Desire and Ideological Resistance: Fabulation in *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*

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> He knew what he knew: that the real world was full of magic, so magical worlds could easily be real.
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> *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, 50.

In the course of my research, I have often encountered instances of what might be called elements from the fable. As a genre, the fable is commonly referred to as a type of short narrative that through allegory and metaphor constructs a moral thesis or a satire of human behaviour. To that end, it usually resorts to animalisation of the characters, so that while they are given the appearance of animals, they act fully according to human speech, thought and feeling.

The concept thus lends itself enough plasticity to be re-invented, particularly at times of crisis, due to its potential for ideological assertion and political subversion [1]. Well-known examples of this are James Thurber's *Fables for Our Times* (1940) and George Orwell's *Animal Farm* (1945). Bearing also in mind the context of the Second World War but aiming to criticise any authoritarian and genocide-driven regime, *Chicken Run*, a 2000 film by Peter Lord and Nick Park, is an example not only of how

[1] Carlos Reis refers to the fable as «um relato de grande projecção pragmática»(Reis e Lopes, 1996: 158).

the fable continues to thrive in our time but also of its ability to expand and use new technological and artistic means at its disposal.

Despite some notable exceptions such as Günter Grass's *The Rat* (1986) and Yann Martel's *The Life of Pi* (2002), in postmodern literature the fable has not enjoyed the fully-fledged form it had with Aesop, Jean de La Fontaine or Ivan Krylov, whose works are regarded as the archetypal form of the fable. It has, however, been reshaped and it has re-surfaced in myriad literary types which seek to use and emphasise some of its traits: irony, change (often in the form of metamorphosis) and ideological engagement. There were many possibilities at hand therefore: for example, Tim Burton's *The Melancholy Death of Oyster Boy and Other Stories* (1997) continues a tendency to comic horror and fantasy already observable in many of his films and particularly in *The Nightmare before Christmas* (1993), and Angela Carter's collection *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* (1979) is peopled with wolves and beasts. With respect to the fable my preference within this collection goes to the short story «The Erl King», an allegory to the Bluebeard uxoricide mania, represented in an idyllic ambience where the king of the forest kills his wives, the doves. The story of Pinocchio has also received considerable attention recently: from *A. I.* (Steven Spielberg and Stanley Kubrick, 2001) to *Pinocchio* (Robert Benini, 2002), to *Pinocchio 3000* (Daniel Robichaud, 2005), and to *The Adventures of Pinocchio* (Steve Barron, a Hallmark Channel production, 1996). In Portugal a new translation has come out in 2004 with illustrations by Paula Rego and the book has attracted considerable interest. But the most daring, scatological and even blasphemous example is probably by the American Robert Coover, who in *Pinocchio in Venice* (1992) turns Alidoro and particularly Melampetta into dogs whose foul language is taken to new creative limits.

In the sense that it has re-invented itself (as the aforementioned examples illustrate), the fable has undergone a process quite similar to the fairy tale. As Cristina Bacchilega asserts: «Creative writers seem [...] inspired by the fairy tale, which provides them with well-known material pliable to political, erotic, or narrative manipulation. Belittled, yet pervasive and institutionalized, fairy tales are thus produced and consumed to accomplish a variety of social functions in multiple contexts and in more or less explicitly ideological ways» (Bacchilega, 1997: 2-3). If the fable, as the fairy tale, has been regarded in the history of literature as a minor genre (a tendency which has for some time been creatively fought against), the two are distinguishable insofar as the fairy tale has been used as narrative tool of social control and manipulation (for instance, in illustrating and educating gender and class roles), while the fable has focused on the topic of humanness, defining, criticising and revealing masquerades it puts on daily. The reason for the revival of the fable or of fabulist writing is related to what Brian McHale defines as the ontological dominant which, in his view, characterises postmodernism. For McHale the postmodern dominant

is concerned with problems of modes of being, in other words, as essentially raising post-cognitive questions in opposition and consequentially to the epistemological ones of modernism (McHale, 1987).

My decision to approach the theme of the fable through Salman Rushdie's work was based on three reasons: firstly because from *Midnight's Children* (1981) to *Shame* (1983) and even to more recent books such as *The Moor's Last Sigh* (1995) and *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* (1999), Rushdie's fiction is often agreed to dwell upon the fable [2]. My exploration of *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* (1990) aims at exploring the accuracy of the idea of the Rushdian fable as well as at analysing its specific narrative strategies. Secondly, it represents a journey back to the source insofar as the *Panchatantra*, the oldest known example of the fable, is originated from India (87 stories in Sanskrit, collected between the third and fifth centuries AD but believed to be much older); given that Salman Rushdie has systematically used his cultural and literary background as a prime guideline and force in his fiction, residues of the *Panchatantra* and of fabulist narrative are likely to be found. Even today, the *akhyana*, strictly a beast or folktale but more widely regarded as any description of a story the speaker witnessed, is still being produced in India. Thirdly, a literary investigation on the fable having as a starting point a contemporary book which, as more classic types, has children in mind as its possible audience, can also, at least in the case of *Haroun*, illuminate the connections that the fable can develop with related genres such as magical realism.

Thus justified, I will address *Haroun* as a fable according to the following tripartite structure:

a) the multi-levelled discourse
b) desire as drive
c) fabulous and chimerical characters

a) The multi-levelled discourse

Briefly, the plot of *Haroun* is based upon a common fear among children: the parents' separation. Haroun's father, Rashid, is a story-teller who is about to use his talent to support the political campaign of Snooty Buttoo and so immersed was he in his tales that he overlooked his wife's growing distance. Eventually one day Soraya runs off with their neighbour, Mr Sengupta. Haroun starts to question his father's occupation until one day he finds a water genie, Iff, in the bathroom, closing the Story Tap that connected Rashid to the source of all stories, the Ocean of the Streams of Stories. Haroun then travels with Iff to Kahani, the land of stories, where a civil war

[2] See for instance the interview with Salil Tripathi and Dina Vakil, «Angels and Devils Are Becoming Confused Ideas», (Tripathi and Vakil, [1987] 2000: 79).

between the guardians of the Ocean, the Guppees («gup» means «gossip» or «nonsense») and the Chupwalas («Chup» refers to silence) is imminent.

To understand *Haroun* and its narrative as a fable, the context of its production has to be taken into consideration. It was written in the aftermath of Salman Rushdie's death sentence, the *fatwa*, declared in 1989 by the religious and political leader in Iran, the Ayatollah Khomeini, as reprisal for the supposedly blasphemous and defamatory book against Islam, *The Satanic Verses*. At first it seems surprising that the author, being under a threat that achieved epic proportion by the action of the media, did not strike back with a political novel whose complexity and depth would put his view more firmly through. However, Rushdie was at the time already an experienced writer who was able to understand that means such as the fairy tale and the fable can drive the point home more poignantly than a direct vicious attack[3]. In fact, he had already integrated such elements in a large scale and as prime textual devices in *Midnight's Children* and *Shame* because, as he reveals in his interview with John Haffenden «[w]hat has happened recently is that writers are using the machinery of the fable but without wishing to point a single moral» (Haffenden, 1985: 247). Rushdie's recurrent use of fabulism thus lies in its usefulness as a device to interpret and interact with the contemporary world but he abandons the idea of a moral, or at least of a single moral; as Rushdie sees it, the fable can be used to open people's eyes but not to indicate a definitive action mode. Nevertheless, Rushdie does present his own opinion which he hopes stimulates and creates a tension with the reader's own.

The issue of realism is thus part of the discussion on the postmodern fable and Rushdie proves to be aware of its value when he asks the reader to imagine *Shame* as a realistic novel. If that were the case, he would have to write about corruption, poverty, genocide and political assassination as well as about other sad and amusing slices of reality such as that sign at the Sind Club in Karachi reading «Women and Dogs Not Allowed Beyond This Point» (Rushdie, 1983: 69). Speaking of such things is exactly what he does in the novel but by using the fairy tale and particularly the fabulous

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[3] In this respect, G. R. Taneja in «Facts of Fiction: *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*»writes: «*Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, then, restates the central truth of earlier books and celebrates the triumph of human imagination. What is amazing is that what such a complex book as *Midnight's Children* strove for, and what a tougher work such as *The Satanic Verses* in a way achieved, a fable in the form of children's tale takes it even further and strengthens it»(Taneja, 1992: 204). Sushila Singh's point of view agrees with this perspective: «Salman Rushdie's new novel *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* (1990) confirms the novelist's stance of a fabulist and a fantasist engaged seriously in dealing with the contemporary world reality. […] For Rushdie, novel is a political discourse, and to this end he adopts the narrative mode of the fable and the stance of a fabulist. […] A fantasist normally abstracts or extrapolates things from the real world with a view to pursuing their imaginative logic» (Singh, 1992: 209).

figure of the feline-woman. The end of his long dissertation on the so-called «realistic» events in Pakistan is reached with this profoundly sarcastic reflection:

> [I]f I had been writing a book of this nature it would have done me no good to protest that I was writing universally, not only about Pakistan. The book could have been banned, dumped in the rubbish bin, burned. All that effort for nothing! Realism can break a writer's heart. Fortunately, however, I am only telling a sort of modern fairy tale so that's all right; nobody need get upset, or take anything I say too seriously. No drastic action need be taken either.What a relief! (Rushdie, 1983: 70)

In *Haroun*, the efficiency of the pen is actually made to coincide with the ferocity of the sword as when Prince Bolo instigates the Gup Army, embodied as a disorganised but energetic library, to war: «Now there is not a second to lose! Assemble the armed forces – all the Pages, every Chapter, every Volume! To war, to war!» (Rushdie, 1990: 105).

Rushdie's intention in *Haroun* follows the reasoning developed in *Shame* of using his imagination, his role as a writer, to retaliate without seeming to be doing anything serious, because the language in *Haroun* is as powerful as that of legendary story-tellers such as Scheherazade. But like hers and Rashid's, who one identifies with Rushdie, language in *Haroun* is entertaining as well: «Haroun often thought of his father as a Juggler, because his stories were really lots of different tales juggled together, and Rashid kept them going in a sort of dizzy whirl, and never made a mistake» (Rushdie, 1990: 16).

The same assumption is encapsulated in Mini Chandra's words when she writes: «The language [in *Haroun*], like that of the fables, seems to communicate a text that is at variance with the apparent playfulness of the story» (Chandran, 2003).

The text is thus constructed in layers of signification of different degrees of playfulness and seriousness, establishing various levels of communication, a trait Mini Chandran identifies as being typical of the fable. As often occurs with the fable, differentiated levels of communication are determined by the previously identified differentiated publics: (politically-conscious) adults and children. One does not prevail over the other which the publication of the novel as a children's play and its representation by the Royal National Theatre in 1998 only goes to prove.

b) Desire as drive

One of the reasons for the fable to be considered a minor literary form derives from its lack of a sufficiently supported structural and thematic definition to specify characterisation, differentiation of primary and secondary planes of action, contextual information and narrative amplitude. Howard Needler, however, presents the argument that desire is a prominent feature of the fable and that the story evolves along its axis: the formulation of a desire (commonly materialised as a wish in fairy tales), its satisfaction or opposition, the actual reasonability of the nature of the desire, the

depiction of the (beneficial or disastrous) consequences and a reflection on the situation from which all readers / listeners take their conclusions as well (Needler, 1991: 423-439).

In the work in question, desire is determined on personal and on political dimensions. On a personal level, it is the desire on the one hand of the young boy who has just lost his mother and wants to get her back and on the other to help his father regain the subscription for the stories. The two aspects are linked through the question at the centre of the book for Soraya had departed with Mr Sengupta not overtaken with an amorous impulse but by its very opposite. Confronted with the dilemma between the pleasure principle and the reality principle, Soraya prefers the latter. As she writes in the single note she leaves behind:

> You [Rashid] are only interested in pleasure, but a proper man would know that life is a serious business. Your brain is full of make-believe, so there is no room in it for facts. Mr Sengupta has no imagination at all. This is okay by me. (Rushdie, 1990: 22)

In a fit of pain, Haroun thus blames his father who admittedly knows no other work but storytelling: «What's the point of it? *What's the use of stories that aren't even true*?» (Rushdie, 1990: 22. Italics in the text). Then the Unthinkable Thing happens: Rashid the Ocean of Notions, the magician of language (Rushdie, 1990: 16), loses his gift. The desire at the start of Haroun's journey can thus be described as a wish to alleviate his guilt and to compensate for his father's loss: «'My fault again,' Haroun thought wretchedly. 'I started all this off. *What's the use of stories that aren't even true*. I asked that question and it broke my father's heart. So it's up to me to put things right. Something has to be done'» (Rushdie, 1990: 27. Italics in the text).

The journey, as frequently happens in literature, is an allegory of self-discovery but the answer to the question that motivated it is also a negation of the Freudian conflict between the pleasure and reality principles which cannot as easily fit within a double pattern of morality. It is, in addition, a meta-literary and political question as it raises the issue of the value of the fable (and of all related «fantastic» genres) and of its use as a form of ideological assertion and resistance. Rushdie's opinion is that it is an effective means for on speaking in the form of fabulation he is nevertheless speaking of the actual world: «the real world [is] full of magic, so magical worlds [can] easily be real» (Rushdie, 1990: 50).

On the political plane, Haroun's desire is to see the Land of Gup to win over the Land of Chup as a mock-representation of the desirable outcome of the Rushdie affair. In the book, the fictional counterpart to the Ayatollah Khomeinei is Khattam-Shud (an Hindustani expression meaning «finished»). For the most part of the story he is unseen, making his force even more compelling through mystery. Through the Dark Art of Sorcery he became «Shadowy himself – changeable, dark, more like a Shadow than

a Person» (Rushdie, 1990: 133). When Rashid describes him, his words convey Khattam-Shud's apocalyptic overtones: «Khattam-Shud […] is the Arch-Enemy of all Stories, even of Language itself. He is the Prince of Silence and the Foe of Speech. And because everything ends, stories end, life ends, at the finish of everything we use his name» (Rushdie, 1990: 39). He is called the Cultmaster of Bezaban, a cult of Dumbness or Muteness (literally «without-a-tongue»). In a clear allusion to all oppressive social systems, either of a military or religious nature, Rushdie describes the increasing fanaticism of such views of the world:

> In the old days the Cultmaster, Khattam-Shud, preached hatred only towards stories and fancies and dreams; but now he has become more severe, and opposes Speech for any reason at all. In Chup City the schools and law-courts and theatres are all closed now, unable to operate because of the Silence laws. And I heard it said that some wild devotees of the Mystery [of Bezaban] work themselves up into great frenzies and sew their lips together with stout twine; so they die slowly of hunger and thirst, sacrificing themselves for the love of Bezaban. (Rushdie, 1990: 101)

The blinding fanaticism experienced by the Cultmaster's followers results in their deaths, deaths that can be metaphorically interpreted as hunger and thirst for enlightenment or actual mutilations and demise of martyrs acting in the name of their faith and, as in the case of the Rushdie affair, they victimise others in the process. In some sense then, *Haroun* is as critical of fundamentalist Islamism as is *The Satanic Verses*. Not only does Rushdie construct the Ayatollah's fictional character as a hypocrite (others cannot speak but he can) but he also makes a veiled reference to the sacred Ka'aba in Mecca, appearing in his book as «a colossus carved out of black ice» worshipped by the Chupwalas (Rushdie, 1990: 101).

The grotesque appearance of Khattam-Shud is indicative of the monstrosity he represents but, having the powers of metamorphosis, he usually acquires the unimpressive outlook of a mingy clerk, conveying the idea that evilness is not always notoriously recognisable:

> The Cultmaster grew and grew before their appalled, astonished eyes, until he was one hundred and one feet tall, with one hundred and one heads, each of which had three eyes and a protruding tongue of flame; and a hundred and one arms, one hundred of which were holding enormous black swords, while the one hundred and first tossed Butt the Hoopoe's brain-box casually into the air... and then, with a little sigh, Khattam-Shud shrank back into his earlier, clerkish form. (Rushdie, 1990: 156)

When no dialogue is possible between people, fear accumulates inside them and their imagination is instead used to fuel that fear, thus contributing to the empowerment of central forces. Responsibility for totalitarian chaos belongs therefore

also to the people who belittle danger when it presents itself in its «clerkish form» and who fail to assume such a situation is the result of a common cowardice or negligence on the part of all. When Iff looks at the polluted stories in the Ocean of the Streams of Stories, he acknowledges this fault: «'If the Source itself is poisoned, what will happen to the Ocean – to us all?' Iff almost wailed. 'We have ignored it for too long, and now we pay the price'» (Rushdie, 1990: 87). As the warning implies, this head-in-the-sand attitude is harmful on ecological, social and individual levels. All must assume their responsibility and be like Mali, the Floating Gardener doing the maintenance of the Ocean and also like Goopy and Bagha, the rhyming Plentimaw Fishes in whose stomachs old stories are recycled and then released back to the Ocean. The use of stories, in the end, is that of preserving memory and of renewal because, as Butt the Hoopoe rhetorically asks: «'[I]s not the Power of Speech the greatest Power of all? Then surely it must be exercised to the full?'» (Rushdie, 1990: 119). This point is condensed in Jean Pierre Durix's cultivation-metaphor and it relates to the fable: «*Haroun* includes some didactic remarks that provide a morality on human behaviour: it mostly concerns the necessity not to forget the importance of using one's imagination, one's inalienable power of liberation» (Durix, 1994: 349). The Bakhtinian principle of polyphony is therefore crucial to this fable and even to its inherent political ideology: «Rushdie too in *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, as in all his other novels, valorizes a plurality of voices, privileging polyphony over an enforced unity of silence. Paradoxically, heterogeneity is seen as more cohesive than the monolithic idea of a nation» (Mukherjee, 1998: 165).

However, though Rushdie proposes that even a Parliament entitled Chatterbox where decisions are postponed for years, and rulers like the idiot Prince Bolo and the brainless Blatcheat (who also does her share of irresponsible corruption and pollution by altering the stories written on the bodies of the Pages so that her beloved can be a hero in all of them) are preferable to any type of tyranny, he adopts a deconstructionist position by dismantling the dichotomy between silence and speech. This insight is prompted by the encounter with the Shadow Warrior, the embodiment of Gesture Language and a symbol of the beauty of Indian dancing and of bodily communication in general:

> 'Gup is bright and Chup is dark. Gup is warm and Chup is freezing cold. Gup is all chattering and noise, whereas Chup is silent as shadow. Guppees love the Ocean, Chupwalas try to poison it. Guppees love Stories, and Speech, Chupwalas, it seems, hate these things just as strongly'. It was a war between Love [...] and Death [...].
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> 'But it's not as simple as that,' he [Haroun] told himself, because the dance of the Shadow Warrior showed him that silence had its own grace and beauty (just as speech could be graceless and ugly); and that Action could be as noble as Words; and that creatures of darkness could be as lovely as the children of light. 'If Guppees and

> Chupwalas didn't hate each other so,' he thought, 'they might actually find each other pretty interesting. Opposites attract, as they say.' (Rushdie, 1990: 125)

But as all duplicities are abolished in the novel, the distinction between the personal and the political is also effaced. Rushdie, who had been separated from his son with the declaration of the *fatwa*, dedicates *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* to Zafar in an acrostic but one senses Rushdie reaching for others as well:

Z embla, Zenda, Xanadu:
A ll our dream-worlds may come true.
F airy lands are fearsome too.
A s I wander far from view
R ead, and bring me home to you

Notwithstanding the identified reader being his son, even in these lines Rushdie is making references to his political situation: the repression of freedom of speech in Iran and similarly oriented countries, his hiding, and his desire that, in spite of it all, that his words still reach his public. For this reason, Sushila Singh writes:

> The novel thus is not to be mistaken as merely a children's classic. With his magic touch Salman Rushdie has once again created a book which can be read at different levels of meaning: as a fable, as fantasy, adventure, allegory or an autobiographical novel. In his endeavour to come to terms with the realities of present-day world and an individual's predicament in it, he has produced a work of superb craftsmanship. (Singh, 1992: 216)

c) Fabulous and chimerical characters

Among the postmodernist features that can be singled out in *Haroun* are counted irony, interconnection between humour and seriousness, variety between «high» and popular cultures and intertextuality. The intertexts have been pinpointed with scrupulous detail in several articles. They include Frank Baum's *The Wizard of Oz* (the film which prompted Rushdie to write his first story[4]), Lewis Carrol's *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass* (the Walrus, the turtle bed, the Guppee court session with pages / cards and a deranged royal family, the adventure into a dreamland ruled at times by absurdity, drinking magic liquids and time stopped – the eleven minutes concentration span in *Haroun* and the Mad Tea Party in *Alice*), J. M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*, *The Neverending Story* by Michael Ende, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* by Roald Dahl, Satyajit Ray's 1968 film *Goopy Gayen and Bagha Gayen* («The Adventures of Goopy and Bagha») from where Rushdie borrowed the names of the Plentimaw Fishes, Charles Dickens (from *Great Expectations* the element of frozen time

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[4] Rushdie has admitted to have used *The Wizard* as an inspiration for *Haroun* (Rushdie, 1992: 9 and 18).

at the exact moment Miss Havisham's heart breaks and from *Little Dorrit* the similarity of the Circumlocution Office with the P2C2E House), and the Beatles (the Walrus is taken from their song «IMD Walrus», included in the 1976 album *Magical Mystery Tour*).

Nevertheless Salman Rushdie rejects the term postmodernist for he feels it to be a scholarly term and prefers instead to see the so-called postmodernist elements arising from the influence of ancient sources had on him. In an interview with Akbar Ahmed, he comments:

> To my mind the *Arabian Nights* was the book which showed me more about writing than anything else. One of the things that one should remember is that what is now called in the West «magic realism» and before that was called «surrealism» and before that was called fantasy or fable etc is all the same thing. (Ahmed, [1991] 2000: 150)

A chief reference has to be the collection *The Ocean of the Streams of Story* itself, known as the *Kathasaritsagara*, dating back to the eleventh century. It is actually mentioned in *Haroun*, as Snooty Booty has an edition of the tales in his houseboat which is purposefully named *Arabian Nights*.

Another significant reference is the twelfth century Sufi poem *The Conference of the Birds*, a fabulist narrative where all characters are birds led on a pilgrimage by a hoopoe.

Salman Rushdie puts an emphasis on the influence of traditional tales and oral narrative (referred to as Old Zone in *Haroun*) both admittedly in interviews and metafictionally. The treatment given to characters reflects this influence through caricature (Khatttam-Shud, Snooty Booty) and literary intertextuality (Haroun and Rashid are the de-fragmented names of Haroun al-Rashid, a Caliph in *The Arabian Nights*) which includes the *Panchatantra*. Sushila Singh believes that Rushdie's admiration and use of *Aesop's Fables* and of the *Panchatantra* is evident already in his first novel, *Grimus* (Singh, 1992: 209).

But characters are also of a more fantastical nature more akin to the fable, though they are not ordinary animals speaking of humanity; Butt the Hoopoe, a mythic figure, here is a mechanical creature; Iff is a Water Genie, thus a being drawn from the rich Indian tradition of storytelling; Mali, Goopy and Bagha are wholly chimerical creatures, the former a type of weed with vegetable tentacles and lilac-mouthed and the Plentimaws were triangular sea-monsters with plenty of mouths to suck in and blow out stories. There is also the army of Pages and General Kitab, their commander, is a book.

Finally, there were the Eggheads whose shaved heads gave them a humanoid appearance. As scientists in charge of all the technological development of Kahani, they transport the reader's imagination, and not necessarily just children, to the universe of sci-fi film of the *Star War* series and *2001: Space Odyssey*, where the language P2C2E (Process Too Complicated To Explain) is common jargon.

The story closes with Soraya's return home to her family. Meaningfully yet, it also represents the encounter of the city with its own identity, and Rashid with himself as his talents are recovered and used to instigate voters to act according to their consciousnesses and thus to make full use of their right to freedom of expression. The city remembers its name, Kahani, meaning «story», and thus Salman Rushdie makes the final assertion that *Haroun* is not an escapist book by making the fantasy world Kahani coincide with the real world. The point of stories that aren't even true is the wrong question because they are about us and our world. As he says in conversation with Günter Grass: «fiction is telling the truth at a time in which the people who claimed to be telling the truth were making things up. You have politicians or the media or whoever, the people who form opinion, who are, in fact, making the fictions. And it becomes the duty of the writer of fiction to start telling the truth» (Rushdie, [1985] 2000: 73-74).

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Resumo: Apesar do género da fábula não ter florescido na literatura contemporânea na sua forma emblemática, algumas das suas estratégias e estéticas foram postas ao serviço de formas literárias de maior sucesso. Em *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, Salman Rushdie utilizou alguns dos elementos da fábula para atenuar o impacto de um trauma pessoal e para fazer uma afirmação de índole política, provando assim que a fábula continua a merecer um lugar na cultura e literatura do nosso tempo.

Abstract: Though in contemporary literature the genre of the fable has not flourished in its exemplary type, nevertheless it has been able to put its aesthetics and some of its strategies at the service of more successful forms. In *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, Salman Rushdie made use of fabulist elements both to attenuate the impact of a private trauma and to make a political statement, proving that the fable still has a place in the culture and literature of our time.