

## overSEAS 2013

This thesis was submitted by its author to the School of English and American Studies, Eötvös Loránd University, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts. It was found to be among the best theses submitted in 2013, therefore it was decorated with the School's Outstanding Thesis Award. As such it is published in the form it was submitted in **overSEAS 2013** (<http://seas3.elte.hu/overseas/2013.html>)

EÖTVÖS LORÁND TUDOMÁNYEGYETEM  
Bölcsészettudományi Kar

# ALAPSZAKOS SZAKDOLGOZAT

*William Blake hatása Salman Rushdie Sátáni versek című regényére*  
*William Blake's Influence on Salman Rushdie's Novel 'The Satanic Verses'*

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2013

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## Introduction

The purpose of this thesis is to show how Blake, the Romantic poet influenced Rushdie, the contemporary author; how the *Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1790) contributed to *The Satanic Verses* (1988) becoming the allegory of both literature and writing. This approach is relevant because by reading and interpreting these two literary texts together a new and unusual definition of literature and writing emerges.

The basis of my research was the fact that Blake's *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* was alluded to several times in *The Satanic Verses*. Rushdie even mentions in his essay "In Good Faith", that Blake's work was one of the main sources of inspiration. Since I did not find critical works that discuss the influence of Blake on Rushdie, I had to interpret their works separately and then analyze the similarities between the texts. Thus, my thesis is concerned with the similarities, rather than the contrasts, between *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* and *The Satanic Verses*.

In the process of research, first, I interpreted the allegory of writing in both works. The allegory of writing depicts the creative process at its profane reality, rather than as a sacred process. Neil ten Kortenaar suggests that the dream sequences in *The Satanic Verses* can be interpreted as "an allegory of Rushdie's own writing process" (349). To defend this idea, he refers to Martine Hennard Dutheil de la Rochère who reads the dream sequences as "an intricate allegory of writing" (189). Harold Bloom also claims that Blake's narrator visits "a Printing house in hell", "a six-

chambered establishment that serves as an allegory of the creative process” (90).

Although this idea emerged first I decided to discuss the allegory of literature before discussing the allegory of writing and the creative process. The reason for this reversed order is that it would be hard to comprehend the allegory of writing without the analysis of the components of the allegory of literature, which in this case include the nature of Evil and the figure of Satan. In the process of the elaboration of the allegory of literature in *The Satanic Verses* Blake’s work was instrumental. Blake influenced the very title, and the interpretation of Evil and the figure of Satan. Thus, the striking similarities between the concepts of literature on the one hand and Evil (and Satan) on the other will be the subject of the first part of my thesis. To prove my ideas on the allegory of literature I used Simona Sawhney’s work on the relation between poetry and prophecy.

## **1. THE ALLEGORY OF LITERATURE**

### **1.1. The title**

Through the simultaneous interpretation of the title of the *Marriage of Heaven and Hell* and that of *The Satanic Verses*, it is possible to decipher how Blake influenced Rushdie in the process of making literature and its desacralisation the central idea of the novel.

In order to be able to contrast the *Marriage of Heaven and Hell* and *The Satanic Verses*, it is essential to know that the former one can be referred to

as “The Bible of Hell”. The reason for this possible renaming is not only the evolution of the formation of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, but also its features which make the text connected to Hell.

Joseph Viscomi claims that Blake’s sketches and notes, which are dated before the actual formation of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, confirm that he intended to create the “The Bible of Hell” as a separate work, as it is announced in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* as well: “I have also The Bible of Hell, which the world shall have whether they will or no” (*Marriage* 189). Yet, Viscomi supposes that “The Bible of Hell” “might be referring to the *Marriage* itself” (321) since the latter appears to be the result of “two separate projects” (322), namely an anti-Swedenborgian work, and “The Bible of Hell”. Thus, it seems that “The Proverbs of Hell” and some of the “Memorable Fancies” are the actual “Bible of Hell”. Moreover, the infernal setting, the Satanic Genius, the Proverbs, and the voice of the Devil are so overwhelmingly powerful that these elements can form together “The Bible of Hell”.

Both in the case of “The Bible of Hell” and in that of *The Satanic Verses* the title consists of one part which refers to a book and a literary genre, and another which is related to Evil. Considering the etymology of the word ‘bible’, which means ‘book’ or ‘script’, it is quite obvious that ‘Bible’ and ‘Verses’ stand for literature, but to understand the real depth of interpretation, first, the notions ‘Hell’ and ‘Satan’ have to be clarified in the terms of how Blake and Rushdie see them.

Blake’s concept of Evil refers to an active force, an energy the source of which is Eternal Delight and sensuality which, in turn, are the bases of

creativity and, therefore, of literature. Thus, Blake denies the orthodox moral interpretation of Evil, and through the figure of Satan, the characteristics of the narrator and the printing house image - which becomes the allegory of writing - he redefines Evil as a profane condition that can represent literature.

Rushdie's interpretation of Evil is similar, and so is the process of its redefinition. Yet, beside activity and physicality, impurity is becoming an significant feature of Evil as it is one of the main characteristics of the Devil and literature. In *The Satanic Verses* impurity does not mean sin, or a morally unacceptable condition, but *mélange*, a human, profane and desirable condition, in which newness can enter the world.

Thus, the infernal parts of the titles are not only connected to literature and writing but they are also equal to them. Following this line of reasoning would lead to the idea that "The Bible of Hell" and *The Satanic Verses* are the profane counterparts of *The Holy Bible*. As the sacred scripts determine and describe the origins and the nature of a religion, the profane texts do the same with literature.

The title '*The Satanic Verses*' has many connotations and most of them are related to literature. Since the elements of the title are many-layered with an almost infinite number of possible interpretations, I decided to discuss these elements separately, beginning with the plural noun 'verses' which is far less complex than the adjective 'satanic'.



### 1.1.1. 'Verses'

The word 'Verses' does not appear only in the title. Sawhney points out that *The Satanic Verses* "is consciously a book [emphasis added] about verses – a book where, in almost every episode, we encounter someone reading, writing, or listening to verses" (269). She proves her statement by enumerating several examples for the presence of verses, for instance the pagan Jahilian poets, such as Baal, the 'nemesis' of the Prophet, Jumpy Joshie's struggle to versify an idiom on politics, Rekha Merchant's reciting Faiz, an Urdu poet, Gibreel's messages to Ayesha in the tunes of Hindi pop songs, Allie's reading Blake (!), and, of course, last but not least, Saladin's "little, satanic verses that made him [Gibreel] mad" (*Satanic* 445). The constant presence of all these literary genres and themes, taken from, basically every cultural register, as well as the considerable amount of allusions, prove the importance of the role of literature in the novel.

It is also possible to call literature a 'main character' of the novel since it changes with the other characters; it goes through a metamorphosis with them. Moreover, the use of allusions creates a strong effect of intertextuality which shows the complex relationship between texts, as characters affect each other. Thus, literature is in rapport with the other characters, and acts as if it were one of them. Still, literature is more than that. Literature is part of the characters, their everyday life. Literature is something like air; we are not aware of the fact that we desperately need it, but it is vital to human existence.

It is ironic that *The Satanic Verses*, in which the central theme is literature and its claim to be seen important, was seriously attacked through

Rushdie. As a response to the scandal over the publication of the novel, Rushdie writes this in his essay “In Good Faith”, in his non-fiction book, *Imaginary Homelands*: “At the center of the storm stands a novel, a work of fiction, one that aspires to the condition of literature” (393). Sawnhey, who also quotes this particular sentence, argues that the mere necessity of the defense of the novel reflects on “the Western tradition, where literature has always had to defend its right to speak or exist” (267). So, not only the novel itself, but also this desperate attempt to justify his novel’s *raison d’être* is the justification of literature as an authority.

Here, the words ‘justification’ and ‘authority’ have to be explained for the purpose of this thesis. As for ‘justification’, I shall use it in the sense of the process of the creation of the allegory of literature in which literature is deprived of sanctity. Therefore, the novel re-defines literature as something more accessible and human.

Literature as an ‘authority’ is meant to be a trustworthy source of questions and answers concerning ontological and epistemological problems; and, therefore, equal with other disciplines of humanities, such as theology or philosophy. This status can only be achieved by the desacralisation of literature.

### **1.1.2. ‘Satanic’**

As opposed to the ‘verses’ the interpretation of ‘satanic’ is much more complex due to the richness of the interpretation of Evil. Evil and ‘satanic’ are two somewhat overlapping concepts in Blake and Rushdie’s works. The concept of evil was introduced in section **1.1.** . Now I shall discuss the

figure of Satan, which emerged and got re-invented in the Romantic era, especially in Blake's poetry.

There are three aspects of this figure; two of them are connected to Blake's oeuvre, while the third one belongs to the thoughts of Defoe. These three aspects together gradually turn the satanic myth into the most accurate symbol of literature. The first one shows a phenomenon which is embodied by Satan, that corresponds to the dynamics of literature. The second suggests that Satan is basically a tool of literature, and the third one declares this profane figure to be the allegory of literature.

To begin with, Schock, in his essay on the myth of Satan and Blake's *Marriage of Heaven of Hell*, explains that Satan in Milton's *Paradise Lost* appears as a heroic, "sublime human figure" (451), which develops in Blake's writings a promethean character, a fiery idea of Revolution.

The idea of revolution also occurs in *The Satanic Verses*. In Chapter VII, "The Angel Azrael", the arrest and death in prison of the falsely accused, prominent black activist Dr. Uruhu Simba infuriate the immigrant communities and the left-wing powers. They begin rioting, and fires start in several black neighborhoods. Rushdie in the previous chapter quotes a passage from *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* to foreshadow the upcoming events: "The ancient tradition that the world will be consumed in fire at the end of six thousand years is true, as I have heard from Hell" (*Satanic* 304). Gibreel, who actually reads this part, thinks that he initiates the Apocalypse. Therefore, the rioting scene becomes similar to Blake's prophetic, apocalyptic images.

Thus, here Satan and 'satanic' are interpreted as a sort of feared political power that can/could bring changes, and, through that, newness into the world, as it did in Blake's time, when the French Revolution, a real threat to every European state, was associated with the Devil's machinations.

The idea of revolution is not unknown to literature. The following quotation from Rushdie's essay "Is Nothing Sacred?" explains that literature is constant, since it is always in the state of renewal and metamorphosis:

'Art is never transfixed,' Read wrote. 'Change is the condition of art remaining art.' This principle is also mine. Art, too, is an event in history, subject to the historical process. But it is also *about* that process, and must constantly strive to find new forms to mirror an endlessly renewed world. No aesthetic can be a constant, except an aesthetic based on the idea of inconsistency, metamorphosis or, to borrow a term from politics, 'perpetual revolution.' (*Imaginary* 418)

Second, according to Schock, the "English writers in the Romantic Era develop Satan into an ideological symbol with a broad range of functions: [...] producing literary effects, such as irony and satire" (441). It is ironic in itself that irony and satire are the basic elements of the *Marriage of Heaven and Hell* and *The Satanic Verses* because both of them use the figure of Satan to create the allegory of literature and writing.

Finally, Sawhney evokes Defoe's *The History of the Devil*, in which he describes Satan as a "vagabond, wandering, unsettled" (269) figure, which is similar to the indefatigable, revolutionary power appearing in Milton's and Blake's oeuvre.

Sawhney also claims that “*Satanic verses*, then, might refer to the verses *of* such a Satan or to verses *about* such a Satan who becomes a name for migrancy as paradox” (269). It seems that Satan as a nomadic character becomes the embodiment of literature, which is possible since they are always in the condition of constant metamorphosis. Since change is strictly bound to time and space, Satan and, therefore, literature are always traveling between eras, cultures, registers and receivers. According to Sawhney, “literature itself is migrant, not only because it wanders wantonly from reader to reader, but also because it does not derive authority from its source or origin, as for instance Mahound’s words claim to do” (269).

## **1.2. The Narrator and the narration**

Apart from the use of various narrative techniques, the figure of the narrator, who is becoming a character of the novel, and struggling to define his entity, assists in the dramatization of the attempt of literature to re-interpret itself.

*The Satanic Verses* has a disembodied, third person omniscient narrator – for most of the novel. Still, he makes ironic remarks, asking and answering questions as a first person narrator, or a character. Moreover, it seems his purpose is identical with Gibreel’s or Saladin’s: he wants to define himself somehow, to belong somewhere. The best example is that he is falling with Gibreel and Saladin in the first chapter, he participates in their strange metamorphosis, and when he says ‘who am I?’ (*Satanic* 4), he is not reporting what is in the characters’ mind, but he is referring to his own insecurity.

The desperate attempt of the narrator to understand the nature of his existence might be read as Rushdie's cry of anxiety since he claims his authorial statement that his oeuvre is "an attempt to come to terms with the various component parts of myself" (Web). But, considering the interpretation of the title, which is the first step in *The Satanic Verses*' becoming an allegory of literature and writing, the self-exploration of the narrator, who is also a significant character of the said process, can be read as literature's struggle to be accepted as valueable and as an authority, as it was demonstrated previously.

The narrator is assisting in the creation and the broadening of the allegory, by keeping the readers remembering the fact that they are holding a book, an artificial object, a precisely written text. He is constantly and directly communicating with them: he is asking questions and answers them later in the book, or never, foreshadowing events, misleading the readers, offering ironic remarks. Briefly, he shows them how the novel was created. For example, in the very beginning of the novel, the narrator warns the readers: "Slow down; you think Creation happens in a rush?" (*Satanic* 5).

Moreover, the narration also reflects on several literary traditions from different eras, cultures and registers, from the *Arabian Nights* to Joyce's *Finnegan Wake*. Narrative techniques, such as the repetition of similar motifs, which is similar to the rhythm of thought of Hebrew poetry and the Bible, emerge in *The Satanic Verses*. The recurring elements, such as traveling and changing, basically tell the story of literature, describing its characteristics. In this sense, literature seems to be a boundless flow that absorbs everything and therefore becomes diverse. Diversity also has the

connotation of impurity which was a significant element in the explanation of Rushdie's concept of Evil and the 'satanic', and, therefore, the desacralisation of literature. He writes in the essay "In Good Faith" that *The Satanic Verses*, as an allegory of literature, "celebrates hybridity, impurity, intermingling, the transformation that of new combinations of human beings, cultures, ideas, politics, movies, songs" (394).

Since literature is impure and profane, it cannot hold one incontrovertible truth, which is the reason why the narrator uses fairy tale elements, such as "once upon a time – *it was and it was not so*, as the old stories used to say, *it happened and it never did* – maybe, then, or maybe not..." (*Satanic* 35). He doubles reality and truth and allows the reader to interpret the text as he/she wishes.

In order to complete the elaboration of the allegory of literature and show the last step in the process of the desacralisation of literature, the resemblance between the narrator of *The Satanic Verses* and Blake's narrator of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* has to be discussed in detail.

Probably the most important of all similarities is that both of them are confident and wise poets, writers, or, Geniuses, who attempt to understand how newness enters the world, because they are interested in the nature of literature and writing. In the case of Blake's narrator it is obvious that he is a young poet who descends to Hell, collects "The Proverbs of Hell", which are basically the rules of creation, and visits a printing house in order to better understand the creative process.

Rushdie's narrator, however, becomes the author through certain delicate reflections. First, when Mahound wrestles the angel (or the devil?), Gibreel begins to 'think' as 'I', as the narrator. For example:

and let *me* tell you he [Mahound] is getting *everywhere* [emphasized by Rusdie], his tongue in *my* ear, his fist around *my* balls, there was never a person with such a rage in him, he has to know he has to know ha has to KNOW and I have nothing to tell him, he's twice as physically fit as *I* am and four times as knowledgeable (*Satanic* 122)

While this particular passage is significant since it shows that Gibreel has to be identical with the narrator, the following quotation confirms that the narrator is identical with the (not) surprisingly human-looking Author-God, who appears to Gibreel: "Higher Powers have taken an interest, it should have been obvious to them both, and such Powers (*I am, of course, speaking of myself*) [emphasis added] have a mischievous, almost a wanton attitude to tumbling flies" (*Satanic* 133). What is more, this particular transcendent existence is very similar to Rushdie: "a man of about the same age as [Gibreel] himself, of medium height, fairly heavily built, with salt-and-pepper beard cropped close to the line of the jaw. What struck him most was that the apparition was balding, seemed to suffer from dandruff and wore glasses" (*Satanic* 318). The importance of the fact that the narrator is identical with the author and the revelation with the moment of inspiration, will be discussed in the following subsection.



### 1.3. Prophet, Anti-Prophet

The presence of the Author-God is ironic in a novel that is trying to desacralize literature and prove that it is profane and human-made. Irony, which is satanic, as it was shown above, is the most efficient device that can be used to destroy the myth of the sanctity of the author's status. According to Sawhney, *The Satanic Verses* "has managed to evoke a global command for the death of the author" (Sawhney 272) by mocking the "outmoded conception of writing and authorial power" (Sawhney 272).

In the case of *The Satanic Verses* the importance of theory of the death of the author is that by removing the author whose presence limits the number of possible interpretations, the texts become free and infinite. As Roland Barthes suggests:

In precisely this way literature (it would be better from now on to say writing), by refusing to assign a 'secret', an ultimate meaning, to the text (and to the world as a text), liberates what may be called an anti-theological activity, an activity that is truly revolutionary since to refuse to fix meanings is in the end, to refuse God and his hypostases' reason, science, law. (Web)

Thus, by revealing how ridiculous a fallible human being is in the role of God, he managed to deprive literature from any pretense of sacredness, and to strengthen the concept of the dead author. As Pierre Bourdieu indicates, the author is "able to produce himself as a creator, that is, as the *subject* of his own creation" (104). Thus, in this context, it is literature which is superior to the author, rather than the other way round.

In *The Satanic Verses* the myth of the omniscient, even omnipotent Author-God is questioned through the figure of the Prophet. This challenge is possible since the Prophet's position is similar to that of the author, and his direct contact with God is dubious, as is the clarity or the divine origin of the revelation.

Many of those critics who discussed the nature of prophetic newness or the allegory of writing in *The Satanic Verses*, or even the life of the Prophet agree that the figure of the Prophet is basically the metaphor of the author and the revelation is that of the moment of inspiration. For instance, Kortenaar evokes Dutheil de la Rochère's suggestion that Mahound "is no better than the novelist" (352), and *The Satanic Verses*-incident "casts him [Mahound] as a novelist" (352). Moreover, Rodinson, whose works were known by Rushdie, also point out that the revelation is similar "to the inspiration of the writer" (93).

Now, it is clear that the Prophet becomes identical with the author, but the process in which the omniscient authorial position is destroyed is still unexplained. First of all, the Prophet is consistently called Mahound, which means Devil and, therefore, suggests that he is a satanic figure who is obviously related to Hell and its profane forces. Evil was interpreted in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* and *The Satanic Verses* as an active, revolutionary eternal and delightful power, while the myth of Satan was read as an impure, nomadic character. In this sense, the Prophet is bound to the material world and profanity, and there was no divine intervention in the process of the formation of his work.

In *The Satanic Verses* the revelation, or, rather, the moment of inspiration is described as neither angelic nor satanic, since the ‘message’ is the Prophet’s own idea. Gibreel, who is definitely not any sort of deity, just a confused schizophrenic *man*, does not say a word to Mahound; moreover, it seems he is “*inside the Prophet*” (Satanic 110). Therefore, Gibrel and both his angelic and devilish forms become the mere projection of the desires of the Prophet.

This idea is equivalent to Blake’s view for many reasons. First, as Schock observes, “all deities are projections of the Poetic Genius” (446), and “Blake’s prophets instead of identifying themselves as ‘poets’, affirm an internal voice, refute external instruction, and make no distinction between vision and writing, or between spirit and sensual body” (Viscomi 319). Second, Blake “adopts the figure of Satan as the personification of his unconventional ethics of desire” (Schock 454). Since prophets claim themselves to be poets, and the deities are bound to them, rather than the other way around, there is no divine intervention during the creative process. The source of inspiration is the poet’s desire which is definitely an active and satanic force. In this context Mahound’s ‘revelation’ is becoming even more profane.

Thus, the figure of the author and the moment of revelation lost their holiness; consequently, the result of the creation, the work of art cannot remain sacred. In the novel, *Salman the Persian*, Rushdie’s namesake, mistranscribes the words of the Prophet, which means that the myth of the Quran’s divine origin is irrevocably damaged. Kortenaar suggests that Rushdie - through the historical figure of Salman - becomes an Anti-prophet

and a Rival-prophet. He humorously notes that “the most scandalous elements of the novel have an important element of self-reflexivity built into them. Rushdie never just blasphemes; he always proclaims, ‘Hey! This is me blaspheming here!’ ” (350).

Blasphemy is a word from the domain of religion. According to Oxford Online Dictionary it is “the action or offence of speaking sacrilegiously about God or sacred things; profane talk.” Rushdie’s blasphemy, even if he was accused by the standards of religion, is rather the denial of an obsolete literary tradition Author-God theory. His claim that literature and writing are profane is newness that has to face the old ideas, a process which is never without scandal.

## **2. THE ALLEGORY OF WRITING**

Before comparing the dream sequences of *The Satanic Verses*, and the printing house image of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, which are the allegories of writing, it is crucial to discuss the figure of the Prophet as the embodiment of the author, and the nature of revelation as the metaphor for inspiration.

### **2.1. The Profanity of the Creative Process**

Writing loses its sacred status for three reasons. First, as creation is described as labouring, fighting and engraving, it is closer to the material world. Second, the process of writing requires a certain state of mind, which seems to be elevated from the everyday experience, yet it is bound to

the author, and, therefore, it remains human. Finally, the creative power is springing from sensual experience, desire, delight and sexuality.

### **2.1.1. The Physicality of Writing**

It is indispensable to discuss the Prophet-Poet's Revelation, which was declared to be the metaphor of writing and a wholly profane process in the preceding section, since previously the emphasis was on the figure of the author.

When Gibreel meets Mahound for the first time, he feels "a dragging pain in the gut, like something trying to be born" (*Satanic* 110). Thus, the formation a new idea is associated with labour and birth with the connotations of filth, blood and, at the end, relief and happiness. On the occasion of the second encounter, they are wrestling, as old and new ideas collide to prove their right to exist and be the only truth. Wrestling, again, is something human and, profane, considering the sweat, the bruises, and the muscles.

In view of his works, it seems that even the Romantic poet, Blake, denies the Romantic myth of creation as a sacred process in which some deity uses the author as an empty vessel and fills it with divine thoughts, claiming that art is a craft. The passage from *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, which says "a mighty Devil folded in black clouds, hovering on the sides of the rock, with corroding fires he wrote the following sentence now perceived by the minds of men" (*Marriage* 180) is interpreted in the following way by Bloom: "The Devil is the artist William Blake, at work engraving the *Marriage*, and the corroding fires refer metaphorically both to

his engraving technique and the satiric function of the *Marriage*” (83). Here, the Devil and fire, which are, as I have already suggested, linked to profane, human powers, such as desire or delight, are related to writing. Moreover, the creative process is defined as ‘work’ and engraving, which emphasizes the activity and physicality of it.

### **2.1.2. Revelation as Inspiration**

The location where the revelation or inspiration is happening is of much help in the interpretation of the allegory of writing, since the setting becomes the metaphor of the particular state of mind which enables the author to create.

In *The Satanic Verses* that significant place is Mount Cone and “a cave five hundred feet below the summit” (*Satanic* 122). The mountain is far from Jahilia and this distance symbolizes the solitude of creation. The author needs this intimacy to be able to face his subconscious. The fact that Mahound has to ascend to the summit or descend to a cave can be read as leaving the plain of reality and entering into the depth of his own mind.

Blake’s narrator leaves his present world, and walks in Hell. But when he returns he realizes that during the creative process he is much more sensitive than any other time and he can experience things that are inaccessible for him beyond the frames of writing. He now knows the meaning of the lines engraved into rocks by the Devil “how do you know but ev’ry Bird that cuts the airy way, Is an immense world of delight, clos’d

by your senses five?" (*Marriage* 180) that is, the author's senses are liberated in the creative process.

Thus, the liberation of the senses is common in *The Satanic Verses* and in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, and the concept is represented in a similar way. Rushdie uses dreams to symbolize this kind of extreme receptivity, which is only available in that exalted state of mind when one is writing, while Blake calls this phenomenon "A Memorable Fancy".

### **2.1.3. Sexuality and Writing**

The said sensibility or sensual experience is connected to desire and sexuality through the figure of Alleluia Cone in *The Satanic Verses*, and The Proverbs of Hell in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*.

The family name of Alleluia Cone, Gibreel's lover, is identical with the name of the mountain where the revelation takes place. Moreover, Blake's "Proverbs of Hell", which are "the laws of artistic creation in a series of aphorisms" (Bloom 82), are alluded in *The Satanic Verses*. Allie and Gibreel are reading passages from the "Proverbs of Hell" in their bed, and these passages are related to sexuality and writing, such as: "The lust of the goat is the bounty of God" (*Satanic* 304), or "This will come to pass by an improvement of sensual enjoyment" (*Satanic* 305). The goat is a traditional symbol of the Satan whose significance in the creative process was already discussed, while the sensual enjoyment refers to writing.

Thus, there is a link between sexuality and writing, the body and the soul. As Blake claims in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*: "Man has no

Body distinct from his Soul; for that call'd Body is a portion of Soul discern'd by the five Senses, the chief inlets of Soul in this age" (*Marriage* 179).

This link is significant, since it emphasizes that in the creative process the objects of the desire of the author materialize, and, therefore, frustration, desire and satisfaction will combine to become the inner power that forces the author to create. These notions are basic human emotions and there is nothing sacred in them, in the sense that their source is not some deity but the human mind and unconscious.

Then, it cannot be a coincidence that, as I have already demonstrated, Allie is familiar with Blake and his oeuvre: "One morning Allie, awaking from spent and dreaming sleep, found him immersed in her long-unopened copy of Blake's *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, in which her younger self, disrespectful of books, had made a number of marks: underlinings, ticks in the margins, exclamations, multiple queries" (*Satanic* 304).

In this sense, writing is both a mental and a physical experience, similar to sexual enjoyment, bringing eternal delight through the sharpening and broadening of the five senses.

## **2.2. The Dream Sequences and the Printing House in Hell**

While in the previous subsections the elaboration of the allegory of writing in *The Satanic Verses* was in the focus, now its interpretation will be discussed in detail through the printing house in hell scene of *The Marriage*



of *Heaven and Hell*. Similar thoughts in Rushdie's oeuvre will be mentioned for comparison.

In this particular passage Blake's narrator visits a place in hell where he witnesses "the method in which knowledge is transmitted from generation to generation" (*Marriage* 185). "In the first chamber was a Dragon-Man, clearing away the rubbish from a cave's mouth; within, a number of Dragons were hollowing the cave" (*Marriage* 185). This can be read as the practice of the writer when he begins to 'descend to hell', into his unconscious, and his senses get 'cleansed' through this moment of insight, so he becomes much more sensible to things beyond everyday experience, and is able to perceive new ideas. The process in which the senses are "widening the body's potential for imaginative knowledge" (90) is related to sensual enjoyment and sexual pleasure, as it was already demonstrated.

The second and the third chambers cohere, the images are in contrast, and in order to comprehend them it is necessary to examine them together:

In the second chamber was a Viper folding around the rock & the cave and others adorning it with gold, silver, and precious stones. In the third chamber was an Eagle with wings and feathers of air; he caused the inside of the cave to be infinite; around were numbers of Eagle like men, who built palaces in the immense cliffs (*Marriage* 185).

According to Bloom, the Viper is "the censorious restrainer seeking to confine man within his fallen limits" (90), while the Eagle is explained by

the “Proverbs of Hell”: “When thou seest an Eagle, thou seest a portion of Genius; lift up thy head!” (*Marriage* 181)

The Viper and the Eagle refer to the two types of men, the Devourer and the Prolific. While the first one stands for restrained, weak desires and unexploited human resources the latter is definitely an active, unrestrained energy that brings newness to the world. But without the Viper destroying any and all kind of knowledge and ideas, the Eagle could not create new ideas, could not initiate change or revolution. “Eagle-like men” (*Marriage* 185) are the artists who can work with these ideas and from them as hot, soft metal can be formed.

The duality of the Devourer and the Prolific appears in *The Satanic Verses* as the complex relationship between Mahound and Baal, who are each other’s reflections, and they are the answer to the question that the novel asks: “what kind of an idea are you?” (*Satanic* 335). According to Kortenaar, Mahound represents a new idea, which was fresh on its own, but is almost a mere ‘replica’ of the preceding cultures, whilst Baal’s new brothel represents “the spirit of newness itself and qualities associated with it: irreverence, transgression, skepticism, irony, humor and tolerance” (350). The Prophet’s replicated idea is “vulnerable to deviations” (350), thus he has to present rules and make them kept by force, to prevent changes. Yet, people need changes as they change themselves. Baal’s blasphemous and profane idea “succeeds not when others repeat it exactly but when others make it their own” (350). Their wrestling and their reflections symbolize and dramatize the neverending fight between the Devourer and the Prolific, which are “not the inseparable halves of the same thing, but merely born

together” (Bloom 76). Thus, when new ideas enter the world they necessarily bend and clash, and that one will survive which is more capable of change.

This kind of dichotomy is observable in literature and writing, as they are made out of ideas. As Barthes suggests, “we know now that a text is not a line of words releasing a single ‘theological’ meaning (the ‘message’ of the Author-God) but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash” (Web). Hence, the writer is working with existing texts, he destroys them and rebuilds them into another system, he creates a text which finally becomes something new, yet all its elements are ancient and have been used thousand times. The best example of this phenomenon is *The Satanic Verses* itself, which “isn’t a direct confirmation of a literary tradition but rather an attempt to subvert it and then thoroughly to reconstruct it with himself as an integral part” (Kortenaar 345). In this way, the writer is becoming both the Devourer and the Prolific, both Mahound and Baal parts of the allegory of writing.

In the last three stages of the creative process the ideas are shaped into their final form:

In the fourth chamber were Lions of flaming fire raging around & melting the metals into living fluids. In the fifth chamber were Unnam'd forms, which cast the metals into the expanse. There they were reciev'd by Men who occupied the sixth chamber, and took the forms of books & were arranged in libraries (*Marriage* 185).

As Bloom indicates “the archetypes” (90) melt into “the basic fluids of imaginative life” (91), and then in the expanse of mind the human experience forge them into books. In this sense the so-called archetypes are universal ideas, a certain knowledge hidden in our unconscious, which is accessible, for example, in the moment of insight or inspiration, and the process of writing is, again, analogous with engraving and smithing, which are dirty jobs, hard and profane crafts.

## **Conclusion**

The significance of *The Satanic Verses* and *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* is considerable even as separate texts, yet, if they are juxtaposed and read together, they give a lot more complex and elaborate image of literature and writing.

To reach the aim of the novel, that is, to desacralize literature and writing, yet claim them to be of value, Rushdie needed Blake’s philosophy and imagery. Blake’s concept of literature and writing is profane since the creative power in his view is bound to Evil, which is fire, sensuality and delight. Moreover, Blake’s figure of Satan is the perfect metaphor for literature as it is the embodiment of change, revolution, irony and impurity, which is important if literature is nomadic. Rushdie by alluding to Blake’s ideas on the nature of Evil and Satan, and the “Proverbs of Hell” itself - which are the rules of the creative process - , was capable of desacralizing literature and proving the profanity of literature.

Therefore, *The Satanic Verses* depicts literature as an entity which is rooted in humanity and capable of changing with it, and not as a self-existent, static, unattainable sanctity. Literature can apprehend and mirror the sacred and profane traits of human existence. Moreover, it can relate back to human beings by inspiring them to create new meaning out of those texts that are already given to them.

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