

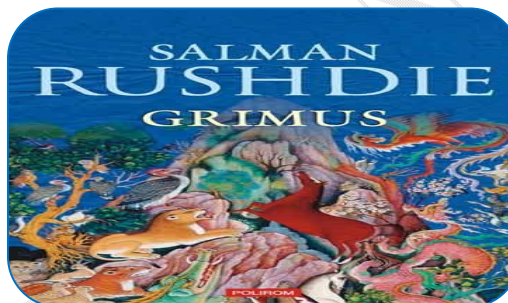


## MYTHS AND ALLUSIONS IN RUSHDIE'S GRIMUS

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### ABSTRACT :

The purpose of this paper is to account for the techniques in *Grimus*. The focus will be placed on the Myths and Allusions in Rushdie's *Grimus*, who is a British-Indian novelists & essayist. By mixing so many myths together, by juxtaposing the past and the present, the Occident and the Orient, Rushdie seems to have created his own myth about human existence. Anyway, these allusions, like myths, serve their purpose in the novel.



**KEYWORDS :** human existence , major myths figuring , mythological, literary and historical figures.

### INTRODUCTION

Once the less than ordinary hero of *Grimus* given the stature of romance hero-"superior in degree to other men and his environ" -by the elixir of life, Flapping Eagle experiences the fate of a typical romance hero. He, too, has his share of helpers and detractors. During his journeys, he first meets a temptress in Livia Cramm from whose clutches he is rescued by Nicholas Diggle. On Calf-Island, Virgil Jones becomes his path-finder and safely escorts him to 'K' despite the stiff challenges of Gorfkoax. In 'K', the temptresses are Irina Cherkassova and EifridaGribb. It is again Virgil Jones and Bird-Dog who show Flapping Eagle his priper way by freeing him from the clutches of the "witches", Irina and Elfrida. During the last leg of his journey, Media accompanies him. In the end, after *Grimus*' destruction, Flapping Eagle emerges as the exalted hero and also wins a bride in Media. The romance form is further strengthened by Rushdie by the imposition of various myths on Flapping Eagle's fantasies. There are also several allusions to many mythological, literary and historical figures, both past & present. All of them, in one way or other, contribute to give shape to the fantasies in the novel. Some of the major myths figuring in *Grimus* are those of the legendary bird Simurg, the Kafmountain and the Norse god Odin. In the following discussion, we will consider their relevance to the themes in the novel.

### MYTHS IN GRIMUS:-

Even if the alchemical symbols are revealed in *Grimus*, the meaning of the novel is far from clear. Several of the novel's myths overlap and almost seem to merge. They create a vast room that embraces creation and destruction, search and insight, hell and paradise. The myths have several common components, above all, the way through great difficulties, a kind of death and after that a rebirth. This is a classical theme in what is usually called an initiation quest or rite, which Joseph Campbell names monomyth in *The Hero With a Thousand Faces*.The same theme recures in the alchemical process. Campbell refers to Jung's interpretation of alchemy and uses a similar syncretistic method, which involves historical comparisons between myths. Myths are always associated with gods or some divine

powers. Yet they are not by any means removed from the world of the mortals. According to Northrop Frye, myth operates, in terms of story, as the manifestation of the "top level of human desire." Frye believes that the myths are rooted in the phenomenon of nature and penetrate human life by "analogy" and "identity." Campbell bases his description of the monomyth on religious myths from many sources and on literary texts. At heart, he means that all myths express a psychological process of maturing. This can be construed as a quest into the unknown, which is an expression of the unconscious. The hero might travel to Aladdin's unknown caves where not only jewellery, but also djinns are waiting. Maturity, a rebirth, requires some kind of death. This is why texts and myths speak of a "night journey." One of Campbell's most important examples is *Dante's Divine Comedy* and the journey down to Inferno. On the road to hell Dante meets unknown and superseded parts of himself that are materialized as monsters, according to Campbell in that way it is also possible to understand Flapping Eagle's encounters with odd figures. If the hero does not halt on the threshold of the unknown, he ends up in a dreamy world of strangely fluid and ambiguous shapes. This description is in accordance with difficulties during Eagle's journey.

A theme connected to death and renewal is stressed in the novel and acquires a contextual charge here. Simurg has his abode on this mountain. In *Grimus*, the Kafmountain is shown as the abode of Grimus. By juxtaposing the above myths together, Rushdie has out the character of Grimus in a new light. Whereas the Persian mythology spells out Simurg as God, the Demavend and Kaf point to the presence of the White Demon or Jinn. In other words, we are expected to view Grimus both as God and demon, and conversely, Flapping Eagle as both a seeker of God and the destroyer of demon. Eagle, incidentally, is regarded as the "symbol of the Destroyer" in the novel (46). The fundamental pattern of initiation and alchemy-death and rebirth-structures the course of events in *Grimus* and is stressed by a multiplicity of motifs. One of the oldest symbols for the myth of death and rebirth, especially in the alchemical tradition, is the phoenix. This mythical bird has the faculty of being born anew after every death. The phoenix is found at important places in the novel. We meet it as early as the beginning of the novel. Flapping Eagle was born on a plateau near the city of Phoenix, a city, it is said, that had risen from the ashes of an earlier city destroyed by fire. It appears again at the end. Grimus identifies himself here with the bird and wants to devise its death and resurrection, now in the figure of Eagle.

The most central myth in the novel deals with the pilgrimage of the birds to Simurg. The classical shaping of this myth is found in Farid-ud-din Attar's poem from the twelfth century, *The Conference of the Birds*, which is also represented among the epigraphs of the novel.

Though references to these various myths are likely to be viewed as Rushdie's exhibitionism, one should not forget that they impose the pattern on that which is seemingly patternless. Thus, they have structural value. They are, in fact, the part of his technique by which he not only gives credence to his theme of quest but also provides it with the deeper layers of meaning by the clever infusion of these myths. Rushdie, too, like Grimus, has used these myths in their distorted form to create his own myth, the myth of Grimus, a necessary ingredient of fantasy in the novel. By twisting these myths, Rushdie transcends them in order to create a new myth. It is not the original myth but its distortion which gains significance because out of this distortion emerges a new myth which propels forth new meaning.

### ALLUSIONS IN GRIMUS:-

Similarly, there are allusions to such literary characters as Hamlet, Don Quixote and Sancho Panza, and the Ancient Mariner. The historical personalities like Napoleon, Gandhi, Chanakya, Florence Nightingale etc. are also alluded in the book. There are also allusions to Vatsyayana and Marquis de Sade through the characters like Kamala Sutra and 'Boom Boom' de Sade, the two prostitutes in Madame Jocasta's 'House of the Rising Son'.

Out of these, only a few allusions, however, are meant to be serious. For example, Flapping Eagle, while journeying towards his past through the insides of Bird-Dog, is suddenly reminded of "Jonah, in the belly of the whale (72)". Now this reference is perhaps meant to comment upon Flapping Eagle's confused state of mind. It is, however, difficult to say if Flapping Eagle was just as reluctant as the reluctant prophet. Nonetheless, Bird-Dog, like the proverbial whale, carries Flapping Eagle to the

shores of 'K' where he set out to fulfill his mission. Sisyphus, too, is briefly mentioned to describe the obsessional quality of Mr Stone's work in 'K' (105). The unending rolling of the stone up and down the hill by the legendary Corianthan King, incidentally, indicates the monotonous life of the inhabitants of 'K'.

The other allusions, however, seem to be simple idiosyncrasies, either of the characters or of Rushdie himself. Some of them are comic and provide a welcome relief to the reader, while some are in real bad taste. 'Napoleon,' for example, happens to be the middle name of Flann O'Toole, but the similarity goes only up to the point that Flann O'Toole, like Napoleon, has only one testicle. The allusion to Hamlet, however, is most ingeniously worked out in the novel. He is linked to the character of Virgil Jones who, like the Danish Prince, is a "Champion of doubt," complete with "Poor Yorick" and all. As a matter of fact, Virgil Jones is a good example of how Rushdie has used various allusions to throw light on the personality traits of his characters.

### CONCLUSION:-

From the above discussion it can be safely concluded that Rushdie has effectively shaped the fantasies in *Grimus* into a particular form by, first, casting them into the romance mode and, second, by superimposing myths on them. It has also been proved that the distortion of the myths has an added significance because the new layers of meaning contribute to the complex pattern. The deliberate mixing of contemporary authors, historical persons, legendary beings and a variety of cultures as evident in 'K,' gives the novel a kind of all encompassing atmosphere. It elevates the novel from topicality to the universality in the sense that it does not remain the story of one Joe-Sue in some land called Axona but becomes the story of all those who share Joe-Sue's existence in the repressive societies like Axona. The myth suggests that the human beings in any society not withstanding its cultural, racial, religious and ideological convictions. This is the true identity of the human being that Rushdie aims at in *Grimus*.

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