his recollection of her he feels as though: 'a skeleton had seized him and was trying to drag him down into a grave; he could smell the freshly dug earth, the cloying scent of it, on her breath, on her lips... revulsion seized him' (Rushdie 1998, 255). His vision is a conventionally Gothic one, of reversal and inversion, for the living are now dead, reality is appearance, and angels are demons.

Similar questions postulating about the nature of perceived selves and realities are presented through Eliot's modernist philosophical pursuit through the dark labyrinthine world of fragmentation that is selfhood, but also the 'unreal city' of London. Eliot's preoccupation with 'death' as it pervades the modern metropolis and the mind of the modern individual is linked emphatically to the failure of language to communicate introspective experience and by default to the concept of subjectivity. As a result, *The Waste Land* was used as a structural analogue by Lacan because of its putting forward of the 'unrepresentable': the mysterious desire for unity that the fictional, fragmented self can never achieve, in a form that is ultimately unified. The diminishing fragmented words and phrases which sustain the poem as a whole can be interpreted as a poetisation of Lacan's theory. In the final verse:

If there were water

And no rock

If there were no rock

And also water

And water

A spring

A pool among the rock

If there were the sound of water only (346-354)

We see that the language disintegrates in anticipation of achieving a purer sense of reality, of self. To reiterate: Lacan refers to this formulation of the subject as 'a drama whose internal thrust precipitated from insufficiency to anticipation' (Lacan 2001, 5).

The current and content of *The Waste Land* could be accurately described in the same statement. Lacan however also maintains that the nightmare of fragmentation will persistently haunt the ego as a recollection of its fictionality (ibid.), an echo perhaps of Eliot's shattered and arguably Gothic concept of reality, in which people are ghosts of themselves, unable to speak, unable to see and unable to know anything (38-41).

Lacanian theory is quite relevant to many angles of interpretation on *The Waste Land*. In his early writing Lacan elaborated on the dislocations of Freudian theory by analysing how in poetry the perceiving 'I' of the narrative disappeared into the anonymous, decentred ego echoing the polyglossia of popular culture (Gelpi 1990, etext). His interest in *The Waste Land* was therefore centred on the struggle for structure and unity in the poem, but also on the day-dream or fantasy-like configuration through which language, identity and aesthetic order are explored. Lacan appropriated the main function of the day dream with reference to Freud as *Wunscherfullung* or wish-fulfilment (Lacan 2001, 160), in which our desires for unity, dominance and erotic power are accomplished. However, unity in *The Waste Land* is paradoxical. Although like most modernists, Eliot here exalts the imagination (though by now devoid of idealism) as 'the agency of coherence' which can 'decreate disordered experience into aesthetic order' (Gelpi 1990, etext), the ghostly voices that speak to us from unknown places, have no unified concept of self or reality. Like Rushdie's characters they seem to be adrift in a world of fragmentation and disorder. F.R Leavis refers to *The Waste Land* in this respect as 'the poetization of the unpoetical' (Leavis 1990, 166), in this case horror in the face of epistemological uncertainty, emotional sterility and loss of faith in humanity, and it all explodes in a Cubist vision that we can only refer to as Gothic modernism.

Williamson comments that to his own poetic standards Eliot makes the imagery of the sordid life of the great metropolis represent something much more than itself (Williamson 1974, 130). I would argue that Rushdie does the same in *The Satanic Verses*. If anything can be taken as 'clear' from Eliot's poem, it is that his perspective on modern 'reality' is effected through the Gothic imaginary at work on a number of different levels supporting the theme of terror and linguistic frustration. A succession of hauntings provides the basic structure for the poem, hauntings that the reader cannot evade because

of the loss of vocal unity and the disturbed and jumbled way in which the ghostly voices speak over each other trying to give account of their lives in the unreal city of London:

“Trams and dusty trees.

Highbury bore me. Richmond and Kew

Undid me. By Richmond I raised my knees

Supine on the floor of a narrow canoe”

“My feet are at Moorgate, and my heart

Under my feet. After the Event

He wept. He promised ‘a new start’

I made no comment. What should I resent?”

“On Margate Sands.

I can connect

Nothing with nothing.

The broken fingernails of dirty hands.

My people humble people who expect

Nothing”

la la (292-306)

We don’t know who these voices belong to or from where they are spoken. They are among other ghosts present in name only: Queen Elizabeth I and her lover; a young girl named Marie; a drowned Phoenician sailor, and their utterances are reduced eventually to a Beckettian murmuring, much like the nightingale whose once invigorating song is reduced to

Twit twit twit

Jug jug jug jug jug jug (203-4)

or overpowered by ‘the sound of horns and motors’(197).

Having said this, the poet’s presence is itself ghostly, melting through time and literary history, melting through space and trans gender, much like the central figure Tiresias, who ‘throbbing between two lives’ (218), sees everything and knows everything and also,

much like the enigmatic omnipresent narrator of *The Satanic Verses*. In *The Satanic Verses*, Rushdie uses the Gothic concepts of terror, evil and metamorphosis to highlight the condition of the ghostly and dehumanised characters of the novel, who together in 'Babylondon' (Rushdie 1998, 459) form the 'walking corpses, great crowds of the dead, all of them refusing to admit they're done for' (Rushdie 1998, 458). This same image corresponds quite succinctly with Eliot's poem:

Under the brown fog of a Winter dawn,
A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many,
I had not thought death had undone so many,
Sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled,
And each man fixed his eyes before his feet.
Flowed up the hill and down King William Street,
To where Saint Mary Woolnoth kept the hours
With a dead sound on the final stroke of nine. (61-68)

In Rushdie's 'uncharted wasteland' (Rushdie 1998, 327), the reader is shown 'fear in a handful of dust', just as in *The Waste Land*, we are presented with the poem itself as a scorched pyre consisting of the ashes of the dead who have not been buried but consumed by the fire of earthly desires: lust vanity and greed.

Burning burning burning burning
O Lord Thou pluckest me out
O Lord Thou pluckest

burning (308-311)

We see that in both texts, terror is reaffirmed and the Gothic elements resurface in the form of 'red sullen faces' that 'sneer and snarl' (344), 'bat-winged imps sitting on corners of buildings made of deceits and glimpsed goblins oozing wormily through the broken tile-work of public urinals for men' (Rushdie 1998, 321), 'bats with baby faces in the violet light' (380-382), a hooded man 'Gliding wrapped in a brown mantle' (364), tumbled

graves, rattling bones. It all becomes an imaginary, from which to view to emotional vampirism that seems to epitomise contemporary existence.

From this angle we can see that Rushdie is looking at postmodern, hyperreal existence and is reading it through the unique lens of Gothicism. In a sense his avatars, witches, vampires and lost souls are Gothic caricatures of our postmodern selves. 'The lost soul' that Gibreel encounters in 'the hellish maze' of London is a poignant example: 'It was young, male, tall and of extreme beauty, with a strikingly aquiline nose and longish black hair, oiled down and parted in the centre. Its teeth were made of gold' (Rushdie 1998, 322). What is immediately striking is that this description fits perfectly with that of Jonathan Harker's account of Dracula in Bram Stoker's Gothic novel of the same name (see: Stoker 2003, 24). Count Dracula, as is known from the novel, is an enigmatic character in that he has the ability to transcend subjectivity. He has no reflection and can therefore be seen as the ultimate subject, exceeding the mirror stage and attaining a surplus of identity from the sources of myth, history, and supernatural existence. What is also significant about this link is that 'the lost soul' has a photo of his body and is roaming the streets terrified and frantic, in the hope of finding it. The inclusion of the photograph is a reiteration (to refer back to Saladin's mirror reflection) and an ironic play on the notion of what we can truly know of our postmodern 'selves'. We see in a photo a distorted image; the symbolic; the alleged 'true' self or soul is radically dislocated from the body. Fragmentation on Lacan's terms can therefore be seen as occurring on a number of different levels and the soul or self is represented as something like a splintered glass whose primal image can never be regenerated. In this we see that Salman Rushdie is taking Eliot's *Waste Land* vision to a new more radical level where, multiple worlds, multiple voices, and multiple selves abound in a sort of spectral existence that transcends time, death and desire. Angels, demons, avatars and ghosts are present in terms of hyperreality.

Many of Rushdie's ghosts, like the lost soul, can be seen as definitively postmodern. Alleluia Cone for example, is haunted by her dead sister via the glossy pages of a popular magazine in which she once featured as a model. The many voices or

‘plurivocity’ to use a Bakhtinian term², present in the text through memory, radio jingles, advertising posters and biblical verses are haunting in the same way. Similarly, the inclusion of the internal voices of characters, manifested in the text in italic form appears to represent some unconscious or repressed self of the particular character. The Derridean concept of ‘hauntology’ is relevant here. The vaporous voices are manifest as separate from the rest of the text as a ‘representation’ or shadow of their ‘real’ existence, which is as empty as themselves; which is neither being nor non-being. The representation of this existence is furthermore contrasted with the ‘real’ noise of media sounds and phrases in the text, which bear something of a technological existence, and that clash with their ghostly whisperings in effect illustrating that their subjective linguistic existence is almost a presence in absence (see Derrida 1994). They ‘are’ in the sense of the indeterminate existence that is pre-linguistic and are not afforded the same existence in the narrative as, say for example our narrator. Subsequently, they may be seen as a sub-text, the presence of a darker side of identity struggling to create itself as it is haunted by its own otherness.

In the novel, this effects something similar to what is created in Eliot’s poem, in which we see a multiplicity of realities, inhabited by spectral beings, but narrated by a watcher: Tiresias, who is a mirror to Gibreel, the visionary of the novel. In *The Satanic Verses*, Gibreel exclaims at one point that ‘he understands now something of what omnipresence must be like, because he is moving through several stories at once’ (Rushdie 1998, 457), namely: the one in which he mourns Alleluia Cone’s betrayal, the one in which he hovers over the death bed of the Prophet, the one in which he watches over the pilgrimage to the Arabian sea, the one in which he waits for the moment at which he will reveal himself, and the meeting with his adversary in the form of the Devil’s mirror-self: Saladin. In this we see again that Eliot’s ideas are taken to new levels, as Rushdie creates a series of ulterior ‘realities’, or from our perspective, fictions which according to Neill Cornwell prove to be ‘equally phantasmoragic’ (Cornwell 1990, 189), including hellish visions of humanity and monstrosity. These

² Plurivocity is part of what Bakhtin would call heteroglossia in a text, whereby multiple subjects are given voice, consequently disputing any homogenous epistemological and ontological values in and outside the text and empowering the reader with a multiplicity of interpretations (Ryan 2001, 4).

different levels of existence are manifest in terms of ancient, modern, dream, mythic and religious and are not only equally phantasmoragic, but equally Gothic. I say this because the phantasmoragia or delirium is specifically terrifying. Sublime terror is outlined on every level of the novel, in every world and every story. It is essentially the terror of subjectivity, the terror of losing one's identity, one's self, and finding that it has been replaced by something ghostly. The spectrality of the characters is emphasised continuously throughout the novel and there are many 'real' ghosts who contribute to the tale. Rekha Merchant, the shape-shifting djinn, who haunts Gibreel to his death, leading him to 'wonder if she is an emissary of the divine antagonist and not an inner guilt-produced shade' (Rushdie 1998, 324), comes to mind as does the ghost of explorer Maurice Wilson as seen by Allie Cone at the penultimate sublime moment she experiences at the top of Mt. Everest. Rosa Diamond too is somewhat of a significant character in her spectrality among many others who make up the haunted metropolis of both Gibreel and Saladin's waking and dreaming states of mind.

Of Eliot's poetry, it is *The Waste Land* that is most haunted by the terrible 'realities' of self and therefore language and that in turn orchestrates a series of brutal tunings of 'the shapes of sound' and 'delicate and careful murderings' of vocal patterns (Cummings 1990, 51). In doing this Eliot seeks to push the limits of language closer to the subjective reality of modern existence. In the opening stanza we are introduced to the recurring Gothic motifs of memory and desire, which are stirred by the 'cruel' Spring as it forces life from the dead earth. This is immediately a reminder of Rushdie's central question: 'how does newness enter the world?' (Rushdie 1998, 272). For Eliot, the answer presents an immediate link between language and identity, as it does for Rushdie whose novel proclaims that '[t]o be born again first you have to die' (Rushdie 1998, 3). Of course this is a reference to the metaphysics of Lucretious and Ovid, and what stands out as significant is death and degeneration. Degeneration of self must precede regeneration according to Lucretious and also Eliot, who attempts to recreate the experience for the reader in his poem. In *The Waste Land* the ghosts of memory speak in a foreign tongue: 'Bin gar keine Russin, stamm'aus Litauen, echt deutsch' (12) and remind the speaker of a lively past that contrasts with a dead and sterile present: 'I read, much of the night, and go South in Winter' (18). It is quite obvious that the reader will be curious as to what the

line in German means, but as Michael Edwards points out its significance lies in the fact that it is presented to us as foreign and other (Edwards 1990, 343). Effectively, this serves to estrange the reader in his or her own language, which of course problematises their knowledge of 'self' in the context of a language that is 'other'. This idea is developed in detail as an aspect of Salman Rushdie's Gothic-postmodernism in *The Satanic Verses* and also *Midnight's Children* where Hindi and Urdu languages are used fervently in an attempt to bring the reader to a perspective based on the concept of being 'other' and subsequently the temporary loss of 'self'. For both writers this technique functions to marginalise the reader through defamiliarisation and so dislocates the logocentrism inherent in identity and morality and conventionality espoused in the discourse of the text. Rushdie's does this to quite an extent in his *The Satanic Verses*, incessantly alluding to Indian and Pakistani tradition without clarification for his readers and also in his linguistic assimilation of words and experimentation with phonetics and alphabet 'Tchu Tche Tchin Tchou. No Matter. All in good time' (Rushdie 1998, 327). According to Paul Brians, this has the effect of 'startl[ing] the Western reader into realizing he/she is not the centre of all stories' (Brians 2004, 4).

From the perspective of this study however, it has a double effect, as it also operates to recreating the experience of postmodern alienation in the mind of the reader, in a sense effecting a role reversal and a shift in position where the reader now occupies a liminal textual space. As is clear from Eliot's poem this was also a central preoccupation of modernism and a crucial focus for literary exploration and sets a precedent for the terror that will be aroused by of the remainder of the text. This terror is one in which identity cannot be sustained. Voices and perspective constantly shift in the form of a disoriented and incessantly mutating protagonist, the modern man of the modern waste land.

Leavis has noted that Eliot's purposeful use of 'othered' languages serves in the creation of an aura of 'impersonality [and] transcendence of the individual self', which results in a world view which has lost its axiom (Leavis 1990, 167). Without an overarching principle or philosophy we are left with an attempt by Eliot to reinstate a unifying philosophy via the fusion of Eastern and Western religious mythology. This is where Rushdie differs from Eliot and so firmly establishes himself as a postmodernist writer.

While contemplating these ideas in literary terms, Rushdie muses through the character of Gibreel, over Blake's image of the Regenerated Man 'sitting naked and splay legged on a hill with the sun shining out of his rear end' (Rushdie 1998, 305). To compare this image for a second with Eliot's regenerated man: The Fisher King, we can see that instead of brooding over 'the fragments' 'shored against [his] ruins', Rushdie's regenerated man is a parodic messiah, revelling in the destruction and fragmentation that necessitated his being. His glorious presence is almost transgressive and makes it impossible for us to determine if such excess is 'good' or 'bad'. But of course, transgressive subjectivity is central to Gothic-postmodernist works.

Lyotard made an extremely significant point when he wrote:

The nineteenth and twentieth centuries have given us as much terror as we can take. We have paid a high enough price for the nostalgia of the whole and the one, for the reconciliation of the concept and the sensible, of the transparent and the communicable experience. Under the general demand for slackening and for appeasement, we can hear the mutterings of the desire for a return of terror, for the realisation of the fantasy to seize reality (Lyotard 1984, 81-2).

Rushdie's challenging of our acceptance of identities such as 'human' and 'monster' through the exploration of the concept of dehumanisation is a reflection of this. Throughout history society's changing attitudes to 'morality' have necessitated changes in the Gothic mode of writing (Botting 1996 4). 'What kind of idea are you?' as I mentioned earlier is one of the central questions of Rushdie's Gothic-postmodernist work, and could be regarded as a central question of Gothic-postmodernism in general. This question is one that can arguably only be answered via the investigation of the mechanisms of obsessional neurosis, defined by post-structuralist theory as: inversion; isolation; reduplication; cancellation; displacement (Payne 1993, 5), and this in turn necessitates the 'frequent' and 'emphatic' 'crossing of boundaries into darkness' (Riquelme 2000, 391). Gothic-postmodernism, in crossing these boundaries into the realm of terror and anxiety however, encounters an experience of sublimity. It is arguably a waste land vision of identity and self. For Gibreel eventually loses 'the last traces of his humanity... as he became ethereal, woven of illumined air' (Rushdie 1998, 336). Kelly

Hurley asserts that the: ‘Gothic is centrally concerned with the horrific re-making of the human subject’ (Hurley 1996, 5). I would argue that postmodernist art shares the same concern. In the context of *The Satanic Verses*, the Gothic can be seen as an intrinsic mode of interpretation, speculation and narration. As the spatio-temporal separation of past present and future is deconstructed in the dreamlike, schizophrenic sequences, subjectivity becomes unlimited and subject is ‘told’ as something of a Byronic Hero.

As a Gothic-postmodernist text, *The Satanic Verses* does not merely function as a system of motifs and fictional scenarios that complete the picture of postmodern hyperreality; it poses a counterpoint for those scenarios in the radical and controversial mode in which they are represented. Jean Paul Riquelme has commented that the ‘Gothic imaginary is frequently a vehicle for staging and challenging ideological thinking’. As a ‘refusal of conventional limits and the critical questioning of cultural attitudes’ (Riquelme 2000, 390) it is a definitive philosophy at work as part of Rushdie’s broader literary approach. It may be just a coincidence that postmodern reality can easily be translated as a hellish nightmare and capitalism as vampirism on an economic level, but maybe there is something intrinsically Gothic about the profane postmodern realities that we so readily accept as our own. Maybe degeneracy is not to be replaced by regeneration. Maybe our ‘selves’ are horrifically monstrous. ‘Do Devils suffer in Hell? Aren’t they the ones with the pitch-forks?’ (Rushdie 1998, 254). To the Gothic-postmodernist thinker, it is merely a matter of perspective.

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