

**Biblical Allusion between Parallel and Contrast in
John Steinbeck's To A God Unknown
The Protagonist as a Study Case**

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Abstract

The present study aims at shedding lights on the areas of allusion between the protagonist of Steinbeck's **To A God Unknown** and Joseph the prophet. It is divided into an introduction and two other sections. The introduction tackles some definitions of allusion and its sources. The definitions are separated into two kinds according to their generality for every definition serves a certain aspects of the subject. It also concentrates on the role of the reader in participating in the creative process. He is also regarded as a second pole in the process. It also alludes to different sources of allusion and how this technique develops through ages. The second section is devoted to the parallel allusion between Joseph Wayne, the protagonist of the novel and the Biblical Joseph. It studies their birth, journeys and responsibilities which come to be almost parallel. The third section deals with the areas of contrast between the two characters especially those which concern faith and temptation. The conclusion summarizes the results of the paper.

التلميح الديني بين التوازي والتضاد في رواية جون شتاينبك

البحث عن إله مجهول (البطل انموذجاً)

الملخص

تسلط هذه الدراسة الضوء على مواطن التلميح بين بطل رواية جون شتاينبك (البحث عن إله مجهول) -جوزيف واين- ويوسف النبي. وتقسم إلى مقدمة ومبحثين، إذ تعالج المقدمة بعض تحديدات التلميح ومصادره. تقسم التحديدات إلى نوعين تبعاً لعموميتها ولدور القارئ في المساهمة في العملية الإبداعية، إذ تقدم تحديدات مختلفة لهذا المصطلح يقوم كل تحديد بخدمة جانب معين من جوانب الموضوع وتركز على القارئ كقطب ثانٍ يكون

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القطب الأول فيها الكاتب. كما تتناول المقدمة مصادر التلميح المختلفة من أسطورية إلى دينية أو أدبية وكيف تطور هذا المصطلح خلال العصور المختلفة. أما المبحث الثاني فيكرس للتلميح المتوازي بين جوزيف واين -بطل الرواية- ويوسف النبي كما وردت قصته في العهد القديم، ويدرس ولادتهما، رحلاتهما والمسؤوليات التي انيطت بهما والتي جاءت متوازية إلى حد بعيد. ويعالج المبحث الثالث مواطن التناقض بين هاتين الشخصيتين خصوصاً تلك التي تتعلق بالإيمان والإغراء، إذ تظهر تناقضاً واضحاً بين إيمان يوسف النبي الخالص بالله وبحتمية ما يقدره على الإنسان وإيمان جوزيف واين المتمزج، في مناسبات كثيرة، بالوثنية والتابو. كما تظهر تناقضاً في مسألة الأغراء الذي تعرض له كل من الشخصيتين وكيف أن يوسف النبي تخلص منه تحت تأثير الإرادة الإلهية وكيف استجاب له جوزيف واين من دون رادع ديني أو أخلاقي. ويختتم البحث بخاتمة توجز النتائج التي توصل إليها البحث بخصوص الآلية المتناوبة للتلميح والتي تعمل ضمن نطاق التوازي والتضاد والخطوات التي اتبعتها الكاتب في إظهار هاتين الآليتين.

1- Introduction

The word allusion is of Latin origin. It means playing with words. "Allusion" is the past participle of "alludere" which means play with and the act of alluding means making indirect reference (1).

An English word "allusion" is modified from an initial meaning of "illusion". In the early renaissance, it was used as meaning of pun or word-play in general (2).

However allusion has its deep roots in language. It, with other techniques and terms, associated the appearance of the first studies of language and the first brick of literary criticism. Socrates says that "art of painting, poetry, music, dancing and sculpture are all imitation" (3).

Then, allusion becomes a kind of imitation which is not literal, but almost figurative and indirect while imitation is "a relation term signifying two items and some correspondence then (4).

The earliest survival literary texts: The Illiad and The Odyssey are full of mythical allusions to the Muses as a source of poetic inspiration (5).

The sources of allusion vary according to the themes that are tackled by writers. Greek and Roman mythology represent one of the main sources. The story of Zeus, the god of gods, for instance can be found in different literary works (6).

The folk-tales which were told orally are fascinating sources of allusion. They remind the reader of different epochs and different views to life. In this way, the writer achieves intimacy by directing the reader to the world from which these tales come (7).

The other great source of allusion is the religious texts. In the western world, the Bible enriches many literary works with stories and parables.

The collective mind or collective unconscious is universal and identical in all people. Writers awaken this memory when they allude to the stories of the past grounded in the archetypes. Readers will share the same thinking and feeling when they read such stories (8).

There are many definitions of allusion which all range from general explanations to the role of the reader in assigning the areas of allusion. The American poet, critic and philosopher Emerson defines allusion as: "A reference without lengthy explanation to literature, history or current event" (9).

Joseph Shipley defines it in more accurate way. He concentrates on a matter of secrecy where any reference to the original text should not be clear:

Originally a parable, now an indication of something without direct mention of it. Direct mention is a reference. A common type of allusion in poetry is a quotation of a word or

so from another work without identifying or acknowledging it (10).

This means that allusion could be like a symbol that expresses something. The language of allusion is like that of a computer. With certain words or symbols it expresses very complicated processes that explain what is behind the words.

P. Guth and L. Rico see that allusion evokes the memory of an educated reader despite the fact of its brief reference:

brief mention that calls up a whole story rich in overtones and associations in which a single word or a single name may activate a whole network of memories (11).

Pierre Fontanier, the French rhetorician, also concentrates on a single word which leads to the complex system of the relations of allusion:

Consisting in conveying the relation of a thing one says with something that one does not say. The locus of this relation could very well be reduced to a single word in which case the allusion belongs to the category of tropes in the strict sense (12).

Finally, Steven Croft defines allusion in a way that mixes its complexity and sources concerning evoking associations in the reader's mind. He also concentrates on its implicitness:

The crucial indicator of the relationship between a given text and literary tradition and it is indirect, implicit rather than explicit reference to another work of literature, place, event, person, history, myth, painting, music, Bible and other religious sources, it provides another layer of meaning and tap indirectly into an association already existing in the reader's mind (13).

Hence, in allusion, the writer uses a single word or phrase or text to refer only to the previous text and to show how it relates with the new text indirectly.

Other critics leave a space for the reader to participate in giving the final operating system of allusion. M. H. Abrams sees that allusion is:

A brief reference implicit or indirect to a person, place or event or to another literary work or passage and it is left to the reader or hearer to make the connection (14).

Abram's definition leads us to think about the theory of the death of the author in which Ronald Barthes argues that "it is the language which speaks not the author" (15).

Hence, the focus has shifted towards the reader's comprehension, for reading a text evokes the reader's thinking. The reader as Webster argues was "a passive receiver of the meaning, then the rise of the reader's importance in literary and critical theory has shifted the emphasis of criticism and interpretation away from the author" (16).

The educated reader is a partner in the productive process. Sometimes he responds pragmatically to some hidden areas in the literary work. The reader, as Freud sees, is said "to respond unconsciously to the disguised content inherent in the creative productions" (17).

J. A. Cudden also concentrates on the role of the reader or the audience to share the writer his experience in this process of recreation. He says that allusion is "often a kind of appeal to a reader to share the experience with the writer"(18). Hence, the reader comes to be an active pole in the creative process. In other words the writer creates and the reader is to re-creates.

1-1 Parallel Allusion between Joseph Wayne and Joseph the Prophet

Joseph, the protagonist of **To a God Unknown** is the most powerful man in the novel. His physical, mental and spiritual strength made him an extraordinary man and a complicated character. He has the same physical features of his father. "The two men were a like. Each had a large nose".

Joseph was not the eldest son, but he was the nearest and dearest to his father's heart and soul as if they were one. His father had great confidence in him; he loved him more than his brother:

*You are not the oldest, but I always thought
of you as the once to have the blessing.
Thomas and Burton are good men, good
sons, but I've always intended the blessing for
you, So you could take my place. I don't know
why. There is something strong in you than in
your brother, Joseph more sure and inward.*

The previous lines ensure that Joseph was strong, extraordinary and dependable man; he is a man of responsibilities. This character eludes to the Biblical character Joseph, the son of Jacob. There are some phases of similarity between them. The name "Joseph" is taken from the Biblical passage which narrates the story of Joseph's birth:

*Then God remembered Rachel, he listened to
her and opened her womb. She became
pregnant to a son and said "God has taken
away my disgrace". She named him Joseph
(19).*

Another phase of allusion is that both Josephs had the blessing of their fathers thought they were not the eldest. Joseph Wayne was blessed by his father before leaving to the west:

*Come to me Joseph, put your hands here-no,
here. My father did it this way... "May the
blessing of God and my blessing rest on this*

child..." Now Joseph, you may go to the west.

"You are finished here with me".

Mr. John Wayne followed the customs of his father in blessing his son. He still calls him a child because he is the dearest. This speech, however, is an allusion to the Biblical passage of "Jacob Blessing His Sons":

Your father's blessings are greater than the blessing of the ancient mountains, than the bounty of the age of old hills. Let all rest on the head of Joseph on the brow of the prince among his brothers (20).

Jacob gave Joseph the best blessing in front of his brothers. Both Joseph's brothers were male only and they were envious. When Joseph Wayne had his father's blessing before he departed, he felt that his brothers were happy for his departure:

"He felt that his brothers would be glad when he was gone".

The sons of Jacob were also looking for a chance to get rid of Joseph. They decided to kill him and throw him in a cistern:

"Here comes that dreamer"! they said to each other. Come now, let's kill him and throw him into one of these cisterns and say that a ferocious animal devoured him (21).

In this way, the allusion to the biblical passage is parallel. Both Josephs were hated by their brothers. They later want to have their father's love for themselves. In spite of all this hatred, both Joseph's forgave their brothers and provided them with what they need. Joseph Wayne's brothers asked him to help them to live in a good land after their father's death. They asked him to buy a new land for them:

Thomas and Benjy think we could all move to the west if there is still land to be taken. We

shall want to hear from you before we make any move.

After Joseph Wayne's brother wrote to him asking to live with him, he found a land for them and informed them saying: "There is a land next to mine. Each of you can have a hundred and sixty acres". This situation is a parallel allusion to the Biblical passage of "Joseph Meets his Brothers":

So the Israel's sons were among those who went to buy grain, for the famine was in the land of Canaan (22).

Joseph Jacob's brother came when they were in need. They, at last, came and lived with him in Egypt, as Joseph's Wayne's brother settled in Nuestra Senora:

Then Joseph said to his brothers and his father's household "I will go up and speak to Pharaoh and will say to him" My brothers and my father's household who were living in the land of Canaan have come to me. The men are shepherds, they tend livestock and they have brought a long their flocks and herds and everything they own (23).

The allusion to the Biblical passage is parallel. Both Josephs left their families though Wayne left it willingly and Joseph Jacob left it obligatory. However, both of them became in charge of their new lands and their families for Pharaoh agreed to Joseph's appeal and allowed his brother to live in Egypt after giving him a wide authority:

"You shall be in charge of my palace and all my people are to submit to your order" (24).

The two Josephs are similar in some aspects of their responsibilities especially those which concern with agriculture. The two societies among they lived are agricultural. Joseph Wayne was fond of land and fertility to the extent of worship. He describes his body as a land and rain; the two poles of fertility: *"I*

am the land". "I am the rain and the grass will grow out of me in a little while". There is an obvious structural allusion which parallels what the Christ says "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end" (25).

Hence, Joseph Wayne tried hard to keep the life and this is another allusion to Joseph Jacob's job. Joseph Jacob followed certain ways in agriculture and keeping the grains to feed people in the years of famine. The name of Joseph is given another meaning for the Pharaoh. He calls him "Zephenath-Paneah" (26) which means the keeper of life.

It is also worth mentioning that both Josephs started their responsibilities at the age of thirty. In one of Mr. Wayne's speech, he address Joseph "a year or two is nothing when you are thirty five". Joseph Jacob was thirty years old when he entered the service of Pharaoh (27).

As for the abnormality in some phases of Josephs, personalities, both of them have the ability to predict. Joseph Jacob's ability results from a divine inspiration while Wayne's results from some sides of abnormality in him. He predicted the death of his brother Benjamin. He also predicted to hear news when the three larks scurried behind him and the horses snorted. What Joseph expected came to be true for his brother died and he received a letter telling him about his father's death. Joseph Jacob had the ability to interpret dreams which are related to some future events. He interpreted Pharaoh's dreams about fertility and drought:

The seven good cows are seven years, and the seven good heads of grain are seven years... the seven lean, ugly cows that came up afterward are seven years, and so are the seven worthless heads of grain... They are seven years of famine (28).

Another important phase of Wayne's feature is that his wife Elizabeth sees the image of the Christ as she looked at him:

*The Christ face was still the face of Joseph;
she laughed uneasily and confessed to herself
"I 'm praying to my own husband".*

1-2 Contrasted Allusion Between the two Protagonists

The relationship between Joseph Wayne and the land and other elements of nature reflect the complexity of his faith. He believes in the power of the oak tree. He looks at it as if it were his father. Therefore; he was not sad when his father died. He deals with the tree in a way of worshipping; it is sacred for him. When his wife, Elizabeth, gave birth, he took baby to the tree to bless it:

*Joseph was holding the baby within the
crotch of the tree and Burton saw how the
gnarled limbs curved up protectingly about it.*

As Burton saw what was going on, he advised Joseph to give up doing so Joseph justified this saying that he tried to create a certain relationship between the baby and the tree:

"I only want my son to love the tree".

The belief in the tree and its power increased and Joseph was engaged with the soul in it. The matter of belief in nature and its power and elements is a kind of "Totamism". It is a system of belief in a totem or mystical relationship between group or an individual and the totem. The totem is an object like, animal, a plant or any natural thing which has power. These things or objects are symbols to the kinship of person or group with it (29). Joseph Wayne is presented as a mystical character and the Oak tree is his totem. However, Joseph defended himself as having been accused by Burton for not being Christian saying that he was not worshipping the tree but he loves it as if the soul of his father inhabits it. Moreover, its strength makes him feel that the tree protects him.

Joseph Jacob blessed his sons Manasseh and Ephraim in a pure Jewish way which he inherited from his fathers:

He blessed them that day and said "In your names will Israel pronounce this blessing... So he put Ephraim a head of Manasseh (30).

Hence, the allusion to this Biblical passage is contrastive. Joseph Jacob's sons were blessed by a believer while Joseph Wayne's son, John, was blessed by the tree. Joseph Jacob had two sons while Joseph Wayne had only one whose destiny is unknown for after his father's death he went away with his uncle Thomas to another new land.

Both Josephs faced some problems and shared some common features. Both were handsome and well-built which make them a source of temptation for women.

After his wife's death, Joseph Wayne felt sad and lonely. Rama, Thomas' wife, tempted him to lay with here. He submitted to this temptation and committed a sin. Rama was in need to this. She admired Joseph and loved his strange personality in which she looks for perfectness through making love:

This is a need. She whispered hoarsely on Joseph's throat and chest a grinding started, like hot gravel and it moved downward, Rama blew out the light and flung herself into the bed. Their bodies met furiously.

This situation is an allusion to the Biblical passage of "Joseph in Potiphar's House":

Now Joseph was well-built and handsome, and after a while his master's wife took a notice of Joseph and said "Come to bed with me!" But he refused. With me in charge he told her, "My master does not concern himself with anything in the house;

everything he owns he has entrusted to my care" (31).

The Biblical character, Joseph, was honest, trustful, and believer. It is his nobility, loyalty to his master and the divine will which prevented him from committing a sin. In this case the allusion is contrastive.

Conclusion

Allusion is one of the literary techniques that can be found in the earliest survival literary works. It is not expressed clearly, So only the educated reader can assign its areas and sources. Hence the references to the Bible are not clear and open. John Steinbeck succeeded in dealing with this matter. He chooses a name that harmonizes with the Biblical name and left the reader thinking about the similarities and differences between the two characters. They meet in some aspects and differ in others. Through the character and events one finds that Steinbeck used allusion in amazing way. He succeeded in keeping the most important events and characters as they are referred to in the Bible with slight difference which resulted from the changes of time and society. However, the various uses of allusion reflect the writer's intelligence and his wide education. They enable him to say much in little and give an aesthetic touch to his work.

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