

ALLEGORY IN SALMAN RUSHDIE'S "GRIMUS"

V.Regga

Assistant Professor, PG Dept. of English, S.T.E.T. Women's College, Mannargudi. 614016

ABSTRACT

An Allegory, from Greek, is a figurative mode of representation conveying a meaning other than the literal. Allegory is generally treated as a figure of rhetoric, but an allegory does not have to be expressed in language; it may be addressed to the eye, and is often found in realistic painting, sculpture or some other form of mimetic or representative art. Allegory has been a favourite form in the literature of nearly every nation. The element of allegory is very strong in all of Rushdie's works. As allegory is a predominant Post-modern technique in Rushdie's novels the attention is focused on his novel Grimus. Grimus is a prefiguring- a volatile playground of western and Eastern literary sources that mix together uneasily in a sustained and uninterrupted allegory.

ALLEGORY IN SALMAN RUSHDIE'S "GRIMUS"

INTRODUCTION

The etymological meaning of the word is broader than the common use of the word. Though it is similar to other rhetorical comparisons, an allegory is sustained longer and more fully in its details than a metaphor, and appeals to imagination, while an analogy appeals to reason or logic. The fable or parable is a short allegory with one definite moral. Since meaningful stories are nearly always applicable to larger issues, allegories may be read into many stories, sometimes distorting their author's overt meaning. For instance, many people have suggested that *The Lord of the Rings* is an allegory for the World Wars, though it was written well before the outbreak of World War II and in spite of J.R.R Tolkien's emphatic statement in the introduction to the second edition "It is neither allegorical nor topical ... I cordially dislike allegory in all its manifestations, and always have done so since I grew old and wary enough to detect its presence" (14).

Allegory is not new to Indian writing in English. As far as Indian fiction in English is considered, there are three important stages. Firstly Writers like Rarayan, Kamlamarkendeya and Mulk Raj Anand were writers from India about the Indian problems. They wrote about the socio, economic and cultural world of their characters. Secondly there are Writers like Rushdie, Vikram Seth and Bharathi Mukerjee who were born in India but write from abroad. Thirdly there are writers like Jhumpa Lahiri, and Indira Ganesan who are truly diasporic, born and brought up abroad and writing about India. Rushdie's *Grimus* is a fantastical Science fiction draws on the twelfth century Sufi poem "The Conference of Birds". The title of the novel is an anagram of the name 'Simurg', the immense, all-wise, fabled bird of Pre-Islamic Persian Mythology.

ALLEGORY IN SALMAN RUSHDIE'S "GRIMUS"

It is an early novel like "Grimus" that shows most clearly what Rushdie is up to in the later works. With the exception of G.V.Desani's autobiographical confessions at the beginning of *All about H.Hatterr*, few novels could have codified so well the feeling of being 'neither here nor there', published in 1975, *Grimus* at first gives no indication of Rushdie's future interest. The tone is speculative and intellectual; the style coldly clever are obviously, although obscurely, allusive. Historical references are rare and oblique. The hermaphroditic hero, Flapping Eagle, is an American Indian on a quest for his lost sister, who he eventually finds on a Mediterranean Island under the control of Grimus, an expatriate European magician whose power emanates from a miraculous stone rose. The very placing of the quest within the Mediterranean suggests the symbolic topography of the novel- a midway point between Orient and Occident. In the opening pages we find Virgil Jones, a pedantic Englishman, and his lapsed Catholic mate, Dolores O'Toole, reading on rocking chairs on a beach and philosophizing at length "About the parade of history", as the body of Flapping Eagle washes to the shore at their feet.

It would be hard to find a novel that demonstrated better the truth of Fanon's claim that a culture that a culture that is not national is meaningless, for if novels do not necessarily have to be set in one location, or be resistantly pure to foreign importations, they must be anchored in a coherent 'Structure of feeling', which only actual communities can create. *Grimus* fails even though it is carried off with professional brilliance simply because it lacks a habitus. The expectations created by the American South – West setting of the opening, for example, are violated by the willful migration to a fantastic middle east. It does not know and 'tries on' cultures like used clothing.

Here we have a composite picture of many national traditions without the forcible enclosures of the conqueror – or rather, the conqueror is played in effectually by the tentative narrator. As geneity, it refuses to adhere to anyone particular semiotic code, anyone narratological scheme. Nevertheless, although, they are camouflaged, Rushdie's cultural origins in the Orient are given a certain priority by the fact that the book's central myth is taken from the *Shahnamah* (Book of the Kings), a tenth century ethical history of Persia, whose semi- legendary characters, for example include the 'Simurg' – a huge bird who has seen the destruction of the world three times and has all the knowledge of the ages.

With an opening allusion to the mythical Simurg, the hero is named Flapping Eagle, an "Axona, Indian, who with his sister Bird – dog had been shunned by his community for violating its laws forbidding contact with the outside world: The God Axona had only two laws: he liked the Axona to chant to him as often as possible, and they instructed the Axona to be a race apart and have no doings with the wicked world. (*Grimus* 1).

Passages like these fill the novel, and establish its mood of uneasiness and disproportion, if Flapping Eagle's heroism comes precisely from seeking the 'outside World', there is little room here for heroes, and he finally flees home not out of principle but because he is forced is the victim of every proverbial village Prejudice, an outcast from birth. His mother, for example dies bearing him so that he is considered the offspring of bad magic ant (like the Phoenix) is given the name 'Born-from-Dead'; his unwarrior like sensitivity marks him with the hermaphroditic alias 'Joe-Sue; and he is inexplicably 'fair-Skinned'.

His Sister leaves Axnona after drinking an elixir of external life given to her by a shady peddler with the sibilant, serpent name of 'Sispy'. After several years of hesitation, Flapping Eagle follows her in his happy fall, leaving the garden of antiquarian codes and religious bigotry. After a series of adventures he is washed up on the Shore of Calf Island, where he is revived by Virgil and Dolores, who with British assurance, inform him that the island is people exclusively by immortals who can no longer bear living a discovery that a star struck young emigrant from India, coming to the English metropolis, would naturally make once seeing its decay first hand. That Flapping Eagle journey it just that kind of allegory is borne out by the image of ascent that occupies the rest of the book, as though scaling Calf Mountain in search of Grimus was physical rendering of the act of climbing the ranks of British opportunity. The novel's portrayal of Flapping Eagle's coming-to-self takes place alongside his gradual apprenticeship within the European guild, progressing at each new level of the mountain's many ledges.

CONCLUSION

In Grimus, the political content of this later fiction. Born in the environs of 'Phoenix' Flapping Eagle instead represents a reincarnation of the nonconformist in an intolerant land. The Amerindians and the Indians are bound together in Rushdie's mind negatively: the religion of Axona mirrors the strict rituals and hypocrisy of Islam, Judaism, Christianity and Hinduism: Women are chattel; those open to foreign influences are repudiated by a community of bigots.

Thus, though the novels Grimus primarily seen as allegorical fiction, they transgress such a narrow boundary. They become novels that explore various themes like alienation, the art of writing, freedom of the artist, political intrigue.

WORKS CITED

Rushdie, Salman. Grimus. London: Victor Gollancz, 1975.

Cundy, Catherine "Rehearsing Voices": Salman Rushdie's 'Grimus'. Ariel 27:1 (1992)

Johnson, Ib. "The Flight from the Enchanter: Reflection on Salman Rushdie's Grimus." Kunapipi, 7.1(1985)

Salman Rushdie *Grimus*. Copyright © 1975 by Salman Rushdie. For Clarissa. Go, go, go, said the bird; human kind Cannot bear very much reality. (t. s. eliot). Come, you lost atoms, to your Centre draw, And BE the Eternal Mirror that you saw; Rays that have wandered into darkness wide, Return, and back into your sun subside. (FARID-UD-DIN ATTAR, *The Conference of the Birds*, trans. Fitzgerald). Flapping Eagle, the Amerindian protagonist of Salman Rushdie's *Grimus* (1975), has many of the characteristics of the prototypical Native American trickster. He is both 'a creator of order out of chaos and a destroyer of order which represses creative energies, [as] an animal being and a spiritual force', and '[w]hatever else he may be, [he] is also a SURVIVOR who uses his wits and instincts to adapt to changing times'. In her anthropological study *In Favor of Deceit* (1987), Ellen B. Basso points out that '[t]he widespread occurrence of trickster characters in folkloric fictions Where a Man Could Live: Worldlessness Against the Void in Salman Rushdie's *Grimus*. *Authors. Authors and affiliations.* To reposition *Grimus* within the rich tradition of utopia/SF is therefore to overcome the ideological limits of previous scholarly appraisals and to restore a properly historical context against which the novel's deep political and pedagogical tendencies as well as its considerable aesthetic accomplishments may be fully revealed. U. Parameswaran (1994) *New Dimensions Courtesy of the Whirling Demons Word-Play in Grimus*, *Reading Rushdie: Perspectives on the Fiction of Salman Rushdie*, Ed. M.D. Fletcher (Atlanta, GA: Rodopi), pp. 35-44 Google Scholar. Copyright information.