



# An Exploration of the Concept of Identity Crisis in Salman Rushdie's *Grimus*

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**Abstract**— *Salman Rushdie is a renowned literary figure who has faced his fair share of challenges and controversies throughout his career. One recurring theme in his life and work is the concept of identity crisis. Rushdie's exploration of this topic sheds light on the complexities that arise when individuals find themselves caught between cultural conflicts and societal expectations. The present study aims to extract the theme of identity crisis in his debut novel Grimus. In this novel, the character Flapping Eagle grapples with an intriguing and thought-provoking exploration of an identity crisis. Rushdie masterfully delves into the complexities of Flapping Eagle's journey, presenting a captivating narrative that challenges conventional notions of self and existence.*



**Keywords**— *Identity Crisis; Challenges in life; Inner Quest; The Grimus Effect; Temporal Consciousness.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Rushdie's first novel *Grimus* presents the crisis of Flapping Eagle's soul. The main protagonist of this novel, Flapping Eagle, is suppressed by his clan for the unfavorable circumstances of his birth. He drinks the elixir of eternal life and becomes an eternal voyager forever homeless and rootless. He feels tired of eternity and hopes for a place where he can finally grow old and shake off the burden of immortality. He finally brings destruction upon himself and his world. He grapples with an intriguing and thought-provoking exploration of identity crisis. Rushdie masterfully delves into the complexities of Flapping Eagle's journey, presenting a captivating narrative that challenges conventional notions of self and existence.

## II. FLAPPING EAGLE'S DUAL CONSCIOUSNESS

Flapping Eagle, a unique creature with a dual consciousness of Time and Timelessness, embarks on a profound quest that transcends the boundaries of time itself.

His ultimate goal is to overcome the limitations imposed by death, making his quest one that goes beyond the confines of history and temporal consciousness. His extraordinary journey takes him on a path where time holds no sway and conventional notions of past, present, and future fade away. His pursuit becomes stripped of any attachment to historical events or temporal constraints, allowing him to explore realms untouched by the passing of time. As he delves deeper into his quest for immortality, he ventures into uncharted territories where the boundaries between life and death blur. His relentless pursuit challenges conventional understanding and opens up new possibilities for conquering mortality.

His quest for human progress is symbolically resolved in the world of the inner quest. As Virgil Jones conceives the human mind and all its attributes as Dimensions, the quest is to harmonize all those attributes into a settled system of feelings and attitudes. In which he explains about the struggles and emptiness of life

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. (G 84)

Thus one's identity is a part of the universe. Our identity has its entity in the universe and the universe is the reflection of ours' identity. Virgil Jones introduces the central dilemma and gnawing predicament in man's quest for knowledge and refinement, through the world of *Grimus* and his Calf Mountain. He tells Flapping Eagle thus:

What you must ask yourself is this: is there such a thing as too much knowledge? If marvelous discovery is made whose effects one cannot control, should one attempt to destroy one's find? Or, do the interests of science override even those of society and, indeed, survival? (G 190)

His grandiose conception, the Stone Rose, a curious, combination representing the mechanical order and the metaphysical order, alike, is in the modernist tradition of studying Futuristic possibilities of man's growth. The stone rose works as a weapon of wizard. Its potential is endless and non-explainable.

### III. THE GRIMUS EFFECT

After arriving at *Grimus*, the Flapping Eagle must face his mortality and face the mysterious figure known as the Aalim who is the god-like ruler of *Grimus* and holds the secret to eternal life. Flapping Eagle observes various inhabitants of *Grimus*, who are trapped in eternal time loops and victimized by the selfish desire of Aalim and he learns the value of accepting his mortality and sacrificing one's desire for goodness of others. In such a way Flapping Eagle started to realize the real purpose of life. Though he has the power of immortality, he longs for the mortal life because of the various encounters that he has faced for his identity.

Flapping Eagle's ultimate release is into the world of *Grimus* where the interaction with Stone Rose is a cataclysmic experience for him. His dilemmas are yet unresolved about the utility and creativity of *Grimus* and his conception of Stone Rose. Stone Rose seems an object of mystery to Flapping Eagle. In any case, his quest for a timeless world of unchanging and eternal permanence proves futile.

As a consequence of *Grimus*'s telepathic transfer of his conception and powers of the Stone Rose to Flapping Eagle, the latter's powers increase in endlessly enormous

proportions. But its disillusionment with such powers is without the Faustian attraction, in the initial stages. His truly humanized self makes him decide to give up the powers of the world of Stone Rose. His eminences thus his disintegration in a world of fantasy:

The combined force of an unlimited power, unlimited learning and a rarified, abstract attitude to life which exalted these two into the-greatest goals of humanity, was a force I-Eagle could not bring himself to life. I Eagle saw its effect on Virgil Jones, on Dolores O'Toole, on Liv Jones, on Bird – Dog, his sister even though they had long been estranged. No, I-Eagle thought, the Rose is not the supreme gift. (G 251)

Ultimately, after thus destroying the alluring phantom of endless and absolute power and knowledge, Flapping Eagle once again rearranges the temporal priorities in the marvellous World of Calf Mountain, into a more stable and secured order thus:

Deprived of its connection with all relative Dimensions, its World of Calf Mountain was slowly unmarking itself, its molecules and atoms breaking, dissolving, quietly vanishing into primal, unmade energy. The raw material of being was claiming its own. (G 253)

### IV. CONCLUSION

Rushdie's treatment of Flapping Eagle's identity crisis is both nuanced and thought-provoking. He skillfully weaves together elements of magical realism and mythology to create a rich tapestry that mirrors the complexities of our identities. As readers follow Flapping Eagle on his quest for self-discovery, they are invited to reflect on their journeys and confront their existential dilemmas. Through his literary works and personal experiences, Rushdie forces us to confront our assumptions about culture, religion, and individuality. In doing so, he encourages us to embrace complexity and engage in meaningful dialogue about the issues that shape our world today. Despite the challenges he has faced, Rushdie remains an influential voice in contemporary literature. His willingness to confront controversial subjects head-on demonstrates a commitment to exploring the depths of human experience and challenging societal norms.

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