Chapter II

The Search for a Self : *Grimus*

*Grimus* marks Rushdie’s entry into the world of fiction. Rushdie himself does not accord a high status to this work in his literary canon. He has admitted in an interview: “I feel very distant from [*Grimus*], mainly because I don’t like the language it is written in. It’s a question of hearing your own voice, and I don’t hear it because I hadn’t found it then” (qtd in Cundy *Salman 25*). But the novel deserves a close study for it’s thematic and technical peculiarities. Though lukewarmly received by the readers for its alleged obscurity and intricate craftsmanship, *Grimus* occupies a central position in Rushdie’s literary career. It may even be argued that the later novels are expansions and reworkings of the ideas and techniques latently present in his first novel. *Grimus* presents in seminal form several themes, perceptions and narrative devices shaped with more colour and greater intensity in his later novels.

*Grimus* is probably the most postmodern of all his writings. Most of the features associated with postmodern fiction like parody, subversion, intertextuality, fragmentation and experimental literary devices characterize the novel. At the same time traditional narrative strategies like the use of allegory, parables, myths, history and fantasy are also used, without taking any single method or device to its logical conclusion, so much so that the novel offers scope for a
wide range of interpretations. Along with postmodernism, the ideological concerns of postcoloniality are explored, making the novel centrifugal within the Rushdie oeuvre. Nasrin Rahimieh in “Grimus: Salman Rushdie’s First Experiment with Postmodernist Narrative” remarks that she has selected the less popular work for a study because “in it he has demonstrated how the writer whose social and cultural heritage is different from that of the average westerner may nevertheless use the most avant-garde literary techniques while maintaining an unbroken link with his cultural heritage” (116). The first novel itself proves Rushdie’s stance as a postmodern writer who also realizes the significance of traditional values in literature.

“Ib. Johansen views the novel as a formal experiment with a mixture of different genres” (Petersson, Unending 61), a device which Rushdie used successfully in all his novels. The novel consists of three parts, Times Present, Times Past and Grimus. In Times Present, the main character Flapping Eagle escapes miraculously through a hole in the sea and reaches an island where two old people Virgil Jones and Dolores are sitting on the beach. Rushdie presents Flapping Eagle’s background and his growth as a North American Indian on a table land isolated from the surroundings. Flapping Eagle’s original name was Joe-Sue. Joe-Sue and his sister wished to lead an independent and free life and called themselves Flapping Eagle and Bird-Dog respectively. Joe-Sue’s mother died when he was born. So he was also called “Born from the Dead”. His sister Bird-Dog
becomes his mother surrogate. She comes across the pedlar Sispy who in fact is Grimus. Sispy gives her the yellow elixir of life and the blue poison of death. Swallowing the yellow elixir, Bird-Dog attains immortality and escapes with Sispy to become his captive servant. Flapping Eagle also swallows the elixir of immortality, keeps the blue one under his custody and sets out in search of his lost sister. He comes across the affluent lady Mrs. Livia Cramm and her associate Nicholas Deggle and stays with them for some time. Mrs. Livia steals his blue vial and ends her life. Flapping Eagle wanders for more than seven centuries in search of Bird-Dog and the pedlar Sispy. Finally he comes to Calf Island where Grimus is the chief. He accepts the hospitality of the old strange lovers Mr. Dolorès O’toole who has divorced her husband Flan O’toole and the bulky Virgil Jones who has left his wife Mrs. Liv Jones.

In part II Virgil Jones becomes Flapping Eagle’s guide. They start ascending the Calf mountain. Virgil Jones tells Flapping Eagle how he was first a grave digger for pets and he discovered the hidden Stone Rose and shared the secret with his friends Nicholas Deggle and Sispy. Sispy tactfully took control over the situation by dismissing Virgil Jones and Nicholas Deggle and became the custodian of the Stone Rose. The climbing of the Calf mountain proves to be a very hazardous task for Flapping Eagle. He was tormented by the dimensions fever. Half way they stop in the city of K inhabited by immortals who have drunk the elixir supplied by Sispy. K is also a
kind of dystopian Atlantis. Flapping Eagle is held responsible for the
dislocation of the order in K and he has to escape from the vengeful
inhabitants and he takes refuge in the whore house under the
protection of its mistress Madame Jocasta.

In Part III, towards the end of his quest Flapping Eagle meets his
sister Bird-Dog. As directed by Grimus, she leads him up the Calf
mountain to the Grimus home where he encounters Grimus
surrounded by mummified birds. Flapping Eagle felt that he was
destined to meet and deliver Grimus from his captivity. With the help
of Jones he goes to the Stone Rose which held the key to the gate.
Flapping Eagle realizes that the Stone Rose was responsible for the
stagnation, boredom and absence of freedom on the mountain of Calf.
The novel closes with the decision of Flapping Eagle to reconstruct
Calf island without the Stone Rose.

Though Rushdie’s fiction resists classification in terms of literary
isms and theoretical frameworks, his writings have often been
analyzed for their postmodern and postcolonial elements. The mixing
of genres, use of parody, fantasy, subversion of myths and the
presentation of grotesque characters are the chief postmodern traits
of the novel. Some of the fundamentals of the postcolonial – issues
like migrancy, survival, search for identity and roots, alienation from
self, the sense of isolation and the resulting quest for identity – are
discussed in detail in Rushdie’s novels. Rushdie describes time and
again in his novels the predicament of the migrant. Petersson defines the condition of migrancy expressed in *Grimus* in terms of gravity and lightness: "Gravity is usually connected to a settled condition and lightness to migration. The migrant, says the narrator in *Shame*, has overcome the law of gravity and learned to fly" ("Alchemical" 22). In *Grimus* the contrast is realized through the gorfs and the birds: "The gorfs represent gravity, immobility, sterility and intellect" ("Alchemical" 22) while the bird figures are connected to lightness.

Flapping Eagle, Grimus and Bird-Dog are migrants who flit from world to world and they symbolize change, heterogeneity and love of freedom.

Flapping Eagle, the protagonist of *Grimus* himself is a migrant. He introduces himself as "an exile in an isolated community" (*Grimus* 18). At the same time he is conscious of his rights: "They could not expel us; we had committed no crime. But they didn't have to like us, so they didn't" (*Grimus* 17). It is the condition experienced by migrants all over the world. It is this isolation that induced Bird-Dog to go in search of a saviour. But Sispy who becomes her savior by giving her the elixir of life, later proves to be her master and keeps her as his slave. Thus Rushdie hints at the pitfalls hidden in migrancy and the difficulties faced by the migrant in establishing his identity in a foreign country. The colonizer comes with bright promises but later proves to be the exploiters of the colony and "Grimus/Sispy becomes the prototype of the native-turned-neocolonizer" (Afzal Khan qtd in
Kuortti 58). In fact Grimus is not a native: "It is not his real name, Grimus. He told us so freely. He changed it from something unpronounceable when he arrived in this country some thirty years ago" (Grimus 209). Grimus has obtained the Gorf's power by getting control over the Stone Rose and his arrival marks the beginning of confusion in the land. As Joel Kuortti observes, "from this initial emancipatory move he has become another force of oppression" (58). The concept of a general disbelief towards emancipatory projects is voiced for the first time in the novel through the portrayal of Grimus.

Through Flapping Eagle's story, Rushdie is trying to analyze the reasons for the migrants' sense of alienation and the motive behind his search for identity. The reasons for isolation in a community as in the case of Rushdie, are racial characteristics like the colour of the eyes, skin and other physical features. In England Rushdie had a very tough time but he had a narrow escape, thanks to the colour of his skin. The migrant will always be unhappy amidst people of different physical features and his life becomes a search for a place to belong where he will not be differentiated by the colour of the skin or the eyes. Flapping Eagle expresses the same thought when he says: "there is such a place; it's only a matter of time before you find it; and you'll know when you do, because its inhabitants will be like you. Young or old, they cannot disguise their eyes from me. Eyes like mine, which have seen every thing . . ." (Grimus 34).
Migrants long for companionships with whom they could share their thoughts and this desire inspires them to undertake hazardous journeys. But in most cases, as in the case of Bird-Dog, their companions finally betray them. The treatment of migrancy in the novel has inspired Catherine Cundy to consider *Grimus* as the writer's first tentative investigations of postcoloniality. She sees Flapping Eagle's journey to Calf Island as undertaken to forget the feeling of being isolated in one's own native country, as it had happened in the case of Rushdie. Eagle from the beginning is viewed as different since he is a white Indian. This is one of the reasons for his being expelled from his birth place among Axona Indians and becoming a turncoat. Eagle tries to find a home and forget his experience of isolation on Calf Island.

Above and beyond this, material and political considerations impel migration. Rushdie's major novels like *Midnight's Children*, *Shame* and *The Moor's Last Sigh* identify some of the reasons for migration as the lust for wealth and power, political tyranny, religious fundamentalism and a sense of cultural anarchy. Grimus roams about under the name of Sispy, watches people and he identifies those interested in the yellow liquid and promises them immortality. He brings them to Calf Island after giving them the elixir of life. It is the charm of the yellow liquid that fascinates people. The yellow liquid may stand for the yellow metal which attracts the ordinary people to
alien countries. Thus craze for wealth can be one of the reasons for migration.

Catherine Cundy is of the view that it is for the investigation of alternative societies and a confrontation with forces of change that Bird Dog undertakes the journey. From the very beginning Bird-Dog shows a dissatisfaction with her life in Axona. “Brennan understands Eagle’s climbing the mountain of Calf as in the first place the migrant’s attempt at social climbing” (qtd in Petersson, Unending 89).

Any social ascend involves some mental conflict and psychological readjustment. In Grimus, this is suggested through the Endimions fever that Flapping Eagle experiences as he starts climbing the Calf Mountain.

Another aspect of migrancy, the emigrant trying to overcome an uncongenial dispensation through forming strange alliances may be found in Flapping Eagle’s union with Virgil Jones. The novel could be interpreted as an attempt by the migrant to destroy a totalitarian regime established through corruption and deception. It was Grimus, Nicholas Deggle and Virgil Jones who found the Stone Rose. But Grimus expelled the others from Calf Mountain and became the sole possessor of the Stone Rose. It is this denial of right that tempted Virgil Jones to become Flapping Eagle’s guide. Virgil Jones knew that Flapping Eagle would bring an end to the autocracy of Grimus.

Calf Island is symbolic of the adopted country of migrants.
People from all parts of the world are found here. A Russian Count and a Countess with their retarded son share a house with a revolutionary from the same country. Jocasta from Greece is the head of the brothel and has among her employees Lee Kok Fook and Kamala Sutra. There are Englishmen, Irishmen and Americans. The condition of migrancy reappears in his later novels and some of the characters in these novels are further manifestations of those appearing in *Grimus*. Saladin in *Satanic Verses*, Saleem in *Midnight’s Children*, and Bilquis in *Shame* are characters tormented by a sense of expatriation.

Though Calf Island is rich and prosperous, the people living there are not happy. All of them came to Calf Island through the deceptive tricks played by Sispy. Flapping Eagle says: “only Sispy would know if there was a way, not of dying, but of restoring his body to the normal, vulnerable state of human bodies: to allow him to grow old” (*Grimus* 33). But Grimus tells him of the impossibility of a normal death by growing old because “The Mountain of Kaf, in short, is a place where death is neither natural nor easy. It must be chosen, and it must be an act of violence against the body” (*Grimus* 232). Grimus himself wants to escape from the Calf Island by transferring his selfhood to Flapping Eagle. Thus all the characters who reach Calf Island are tormented by its immortality and sterility. All of them express the desire to escape from their monotonous life. Rushdie appears to suggest that the migrants are never happy in the adopted
country. Whatever be the charm that had attracted them towards it, finally they get bored with it and try to escape. Flapping Eagle sums up the attitude of the migrant towards the adopted country: “This island . . . is the most terrible place in all creation” (Grimus 15).

Towards the end of the novel, Flapping Eagle realizes the futility of questioning and concludes: “I am past questioning motives; I accept companionship where it is offered” (Grimus 217). He re-creates Calf Island without the Stone Rose of authority. Authority is destroyed and the migrant establishes a new kingdom with the support of other migrants.

In Grimus Rushdie makes a thorough investigation of the causes and effects of migrancy. The migrant’s fragmented psyche makes the society appear fragmented and chaotic to him/her. Unlike the modernists, Rushdie does not sentimentalize the pangs of isolation. He treats it with a postmodern playfulness. Rushdie resorts to fragmented narrative mode for the presentation of the fragmented society. The experiment with different stylistic devices, which is characteristic of Rushdie, begins with Grimus.

Rushdie’s fiction interweaves contemporary and mythical realities and Grimus incorporates a variety of literary styles and themes into its framework. Rushdie’s work phosphorates with borrowings from Hindu myths and elements of Sufism. According to Catherine Cundy, “Rushdie’s work blends a wide-ranging knowledge
of Eastern literature, culture and history (he studied history rather than literature at university) with a correspondingly broad appreciation of their Western counterparts, combining them in a technically erudite and theoretically aware whole” (Salman 5). Rushdie has openly declared the western literary sources from which his works originated. He cites medieval artists such as Dante and Boccaccio, European masters such as Gogol and Kafka, modernists such as Brecht and Joyce and Oriental literary works like *The Katha Sarith Sagar*, *The Ramayana*, *The Mahabharatha* and *The Arabian Nights*. In *Grimus* we find the influence of Dante even deciding the very structure of the novel. Margareta Petersson remarks that the novel is “a parodic inversion of Dante’s *Comedy*” (*Unending* 63).

Parody has been used as a literary device both by the traditional and modern artists. The use of parody entails continuity with the past. It shows the modern artist’s desire to refashion the old art forms to their needs. Michel Foucault has argued how the entire concept of artists or author as an “original instigator of meaning is only a privileged moment of individualization in the history of art” (qtd in Hutcheon, *Parody* 4). As originality is apparently impossible, dependence on the classical works for themes is not a crime. Since most themes and motives have been exhausted by writers of the past, the modern artist resorts to subversion and parody of the existing texts.
Linda Hutcheon observes, “Parody is one mode of coming to terms with the texts of that ‘rich and intimidating legacy of the past’” (Parody 4). The use of the parodic mode in the novels of Rushdie shows his interest in the ancient classics and at the same time by subverting the classical texts he shows that he is a practitioner of the postmodern tendencies in literature. Theorists of parody have underlined the importance of parody as a modern literary device. According to Hutcheon, “All avant-garde texts have been, in Laurent Jenny’s words, “volontiers savant”. . . haunted by cultural memories whose tyrannical weight they must over throw by their incorporation and inversion of them” (Parody 5). So inversion becomes a necessity of contemporary literature. In Grimus the quest theme raises echoes of similar classical stories – The Pilgrim’s Progress, Jason’s search for the Golden Fleece, adventure stories, fairy tales and myths. Flapping Eagle’s experiences are the modern day versions of the temptations and obstacles Christian and Jason had to overcome in their search.

In the structure of the story and eventual self-realization of the hero, Grimus invites comparison with The Divine Comedy. As in The Divine Comedy, Eagle’s wandering on Calf Island has a three layer structure. He first confronts various obstacles which could correspond to Dante’s wandering in Inferno. Then follows purification in Purgatory and the last section has some similarities to Paradiso. In The Divine Comedy the journey has both spiritual and religious overtones. On the road to hell Dante meets unknown and superseded
parts of himself materialized as monsters. Flapping Eagle's encounter with odd figures could be apprehended in the same way. But as Rushdie virtually disregards religion, it is sidelined and the consciousness of the protagonist is focussed. Rushdie is attempting to highlight the agony and the sense of expatriation that a human being faces in his quest for identity in an unknown land.

Flapping Eagle's quest is to overcome the twin consequences of time – suffering and death. Before the journey Virgil Jones warns Flapping Eagle: "the slopes of Calf Mountain are full of monsters, Mr. Eagle. You'd never survive without a guide" (Grimus 54). But Flapping Eagle was determined to undertake the journey. The Gorfs who had been watching the ascent feared that he would fall under the terrifying and often fatal spell of Endimions Fever. While climbing, "His legs wobbled; standing became harder and harder, climbing impossible. He came to a halt. His forehead blazed. The whine grew louder still and louder" (Grimus 69). He had the feeling that he was dead. He regretted undertaking the journey. He tells Virgil Jones: "Grimus used to say a man would either lose or find himself in these woods. That is the difference between myself and yourself. I can only lose" (Grimus 70). As Flapping Eagle begins his ascent, he enters a world of scientific artifacts associated in the novel with the inner dimensions. He explains the challenges awaiting a visitor to the Calf Mountain:
Lurking in the Inner Dimensions of every victim of the fever is his own particular set of monsters. His own devils burning in his own inner fires. His own worms gnawing at his strength. These are the obstacles he must leap, if he can. Often, sadly, they are stronger than he is; and then he dies. Or lives on, a working body encasing a ruined mind”.

(Grimus 84)

The ascent thus becomes a parody of an inner spiritual journey.

Ib. Johansen identifies several characters from Dante parodied and subverted in Grimus. Beatrice is parodied in the character of Bird Dog and the Stone Rose stands for the Celestial Rose in Dante, though both are subverted in the novel. Dante has presented Beatrice as the symbol of virtue and beauty. But Bird-Dog is neither virtuous nor beautiful. The Celestial Rose in Dante stands for God’s glory while the Stone Rose in Grimus is associated with magic and the underworld of tyranny and crime. When Flapping Eagle decides to rebuild the world of Grimus he decides to do so without the Stone Rose in it, which signifies the Stone Rose as a symbol of evil, authoritarianism and crime.

In Grimus parody is on an elevated plane as the texts parodied are not presented in an unfavourable light or held to ridicule. Self-realization is projected as the ultimate aim of all the quests undertaken by Rushdie’s protagonists. As a result of a hazardous
quest into the unknown, the hero attains maturity. According to Campbell, "At heart all myths express a psychological process of maturing" (qtd in Petersson, Unending 65). The hero has to travel to the dark unknown realms where he is confronted with harsh difficulties. This attainment of maturity or rebirth needs some kind of death. Rushdie opens Grimus with a birth that is the birth of Flapping Eagle which leads to the death of his mother. Bird-Dog, his sister, becomes his mother surrogate who attains immortality by drinking the elixir of life. At the end of the search Flapping Eagle finds his sister but realizes his larger duty to liberate the land of Calf Island. A similar pattern can be observed in his other novels: Midnight's Children begins with the birth of Saleem Sinai and passes through the disintegration of the midnight's children and ends with the birth of Adam Sinai who symbolizes the new hope of India; Shame begins with the shameful birth of Omar Khayyam and ends with the death of Sufiya, the beast, which suggests the possibility of the birth of a new freedom.

The introduction of the quest theme could also be read as an attempt at fusing tradition and modernity. The description of the hardships undergone by the protagonist is reminiscent of traditional pattern of myths. But Flapping Eagle's quest is only a domestic quest inspired by selfishness. The obstacles too are very strange and too cerebral for an average reader as they are fashioned after science fiction. Thus by subverting the nature of the quest and by presenting
the difficulties which belong to the scientific world, Rushdie tries to incorporate the elements of postmodernity into the structure of the classical myth.

Thematically the quest myth draws on Eastern and Western philosophical thoughts. Though cast in *The Divine Comedy* mould, towards the end the search attains dimensions of a psychological quest envisaged in Indian philosophy. Virgil Jones advises Flapping Eagle: “Mr. Eagle, you are not a realized man” (*Grimus* 70). The search reaches a dimension of the psychological quest for self-realization and the attainment of individual identity. Rushdie here comes very close to the Indian concept of self-realization after years of long penance and self-mortification, though the spiritual issues involved in such a quest are apparently beyond the scope of any fiction, serious or parodic.

The quest in *Grimus* is an idealized version of an ordinary search and in tune with the spiritual and psychological implications inherent in the quest theme of traditional classics. Alongwith the quest theme *Grimus* incorporates the fantastic, the fictitious, the allegoric, the grotesque and the mythical into its framework. A mythical pattern is obvious in the structure of *Grimus*. This pattern extends to other novels like *Midnight's Children* and *Shame*. *Grimus* is a collage of myths collected from different cultures and languages, but these elements function as an organic element in Rushdie's art and give
both structural and thematic unity to the novel.

Petersson points out the presence of a multiplicity of myths in the novel. Traits of Islamic mythology are also pervasive in the work. Mujibudin Syed discovers parallels to the Prophet Muhammed’s journey with the angel Gabriel to heaven and his encounter with God in the journey of Flapping Eagle. In the Sufi tradition the Rose is the symbol of God’s glory. In Rushdie this myth is subverted.

Subversion becomes a major narrative technique in Rushdie’s novels. Subversive strategy is used in *Grimus* from the beginning to the end. The central character Flapping Eagle is an isolated grotesque being deprived of all heroic qualities. His guide Virgil Jones is a cripple and the Rose is only a Stone Rose. The Sufi myth is also subverted in Flapping Eagle’s story. The name *Grimus* is an anagram of Simurg, the name of a bird in Sufi myth. Farid-nd-din Attar in *The Conference of Birds* describes the pilgrimage of the Sufis through seven different situations which the soul must pass before it can be merged in to God. The description is allegorical. The birds make the expedition guided by a hoopoe. The journey is dangerous, full of hazards and adventures. It takes place both on the external and the internal levels. The mountain Kaf recurs in Islamic mythology where God is said to have created it to support the world. Men and animals would not be able to exist on earth if the mountain were not there. The mountain marks the border of the earth and it is sometimes used
to represent death, the border of life. But here in Rushdie it is Grimus who had arranged Eagle's quest and he wants Eagle to succeed him. But Eagle is disenchanted with immortality. Grimus desires Eagle to fuse with him. But Eagle refuses fusion, retains his identity and rejects Grimus along with the preservation and perpetuation of Calf Island where eternity has become a curse to the inhabitants. Calf Island becomes a place from where Eagle tries to escape, whereas in the Sufi myth it serves as an ideal place, which supports life on earth.

There are overtones of Hindu mythology also. When a tremor shakes Calf Island, Dolores tells Virgil: "The Great Turtle moved" (Grimus 50). In Hindu mythology the turtle is the incarnation of God Vishnu. Jones describes Calf Mountain to Eagle as "a giant lingam weltering in the yoni that is the Sea" (Grimus 55-56). The lingam is a symbol of Siva and Yoni of Parvathi. The mythical references in Rushdie's work show the writer's fascination with traditional myths. At the same time Rushdie subverts the classical myths to suit his purpose of representing contemporary reality. This subversive strategy employed by Rushdie in dealing with the classical myths is probably one of the reasons for considering him a postmodern writer.

The myth of immortality is subverted in Rushdie through the reinterpretation of the Phoenix myth. One of the oldest symbols of immortality is the Phoenix. The Phoenix image is recurrent in the novel. Flapping Eagle was born on a tabletop at the city of Phoenix, a
city that had risen from the ashes of an earlier city destroyed by fire.
Grimus identifies himself with the bird and wants to configurate its
death and resurrection now in the figure of Eagle. Without death no
new life can emerge. Though immortality is considered to be a
desirable goal of life, in Grimus the people who drank the elixir of life
want to escape from immortality. The mythical bird gifted with the
power of immortality was a haunting symbol for ancient masters of
literature. But for Rushdie the bird’s power to die is more important
than its power to be reborn, because it is death that makes life
possible and meaningful and that is the message conveyed through
the myth of Phoenix in Grimus.

Some of the myths in Grimus have been explained by the
postcolonial theorists from the perceptive of the marginalized. Syed
Amanuddin is of the view that in Grimus “Rushdie initiates the
exploration of the heritage of colonialism. He sees Grimus as a
European ‘discovering’ the native Eagle and exploiting him for his own
purposes” (qtd in Petersson “Alchemical” 22). Cundy and Ib. Johansen
endorse this view. Cundy emphasizes the oppressive nature of white
imperialism and Johansen sees Grimus as a Prospero and Eagle as a
Caliban. Cundy further stresses the cultural relevance of the various
images and symbols used by Rushdie, especially the image of the
Simurg. She is of the view that “in the myth of Simurg, the unity
behind the multiplicity is stressed and here, Rushdie tries to fuse the
cultural multiplicity into an aesthetic unity” (qtd in Petersson
"Alchemical" 21). Following the Indian tradition, Rushdie who has developed a virtually all-inclusive consciousness considers plurality as the hallmark of culture. *Midnight's Children* is a novel, that hails the cultural multiplicity of India. In *Shame* Pakistan is criticized for its indifference to plurality. *The Satanic Verses* attacks monotheism as it is guilty of destroying cultural hybridity. Like the Kalidoscope of Lifafa Das in *Midnight's Children*, Rani's scarf in *Shame* and the paintings of Aurora in *The Moor's Last Sigh*, the picture of Calf Island is symbolic of Rushdie's passion for multiplicity.

Existence on Calf Island is a rich celebration of the fullness of life in all its material forms. It is a world for the disapprobates. It is a truly marvellous world without any temporal and spatial barriers. Elfrida Gribb, Flann O'Toole, Jo Casta and Liv live on Calf Island. Mr. Gribb provides another imaginative dimension to the narrative content. He seeks to imaginatively fuse the diverse racial memories into a harmonious universal self. He tells Flapping Eagle that he had achieved the ultimate harmony, the combination of the most profound thoughts of the race tested by time and the cadences that give those thoughts coherence and popularity. Finally when Flapping Eagle reaches Grimus's castle, Grimus seeks to telepathically transfer his character and self to Flapping Eagle. As a result of such telepathic transfer Flapping Eagle's consciousness expands. He sets about rearranging Calf Island: "I began to re-create Calf Island, exactly as it was, with one difference: it was to contain no Rose. I had decided that
this was a better alternative than physically breaking the Rose” (\textit{Grimus} 252). Flapping Eagle succeeds in ordering the chaos of Calf Island based on a new vision and a new set of values. Flapping Eagle brings order in Calf Island though it is brought only after breaking the Stone Rose, the symbol of power and unitariness. Flapping Eagle is able to do this because he showed the readiness to accept the diversity of Calf Island where people from different parts of the world came and lived. They were enchanted and attracted to this world by the magician Sispy.

Rushdie experiments with the technique of mixing of genres for the first time in \textit{Grimus}. \textit{Grimus} could be read as an allegorical novel in which the author makes an attempt to analyze the working of the human psyche: “Lurking in the Inner Dimensions of every victim of the fever is his own particular set of monsters. His own devils burning in his own inner fires. His own worms gnawing at his strength” (\textit{Grimus} 84). The monsters, devils and worms could very well stand for the fears, anxieties, desires and disappointments of human beings. Their suppression is a necessity for leading a happy life; only through conquering the emotions can self-realization be attained. But the people of K find it difficult to keep these monsters away. Grimus’s success lies in creating the dimensions fever by which he keeps the inhabitants of K away from his Grimus home. Thus the novel is an allegoric representation of man’s attempt at reaching self-realization through conquering passions and emotions.
Grimus is a ritually symbolic novel with autobiographical overtones. Flapping Eagle stands for the author in his soaring ambition to create artistic order out of the chaotic world of imagination. For bringing about an artistic order Flapping Eagle must overcome the passivity and monotony represented respectively by the people of K and the Stone Rose, as also the dictatorial forces symbolized in Grimus. Bayapo. Reddy comments on the use of symbols in Grimus:

Flapping Eagle symbolizes a realized soul. Calf Island is symbolic of disorder. The people of K represent passivity and monotony. Stone Rose is a symbol of monotonous stagnation. Grimus is symbolic of rational thinking. Flapping Eagle is an adventurer who sets right the muddled Calf Island by resurrecting it without Stone Rose. (9)

The bird image of Grimus may also be symbolic of imagination and intellectual genius as in James Joyce. Birds have always been associated in literature with the flight of imagination. Ornithological interests recur in Salman Rushdie's other works also. In Midnight's Children, Adam Sinai produces bird noises. In The Moor's Last Sigh Aurora and Abraham are represented as sleeping with their bodies entwined and "they have feathers instead of skin" (MLS 103). The rose is another recurring symbol in Rushdie. In Grimus the Stone Rose is an ambivalent symbol. It is a very powerful instrument, which
commands supreme and irresistible powers. Even Grimus fails to control it. Virgil Jones is practical and is very suspicious of the powers of the Stone Rose. When flapping Eagle creates the new world, he creates it without the Stone Rose, underscoring that it is an evil force. At the same time the Stone Rose is a positive force also. Grimus speaks of it:

> With the Rose you can enter into, and become, a thousand thousand other people, live an infinity of lives, and acquire the wisdom and power to shape your own . . . . you can pass this supreme gift on to another, choose the moment and manner of your going and give the Phoenix a new life, a new beginning. (Grimus 251)

Joel Kuortti says: "when the Stone Rose with it's supplementing devices becomes a "weapon" (Grimus 211) or "a bomb" (Grimus 234) to fulfil Grimus' "Grand design" (Grimus 234) even the Gorfs become concerned" (54). The Gorfs admit: "We are extremely perturbed about Grimus' misuse of the Rose" (Grimus 245). Virgil speaks of the need for destroying the Stone Rose: "This is what must be destroyed. There is, actually, a considerable risk. It is possible that this Dimension cannot survive without the Rose. What is certain is that no-one will survive here, except for spiders, flies and animals, unless the Rose is broken" (Grimus 191). Thus the Rose in Grimus symbolizes power and destruction. The Stone Rose becomes the cause for all confusion and
unhappiness to Grimus who possesses it. A new creator comes and creates a new order without the stone Rose. When the Stone Rose is referred to as "the supreme gift" Rushdie endows it with some positive qualities.

Rushdie's delineation of strong, bold and liberated females begins with Grimus. He does not glorify womanhood or its sufferings. Often in Rushdie's novels women are paradoxical and the very opposite of the patriarchal concept of women. Bird-Dog in Grimus is a mixture of opposites. In Bird-Dog Rushdie presents a strong female who vehemently opposes the rigid customs and patterns of society. She is drawn in contrast to the traditional woman who is supported by the male. Here Bird-Dog is the provider and Flapping Eagle realizes: "How much she suffered because of my deformities, she never said. It was a mark of her love" (Grimus 18). Her original name is not known or she does not like to be known by her original name. She herself took the name Bird-Dog for her. It was her desire to break away from the monotonous life at Axona that tempted her to choose the name. She describes how she happened to come across the name: "When I was your age I went into the town, she said, and listened at a window out side an eating-place. There was a singing machine there. It sang about a creature called a bird-dog, clever, fiendish. It feared the creature. I thought: that is the brave's name for me" (Grimus 18-19). The sense of rebellion implied in her choice of name characterizes her actions too. Again it is her disgust with the Axona life that makes
her befriend Sispy. She accepted the bottles of yellow and blue liquids from Sispy because she knew that they would keep her young. She drank the yellow liquid and threw away the blue bottle saying “Death, . . . Death to death” (Grimus 21). A zest for life and the unwillingness to get aged are the two instincts that inspire her to follow Sispy.

A deep concern for the brother who is very weak when compared to her, is another praiseworthy quality in Bird-Dog. She tries to make him brave. She advises him to go to the town on his 21st birthday because “That’s the day you’ll prove you’re a brave” (Grimus 19). As directed by her, Flapping Eagle goes to the town. On his way up to the tabletop he saw an eagle which came to him and scarred his chest and flew away. Bird-Dog had been watching this like a guardian. She gave him the name Flapping Eagle. Bird-Dog gives her brother a name and identity and steals his virginity. Incest between brother and sister a recurring theme in Rushdie is hinted at for the first time in Grimus. This psychological perversion is foreshadowed in Flapping Eagle’s relationship with Bird-Dog: “So, on one day, I was offered eternal life, broke the law of the Axona, took a brave’s name from an omen and lost my virginity to my sister” (Gimus 22). In Midnight’s Children Saleem’s love for his sister Jameela may be termed incest. In Grimus, Rushdie presents Bird-Dog as a mother, sister and the beloved to Flapping Eagle which are the three different roles played by a woman in three different situations to three different individuals. But in Grimus all the three roles are united in Bird-Dog’s personality.
Religion too is the target of Rushdie’s attack in *Grimus*. Though Rushdie makes use of religion in his grand subversive narrative of *Grimus*, his sentiments are in no way religious. His attitude to God, religion and everything they imply is one of playful irreverence often construed as outright blasphemy. He describes the Axona God through Flapping Eagle:

> The god Axona had only two laws: he liked the Axona to chant to him as often as possible, in the field, on the toilet, while making love if concentration allowed; and he instructed the Axona to be a race apart and have no doings with the wicked world. I never had much time for the god Axona, especially after I reached puberty. . . . (*Grimus* 16)

The concept that God is the creator is subverted when *Grimus* says: “In a sense, Flapping Eagle, I created you, conceptualizing you as you are. Just as I created the island and its dwellers with all the selectivity of any artist” (*Grimus* 233). Flapping Eagle believes that to free himself he must render Axona unclean and rapes Goddess Axona. Joel Kuortti points out: “This counter-hegemonic status of the novel is, in *Grimus*, further illustrated by means of the figure of the brothel as sanctuary (G 185) very much as in *The Satanic Verses*” (58).

Religion and other totalizing systems of thought emphasize the need for having a definite goal in life. But Salman Rushdie through *Grimus* subverts this notion. The epitaph of the novel sums up the
nature of man’s existence. “Go Go Go said the bird, human kind / cannot bear very much reality” (epitaph). This suggests that human beings search for the real among the temporal. Flapping Eagle’s attempt is to reveal this truth about life. Finding his sister is his goal of life. He finds his sister, but fails in creating a new world. Rushdie seems to suggest that a goal in life is nothing but a starting point for a new goal. Even immortality is not a reality. If there is no death men cannot be regarded as alive. The glory associated with immortality itself is contextual. As long as immortality remains unattainable, it is attractive. But once it is attained as in the case of the people of K it becomes a curse from which one would try to escape. This distrust towards emancipatory projects which claim the redemption of humanity is quite apparent in Rushdie. *Midnight’s Children* questions the reality of politics. Religion is the meta narrative that is distorted in *Satanic Verses* and *Shame*. Flapping Eagle says on his way to the Calf Mountain “If there were no god, we should have to invent one, . . . since there is a Grimus, he must be destroyed” (*Grimus* 101). Thus by subverting the significance of symbols and personalities, Rushdie tries to create new myths suited for the contemporary reality. This subversive strategy is used by Rushdie to indicate the unreliability of all grand narratives. Rushdie dismantles the reliability of the meta narratives of religion, myth and God in *Grimus*.

Rushdie draws on literary, religious, historical and mythical sources for his story in *Grimus*, and at the same time his narrative
method is equally eclectic. He uses a wide range of technical and stylistic devices like multiple narrative voices, subversion of style and themes, features of the absurd and the existential, satire, irony and paradox within the larger texture of a myth-quest-science fiction and fantasy. The style itself is of a fragmented mode reflecting on the fragmentation of self and identity. The characters in Grimus suffer from fragmentation and the fragmented story spreads across many worlds like the earth, Axona and Calf Mountain. As Petersson suggests, "He is mixing dross and gold. Slang, filth and everyday motifs contrast with the most exalted dreams: art, religion and love" ("Alchemical" 24) in the fragmented narrative of Grimus.

Except in the second chapter, Rushdie employs the third person narrative, while chapter II is narrated by Flapping Eagle. But each chapter is told from the perspective of the chief character of the moment, giving the whole novel an appearance of a collage of voices. This narrative device is verbalized in the novel by Flapping Eagle who describes a T.S.Eliot like figure he came across:

A man rehearsing voices on a cliff top: high whining voices, low gravelly voices, subtle insinuating voices, raucous strident voices, voices honeyed with pain, voices glinting with laughter, the voices of the birds and of the fishes. He asked the man what he was doing (as he sailed by). The man called back - and each word was the word of a different
being: - I am looking for a suitable voice to speak in.

_(Grimus 32)_

This applies equally to Flapping Eagle, Grimus, Deggle and all other characters who are in search of their identity as to the novelist. Thus an autobiographical element also is inscribed with in the structure of the novel. Goonetilleke points out: “In _Grimus_, Rushdie is practising his notes; in _Midnight’s Children_, he finds his voice and a real subject congenial to his talent” (15).

The biographical element mingles with the metafictional nature of the narration in _Grimus_. It plays with the very conventions of the novel. The element of self reflection becomes apparent in _Grimus_ in the talk between Virgil Jones and Flapping Eagle. In chapter eight we get an insight into Rushdie’s concept of artistic organization of _Grimus_. In this chapter Virgil Jones is seen constructing jigsaw puzzles. Virgil Jones accidentally scatters the pieces of the puzzle on the floor. From the incident onwards the narration becomes an attempt to put together the pieces of the puzzle. When Flapping Eagle asks him to complete the puzzle Virgil Jones replies that the jigsaw cannot be completed as it is his little joke. Nasrin Rahimieh points out: “To enjoy the text the reader must be willing to embark upon a quest similar to that of Flapping Eagle on the mountain of Calf . . . The act of reading itself becomes equated with the solving of the puzzle” (118).
One reason for the indeterminacy of meaning and message in Rushdie is his love of the fantastic. His fantasy is not confined to the truly literary alone, but it seeps into the serious, the revered and the inviolable. Rushdie is often called a magical realist for his excessive use of fantasy. Even though history, politics and religion became the subject matter of his later novels, his attraction for the fantastic never decreased. The fantastic mode helps the narrator to present the unpresentable reality. *Grimus* is literally an exercise in fantasy. As Dilip Fernandez remarks, "*Grimus* is a novel of such hallucinogenic intensity- conjuring rock-like creatures called 'gorfs' who riddle human minds with anagrams, phantasmagoric time travel with a Stone Rose that makes things materialized out of a thin air" (qtd in Murti "Secular" 171). Flapping Eagle moves from Amer India to Calf Mountain. The world of Amer India is related to the underworld of whirling demons. From there Flapping Eagle escapes to the marvelous world of Calf Mountain. It seems Salman Rushdie is dissatisfied with the tall claims of science and he finds the world of imagination as the ideal world.

*Grimus* has been described as "a chaotic fantasy" (Cundy, "Rehearsing Voices" 131). Only fantastic creatures can inhabit the fantasy world. As a result Flapping Eagle has to undergo a transformation to become a denizen of this world. Flapping Eagle and Bird-Dog could reach Calf Island only after drinking the elixir of life. Flapping Eagle's entire life had been a preparation for the journey to
the Calf Island. In fact Joe-Sue becomes Flapping Eagle for this entry. On his way to the mountain he was attacked by an Eagle and Bird Dog who had been watching this drama remarked: "That is your name. Flapping Eagle. Why else do you think the eagle came to you before attacking you? It's your brave's name, it must be" (Grimus 22). Thus by breaking the accepted custom of society Flapping Eagle and Bird-Dog both accept the names of birds as their brave's name which is really symbolic. They represent the author who is pruning his wings for a mighty flight into the world of fantasy. By adopting a bird's name, Eagle becomes the first character in Rushdie to question the customs and conventions of society along with his sister Bird-Dog.

Uma Parameswaran considers Grimus as "an epic fantasy of vaulting imagination, full of strangely echoing, mysterious and extraordinary adventure" (qtd in Reddy Bayapä 8). The myth of longevity is an integral part of many works of the fantastic. Grimus presents a world of immortals of which Flapping Eagle is one. When Flapping Eagle arrived on Calf Island, his body was 34 years, three months and four days old. But he had lived for a total of 777 years seven months and seven days. He had stopped ageing at seven hundred and forty three years. Flapping Eagle transcends time and space. He becomes a legendary character like Calf Island which is described as "an island of immortals who had found their longevity too burdensome in the outside world, yet had been unwilling to give it up; with Sispy's guidance they had come to Calf Mountain to be with
their own kind" (Grimus 41). Calf Island is a fantasy world, which offers its inhabitants an escape from the outside world of reality.

Virgil Jones introduces the fantastic topography of Calf Island, which is very cerebral and based on the science fiction writer’s favourite concept of several dimensions existing simultaneously. According to him the topography of the island is based on a principle of “dimensions”, different kinds of solids, empty spaces of which we are not aware. He tells Flapping Eagle: “an infinity of dimensions might exist, as palimpsests, upon and within and around our own, without our being in any wise able to perceive them” (Grimus 52-53). Flapping Eagle’s ascent of Calf Island under the guidance of Virgil Jones is watched by the Gorfs. The Gorfs are also creatures of the fantastic: “The Gorfic planet is sometimes called Thera. It winds its way around the star Nus in the Yawy Klim galaxy of the Gorfic Nirveesu. This area is the major component of the zone sometimes termed the Gorfic Endimions” (Grimus 64). Rushdie chooses the easy way of using anagrams to name his new world – Nus for Sun, Thera for Earth, Yawy Klim for Milky Way and the like. But this at once establishes the nature of his fantasy; he is describing a world with its strange creatures, goals, politics, religions and incongruous struggles. Only a man of imagination can make order out of this chaos and Flapping Eagle is intended to be that. The Gorf watches his ascent with great concern because he knew that Flapping Eagle alone could give shape and form to the chaotic state of affairs. Rushdie appears to
proclaim that the writer who deals with the world of imagination is really capable of creating order and harmony in a state of chaos and confusion, in spite of his being ill-treated by autocrats like *Grimus*.

*Grimus* presents a menagerie of grotesque and fantastic characters who defy any logicality and dimensionality. They are basically illogical without any reference for proportions or temporal and spatial limitations. They explode the very myth of a unified and coherent self in the process of their evolution through tensions and conflicts. As the fantastic characters defy conventional three-dimensional models of realistic fiction, they are essentially incoherent and underdeveloped or even incapable of developing into substantial selves.

The central character, Flapping Eagle, is an inversion of a mythical hero, a person without any heroic qualities. He is grotesque, and he introduces himself: “I was the boy. I was Joe-Sue, Axona Indian, orphan . . . . My mother died moments before I was born, which is why my formal given name was Born-From-Dead” (*Grimus* 16-17). He is ready to make compromises. So like all Axonas he never descended from the plateau to the plain beneath. His sex is undecided. He is a hermaphrodite. His sexual ambivalence is one of the reasons for his being expelled from his tribe and forced into exile. He is a weakling supported by his sister. Though he begins a quest, it is not motivated by valour, but by self-interest of finding his sister. In
the later novels also Rushdie presents anti-heroes like Saleem Sinai, Omar Khayyam and Moraes.

Other characters like Virgil Jones, Dolores, Nicolas Deggle and Bird-Dog are equally grotesque and fantastic. The inhabitants of Calf Island are all oddities. Many show an aversion towards life and normal human relations seem impossible between them. Virgil Jones was “gross of body and short of sight” (*Grimus* 13). He lived with the hunch-backed old crone called Dolores O'Toole who was separated from her husband but not from her desires. Virgil Jones tells Flapping Eagle that he wanted to become an archeologist but became a grave digger. Sterility is another curse which haunts the inhabitants of Calf Island. Many other protagonists of Salman Rushdie suffer from impotency. In *Midnight’s Children* Saleem’s impotency irritates Padma; Ahamed Sinai’s freezing of assets leads to the freezing of his sexual powers; in *Shame* Sufia is incapable of having sexual relations with Omar Khayyam; in *The Moor’s last Sigh* Camoens is presented as a homosexual.

The protagonist and other characters in *Grimus* are not round characters as happens in realistic fiction. They are not rigid but flexible, multidimensional characters. Elasticity and flexibility in characterization help the author roam freely in the world of fantasy. This may be Salman Rushdie’s purpose in creating bird-like figures like Flapping Eagle, Bird-Dog and Grimus who dominate the novel.
Even elements of the absurd are to be found in the work, though the absurd is often apparently incompatible with quest themes. The romantic life of Jones and Dolores is presented in terms of the absurd. Virgil Jones himself is described as a Becketian Vagabond. The absurdity of life in Samuel Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot* is echoed in *Grimus* when Dolores says: “Nothing will change . . . We shall still sit upon the beach and feed the chickens and listen to the birds and dust the house and . . . Nothing will change! Nothing!” (*Grimus* 49). The absurdity of life torments Dolores and Virgil.

The absurd and the grotesque combine in the story of Irina, one of the characters conferred immortality by the elixir. For her as for most other characters immortality has become a bane and not a blessing. She describes her shockingly grotesque experience to Flapping Eagle:

> soon after drinking the elixir of life I found I was three months pregnant. The elixir, as you know, arrests all growth and physical development. So that, all these centuries later, I am still with child. Still. Can you understand, Flapping Eagle, how that feels? What it is to have a second life stagnant within one’s womb, perhaps a genius, perhaps a second idiot, perhaps a monster, as frozen within me as the lovers on the grecian urn? What it does to a woman to be with child, heavy-breasted with the
juices of maternity for so many eternities? Do you understand that? (Grimus 146)

This image of a woman being pregnant for centuries is the forerunner of similar fantastic and grotesque characters and situations in *Midnight's Children* and *Shame*.

While the grotesque is at one end of the spectrum the carnivalesque occupies the other. The description of Flapping Eagle after his meeting with Grimus in “full ceremonial feathered headdress and face-paint of an Axona Sham-Man” (Grimus 231) is carnivalesque. Similarly the description of the brothel, the bar and the characters who frequent it have the carnival element in them.

In an interview Rushdie has stated his indebtedness to science fiction in writing the novel: “At the time of *Grimus*, I was very interested in science fiction. And I was taken with the liberty to discuss ideas that science fiction can give you. I suppose that’s why *Grimus* plays so much with science fiction conventions” (qtd in Rahimieh 116). Rushdie has drawn extensively from the practices of science fiction and fantasy for his novel. According to Petersson: “*Grimus* has been characterized as a science fiction novel on the grounds that it contains many technically advanced, supernatural phenomenon and is set against a cosmic background” (*Unending* 69). Virgil Jones's description of the location of Calf Island itself suggests that the novel has all the elements of science fiction: “in our midst,
permeating all of us and all that surrounds us, is a completely other world, composed of different kinds of solids, different kinds of empty spaces, with different perceptual tools which make us as non-existent to its inhabitants as they are to ours? In a word, another dimension" (Grimus 52). The same technique is used in the description of the Gorfs: “Their origins are lost in mystery; some radiation, perhaps, blasting their now-barren planet, formed the rock into these masterpieces of intelligence and at the same time trapped them in the tragic irony of near-immobility and total isolation” (Grimus 65). The Stone Rose itself is the ultimate goal, the ideal towards which the questers travel, at once bringing to mind the Golden Fleece, the Holy Grail and modern day versions like the talisman in Stephen King’s Talisman. Neilten Kortenaar who traces the development of the science fiction technique employed in Fury, comes to the conclusion that “science-fiction fantasies that Malik Solanka invents for television and the internet sound very close in spirit to Rushdie’s own first novel” (“Salman” 246). The statement reveals Grimus as Rushdie’s first experiment with the various literary devices.

Even though a wide array of thematic concerns and technical peculiarities are to be observed in Grimus, the dominant mood of the novel is set by satire. From Grimus onwards, satire has informed all his fictional writings and he uses sarcasm, parody, irony and exaggeration for producing the satiric effect. Satire is introduced in Rushdie’s novels even in the names of characters. Nicknames are also
introduced to make the situation more comic. Rushdie’s obsession with names begins with *Grimus* and continues in *Midnight’s Children*, *Shame* and *The Satanic Verses*. The town where Flapping Eagle and his sister lived “was called Phoenix because it had risen from the ashes of a great fire which had completely destroyed the earlier and much larger city also called Phoenix. Nobody knew why the city had been given that name” (*Grimus* 24). Bird-Dog who got the elixir of life from the pedlar Sispy describes him: “He was a pedlar. His name was Mr. Sispy. Nice man. Funny name, Sispy” (*Grimus* 19). Bird-Dog continues the story of his name: “It is not his real name, Grimus . . . He changed it from something unpronounceable when he arrived in this country some thirty years ago” (*Grimus* 209). Grimus, Nicholas Deggle and Virgil Jones are the trio who found the Stone Rose. Grimus is an anagram of Simurg. Deggle suggests associations with devil. Deggle functions as a Lucifer, breaking off a piece of the Rose and thus destroying the created world. He is banished from the island for his crime. Virgil was Dante’s guide in *Divine Comedy*. But in *Grimus*, Virgil Jones is a degraded version of this guide. He is a village idiot in K. Virgil’s second name is Chanakya who is a historical character known by the name of Kaudilya, the guide and master to Chandragupta Vikramaditya. But in *Grimus* Virgil is only a grave digger by profession.

Rushdie subverts names through word play. The very title of the novel is an anagram of Simurg a monstrous bird of Persian legend
imagined to be rational and having the power of speech. P.S. Moonshy is an after thought of his parents and Moonshy who sleeps with Marx under his pillows is a Munshi. IQ Gribb is a philosopher, whose IQ is questioned. Calf Mountain is named after the Arabic letter Kaf. Gorf is an inversion of Frog. The name Liv is mystified by Rushdie when Grimus says: “In the Roman numerology that is fifty-four. I was fifty-four when I drank the elixir. The numbers bind us” (Grimus 214). Virgil Jones comes to a brothel where lives Kamala Sutra whose name reminds one of the Kama Sutra. Florence Nightingale is a nun in the brothel. Elfrida Gribb’s name is explained: “Elfrida: the name suited her, and she abhorred all diminutives. A name is a name, she said. Elfin-faced and elf-boned, there could have been no other name for Mrs. Gribb” (Grimus 108).

Inversions like these have prompted I.B. Johansen to consider Grimus as a Menippean satire. According to him “Inversions of this kind are typical of the Menippean satire. The character of Virgil would fit such a pattern well” (Petersson Unending 63). B.aktin’s view of Menippean as “the organic combination within it of the free fantastic, the symbolic, at times even a mystical-religious, with an extreme (and from our point of view) crude slum naturalism” (qtd in Goonetilleke 14) aptly summarizes Rushdie’s satire in the novel.

Intertextuality, one of the distinctive characteristics of postmodern texts, is a distinguishing feature of Grimus. The relevance
of intertextuality in postmodern texts has been commented on by critics like Kristeva and Graham Allen. According to Allen

Intertextuality seems such a useful term because it foregrounds notions of relationality, interconnectedness and interdependence in modern cultural life. In the postmodern epoch, theorists often claim, it is not possible any longer to speak of originality or the uniqueness of every artistic object, be it a painting or a novel, since every artistic object is so clearly assembled from bits and pieces of already existent art. (Allen 5)

As the title of the novel is suggestive of a literary work, the entire work is a literary pastiche. According to Nasrin Rahimieh: “in his use of intertextuality Rushdie shows meticulous care” (121). The literary references in Grimus begin even before the beginning of the novel. One of the earliest hints is a list of four literary references presented before the narration begins. Intertextuality in Grimus goes beyond the postmodern tendency of random references to previous texts: “It is a text created of other texts, a collage, a series of echoes which invites the reader to participate in the act of pasting together what has the appearance of a finished product” (Rahimieh 117). Here intertextual elements set the tone, comment on events and offer insights into the story, characters and style. The quotes from T.S. Eliot and Ted Hughes introduce the motif of the bird, the tone of fantasy and the modern
day anti-hero, the Crow and move towards Farid-ud-din'Attar and Ignatius Gribb. Together these epitaphs propose a world of phantasmagoria, timelessness, the eternal search and the anti-hero that modern man has become.

We get echoes of Cervantes when Rushdie says, “On their rickety bicycles, dressed in their forlorn garments, Flapping Eagle and Virgil Jones, Don Quixote and Sancho, rode to their tryst” (Grimus 85); “Dark lady with the fair skin fair hair fair eyes so fair and so unfair and yet so fair” (Grimus 96) reminds us of Lady Macbeth. When Florence sang, Virgil remembered the lines “A damsel with a dulcimer/ In a vision once I saw” (Grimus 134) from Coleridge’s Kubla Khan. Irina’s conversation is reminiscent of Keat’s Grecian Urn when she says: “What it is to have a second life stagnant with in one’s womb, perhaps a monster, as frozen within me as the lovers on the grecian urn?” (Grimus 146). These are not random quotes likely to be found in a well-read author, but deliberate attempts of the writer to connect himself with the glorious literary tradition of the past.

There are always reflections on politics in Rushdie’s novels, while some of them are overtly political. Grimus has political overtones as the theme involves dethroning a reigning power and liberating the country. According to Petersson “The description of life in K functions as a criticism of religious and political utopias” (Unending 68). Grimus has created Calf Island as a place for immortals. In the beginning it
was a paradise where happiness and joy reigned. It was green and fertile. Money was not in use. Every thing was distributed according to need. But after a couple of months everything goes astray. Some men commit suicide. The inhabitants turn against the trio. They are then separated. Deggle breaks off a bit of the Stone Rose and even Grimus cannot control the ensuing crisis. After drinking the elixir of life the inhabitants of K lead a frozen life. Thus Rushdie presents the dark side of political utopias promised by revolutionaries and dictators.

In *Grimus* we find the first dictator in Rushdie's fiction who later developed into Smt. Indira Gandhi and Raza Hyder. Like fate, Grimus controls the actions and destinies of people. Everything is preplanned by him:

Mr. Eagle, who is therefore prepared at last to meet me. He knows about me now, intimately, I think. And more important, he has moved from a state of what I should call self-consciousness to a state of what I would humbly term *Grimus*-consciousness. That is a good state in which to meet me, and I must once again thank you all: the absent Nicholas Deggle for making the meeting possible, you, Virgil, for leading him so astutely towards a confrontation with me, and you, Liv, for breaking down the last barrier to that meeting: his masculinity. In a sense, Liv, you were the
Gate, as far as he is concerned. Now that he has passed you, he may come to me. I am very thrilled: perhaps this is my Perfect Dimension, after all. (Grimus 222)

His capacity to reduce people to mere shadows is highly suggestive. It is a quality that Rushdie identifies in all dictators. In Midnight's Children Smt. Gandhi reduces the children of midnight to mere shadows. They fall into amnesia. Finally as in the case of Flapping Eagle she finds their masculinity a hindrance and she overcomes the difficulty by making them all sterile. In Shame dictators like Raza and Iskander exploit the social structure to arrive at their goals.

Finally, Flapping Eagle opens his heart to Grimus and tells him:

Yes, you have brought me here in the condition you wanted for the lunatic purpose you envisaged. You are so far removed from the pains and torments of the world you left and the world you made that you can even see death as an academic exercise. You can plan your own death as a kind of perfect game of chess. But in the end it all depends on me. (Grimus 236)

Thus Rushdie suggests the victory of the victim over the victimizer, a culmination of all dictatorial regimes. In Midnight's Children, the end of Smt. Gandhi, in Shame that of Raza, and in The Moor's Last Sigh that of Abraham are all suggestive of the disastrous end of political
dictatorships and the emergence of the democratic social pattern. Though Rushdie makes use of postmodern devices in *Grimus*, he is immensely readable, unlike many other postmodern writers who are notorious for the esoteric nature and complex unreadability of their writings. In Rushdie the eclectic narrative devices, diversity of themes, quaint characters and the traditional perennial human concern of the quest coalesce into a literary whole engrossing, challenging and capable of multiple readings. Most of Rushdie's later artistic achievements and the political and historical concerns dealt with exhaustively in *Midnight's Children* and *Shame* are prefigured in their seminal forms in *Grimus*. 