

---

## **Grimus : An Analysis**

Dr. Mrs. S.D. Thakare,

Matoshree Vimalabai DeshmukhMahavidyalaya Amravati.

---

**Abstract :-** Grimus is a "futuristic fantasy" about an immortal native American called Flapping Eagle, whose quest it is to find his sister Bird-Dog and vanquish the arch-villain Grimus, ruler of Calf Island. Due to Flapping Eagle's posthumous birth, the siblings are virtual outcasts, which is why they have little difficulty in leaving their people when they are offered immortality. In the middle section of the novel Flapping Eagle abandons his companion and attempts to settle down in the town of K, where he wreaks havoc on its population by depriving some inhabitants of the absolute certainty that is necessary to fight off the "Dimension-fever" caused by Grimus. The problem with this novel is that science fiction is usually a fundamentally rational genre.

**Introduction :-**Grimus is a 1975 fantasy and science fiction novel by Salman Rushdie. It was his literary debut. To a large extent it has been disparaged by academic critics. The novel contains references to numerous works of literature such as Dante's Divine Comedy', Farid-Ud-Din Attar's 12th Century Sufi poem "The Conference of the birds", Samuel Johnson's Rasselas', Hamlet, Tempest, Robinson Crusoe as well as to writers like Coleridge, Keats and Samuel Beckett, to name but a few. Grimus also contains "tentative steps towards an examination of post-coloniality. The story loosely follows Flapping Eagle, a young Indian who receives the gift of immortality after drinking a magic fluid. Then the flapping eagle wanders the earth for 777 years 7 months and 7 days, searching for his immortal sister and exploring identities before falling through a hole in the Mediterranean Sea. Like much of Rushdie's work, Grimus undermines the concept of a 'pure culture' by demonstrating the impossibility of any culture, philosophy existing in sterile isolation. Further, the habits that communities adopt to prevent themselves from acknowledging multiplicity gain allegorical representation.

**Critical Analysis :-**Reading Grimus is, in some respects, like putting together a puzzle. The first chapter involves turning all of the pieces face up so we see what we have to work with. The second chapter relies on our powers of observation to not only look at the pieces but, at least try to fit them together. The third chapter leaves us with about fifty pieces left of a well defined picture and we can race to the finish line, putting everything in place. Like every great masters, Rushdie has the ability to take us out of our own world disorient us, and reorient us in a way that is not unsettling, but engaging. In the end, we feel smarter and more open minded.

The bizarre story deals with immortality, created worlds, other

dimensions both inner and outer, and outcasts. Flapping Eagle, or Joe-Sue, or Born from Dead is an Axona indian who has a lighter complexion than the rest of his people, add to this that his mother died seconds after he was born and you get an outcast. He is not easily accepted, but his sister, Bird-Dog, protects him. she also presents him with the elixir of eternal life and she disappears mysteriously from the land of the Axona. Flapping Eagle is then exiled from his people, and wanders the world for centuries before falling through a gate in the Mediterranean that leads to 'Calf Island' while attempting suicide. Flapping Eagle gets Virgil to admit that he has seen Bird Dog on Calf Island and decides to go up Calf-Mountain, but Virgil must accompany him because of the "Grimus Effect". This effect consists of a "Whine" that pervades the mountain and, for lack of a better explanation, drives people mad who succumb to it for too long a time. At the top of calf Mountain sits the town of "K", in which live people who deal with the effect by obsessing over various things. Here flapping Eagle and Virgil part ways. When people begin dying in the town of "K", they turn against Flapping eagle, and he and Virgil decide they must join forces and face Grimus, who supposedly resides at the cloud-obscured summit of Calf-Mountain. This leads to the Novel's Climax. Philosophical issues such as immortality, free will and determinism, suicide and death are dealt with throughout the twisty tale. It is a bizarre read, and half way through the novel readers may wonder what they have get themselves into. Even Most of the women characters are either prostitutes or dizzy and demented with love for a man. One example is the character of Liv, who is black-velied beauty who uses intimacy as a tool for revenge. Many of the women in this novel all come off as somewhat hollow, weak and one sided characters. This adds to the second rate and unexceptional tone that pervades the entire novel.

**Conclusion :-** Grimus is not an easy novel to categorize, as people so like to do with novels. It has elements of fantasy and science fiction, contains themes from Middle Eastern and Western traditions, but is definitely literary fiction in general tone. Apart from the "flimsy" treatment of post-colonial issues, Grimus has been criticised for its 'often tedious mimicry of other writers', its generic insecurity between science fiction and fantasy.

**References :-**

- 1) Amanuddin, Syed, "The Novels of Salman Rushdie : Mediated Reality as Fantasy. "WorldLiterature Today 63:1 (1989) : 42-45
- 2) Afzal-Khan, Fawzia, Cultural Imperialism and the Indo-English Novel; Genre and Ideology in R.K. Narayan, Anita Desai, Kamala Markandaya and Salman Rushdie (Pennsylvania, PA : Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993), P.143.
- 3)Hume, Kathryn. "Taking a Stand while lacking a Centre : Rushdie's Postmodern Politics." Philological Quarterly 74:2 (1995) : 209-30
- 4) Rushdie, Salman. Grimus, London : Vintage, 1996.
- 5) Walsh, William. Indian Literature in English, Harlow : Longman, 1990.