

Salman Rushdie's *Grimus* as an Alternative History

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“There are a million possible Earths with a million possible histories, all of which actually exist simultaneously.”—(*Grimus* 53)

“As for me; I, too, like all migrants, am a fantasist. I build imaginary countries and try to impose them on the ones that exist. I, too, face the problem of history; what to retain, what to dump, how to hold on to what memory insists on relinquishing, how to deal with change.”— (*Shame* 87-88)

The main contention of Salman Rushdie's *Grimus* is to offer an alternative version of history. The aim of this paper is to question the efficacy of historical truth as factual knowledge in the light of Rushdie's concept of history. This metahistorical text reveals new meanings of history in relation to the postcolonial context. Since history is a man-made activity, and since historical experience and its conclusions varied from one individual to another and from one society to another, the certainty of historical truth is invalid. What we have, then, are different forms of realities, each has its particular truth. According to Rushdie, there are two forms of history: formal, exclusionary, totalitarian history which offers a singular view of the historical events, and polyphonically representational history which provides multiple realities and multidimensional historical truths. Whereas the former relies on the recording of “facts” and dated events, the latter is based on the representation of them. These New Historical speculations constitute the theoretical foundations of this paper.

Grimus is a history-seeking novel. The central character, Flapping Eagle, and his companions travel from one place to another, seeking shelters for new free lives. Also, they seek the truth of life, knowledge and “new possible histories”. Elfrida, a female character says, “There are a million possible Earths with a million possible histories, all of which actually exist simultaneously.” (*Grimus* 53)

Rushdie's *Grimus* is made significant by his ability to build pluralistic worlds mediated by fantasy which permits entrance into alternative universe. In the novel, he uses the intervention of fiction to make the implausible possible. The alternative realities created in this novel, in particular is mediated by fabulation and fantasy to oppose the imposed rational reality and also as a technique that enable the excluded characters in the novel to escape the particular social restriction and conformities in their sad cities through the wings of fantastic imagination. Yet, the technique of fantasy in this novel serves to represent Rushdie's visions of “social change” and how history should be re-created to gratify the individual demands of new imaginative life. These pluralistic

visions of realities and experiences indorsed in the novel form what we call “alternative versions” of history.

“Alternative history” is a form of discourse which is constructed as a direct response to another form of discourse. It might also be viewed as a form of mythical narrative, which expresses a rejection to the realist political, colonial as well as patriarchal systems. It is also a method of analysis, which produces ideas and views which are used to defend certain values or attack particular dominant authorities. “Alternative history” can be described as a counter-narrative to the surrounding reality of repressive authority or colonial narrative: that is, to think of ideas and strategies that liberate people from the colonial supremacy. In the world of postcolonial fiction, the “alternative history” may signify a fictional narrative which functions as a form of counter, dissent and disruption against the repressive systems. This narrative has the meaning of confrontation and liberation, transformation and creation of new realities. In this case, the “alternative history” might be a creation of new fictions and myths against the fictions and myths of the dominant authority.

“Alternative history” is defined as “a genre of fiction consisting of stories that are set in worlds in which history has diverged from the actual history of the world. It can be variously seen as a sub-genre of literary fiction, science fiction, and historical fiction; different alternate history works may use tropes from any or all of these genres” (*Wikipedia*). In his *The Incoherence of the Philosopher*, Al-Ghazali defends the Islamic Ash’ari doctrine of a created universe that is temporally finite, against the Aristotelian doctrine of an eternal universe and proposed a modal theory of possible worlds. (Kukkonen 479–502) “Alternate history is inherently presentist. It explores the past less for its own sake than to utilize it instrumentally to comment upon the present. Based as it is upon conjecture, alternative history necessarily reflects its author’s hopes and fears.” (Rosenfeld 93)

However, *Grimus* is considered by many critics as a science fiction, a term that encompasses novels and short stories that “represent an imagined reality that is radically different in its nature and functioning from the world of our ordinary experience” (Abrams 278). Hence, narrative is made to render plausible the fictional world by reference to known or imagined scientific principles whereby fantasy can be the appropriate device, especially in the issue of historical representation which is based on recreation. Fantasy then is used to enrich realism.

Science fiction is basically designed to provide an alternative version of reality and thus to create a possible way of looking to reality from different angles and dimensions. It is a mixed world of the real and the hyper-real and the events in this world move from temporality to timelessness, crossing the borders of the actual and the mythical, the real and the hyper-real. On this basis, Rushdie’s *Grimus* is considered as a science fiction because it makes use of these elements, and its themes have been conveyed within the frame of this genre. The novel makes use of technology and alchemy in order to highlight the themes of transformation, change and re-creation.

The blurring of the “real” and the “fantastic”, and the past and present is a dominant feature of the novel. From the beginning of the novel, we read about the “elixir” which transforms the hero into an immortal and time-traveler being who breaks the boundaries between time and place. In his fantastic voyage, the Eagle explores and experiences many versions of life in the past and present. The multi-experiences of his journey enable him to predict and plan the shape of the realistic state of future. For this, we see him in the end of the novel giving his resolution to the conflicting views of the solid and stagnant state and the absolute liberal one.

Basically, science fiction is a form of literary work whose central concern is to research history, new imagined universes, and world of technology. The writer of science fiction relies on two major things: the advanced knowledge of technology and the exploration of new cosmos. In this case, Rushdie’s *Grimus* searches for possible versions of histories and alternative realities, by focusing on the different experiences of his characters and by burdening them with the quest for a “history”.

However, some critics argue that science fiction is not alternative history, but a fantastic story that deals with alternative reality in which the histories of the worlds being described do not connect with our own. Yet, Rushdie’s *Grimus* is not actually a typical science fiction narrative that explores the future events and predicts new technologies. Rather, it is a narrative that explores within a science fiction narratology a possible version of history through dealing with different alternative realities. The main concern of Rushdie is neither the future nor the “the pastness of the past,” but “its presence”.

In the light of Rushdie’s view, science fiction can then be described as a historical literature in which the alternative histories are achieved through the fiction narrative itself. In other words, alternative history is seen as part of science fiction. In every science fiction narrative, there is an explicit or implicit fictional history that connects the period depicted to our present moment, or to some moment of our past. Because no science fiction story describes the actual future that will ensue in the real world, one could even say that all science fiction narratives are alternative histories. Therefore, the relationship between science fiction and the writing of history seems obvious. Whatever else history may be, it is not an experimental science. The question is how we can make plausible conjectures. This is the way in which the alternate-history story was born. The common target of the two works of writing is to provide societies with imaginative frameworks to change the social and political environments. Ken MacLeod in this regard has argued that “History remains the trade secret of science fiction... History is an inexhaustible source of plots, and an indispensable map of the way in which societies work and how they can change.” (8-14)

In fact, many fantasies and science fictions are set in a world that has a history somewhat similar to our own world, but with magic added. Some of these stories posit points of divergence, but some others feature magic, thus altering history all along. For example, Flapping Eagle’s universe in the Calf Island is in part historically recognizable but also obeys different physical laws, reflecting the matter of India as history, and India as reality. The writer explicitly maintains that all possible decisions are made in all possible ways.

I do not care for stories that are, so tight. Stories should be like life, slightly frayed at the edges, full of loose ends and lives juxtaposed by accident rather than some grand design. Most of life has no meaning so it must surely be a distortion of life to tell tales in which every single element is meaningful. (*Grimus* 141)

Grimus thus is a form of fantasy by which Rushdie deconstructs the concept of history as a given factual knowledge. Rushdie at the outset of the novel tells us that the central character, Flapping Eagle has lost his mother the moment he comes to this world. This kind of disruption that occurs in the life of the young Eagle registers a breakthrough in his life since it cuts him of his past. He has to experience a new reality in Axona. But, since Axona is the world of fixity and singularity in which there was only one version of life and one way of thinking, he was expelled for breaking the rule and having “strange attitudes”. The god Axona imposes only one way of life: “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”. (*Grimus* 16)

In fact, Rushdie’s contention in this novel is that the individual can express his world views and live globally but thinking “glocally”. Rushdie was not against the past or history, but he is against its totalitarianism. That is exactly what happens to Flapping Eagle. When he revolts against his past and begins searching for immortality (archetype) by drinking the magical liquid of elixir, he has bitten up by his sense of isolation and nihilism. His life in the Calf Island becomes monotonous and mechanical and has no meaning for human life. Rushdie here wants to suggest that immortals do not have history because their lives are governed by divine laws and therefore do not have variations. On the contrary, human life is nothing but an accumulative account of various forms of experiences and activities. It is then is subject to possible versions of realities and therefore cannot be narrated through a single view altogether. The novel at the outset deals with the re-creation of history. Mr Virgil Jones, the philosopher and the guide of the Eagle gives his views about history. “An historian is affected by the present events and that eternally recreate the past.” (*Grimus* 13)

Subsequently and soon, he recognizes his meaningless life of immortality and mechanicality in Calf Island, Mr. Eagle decides to reclaim his role as a social being and gets rid off this “given” life by battling with the monolithic *Grimus*, the official ruler of the land. He starts longing for his personal life and nationhood in Axona and therefore decides to make the Calf Island his alternative home that combines within itself the emotion of the “past memories” and his “present realities”. As a result, the authority of the past has been modified by the reality of the present. This artistic representation that externalizes the ideas of monolithic version of history and the alternative or possible view of history is the underpinning element of the novel. Through the character of Flapping Eagle, Rushdie has shown us different versions of history from the conventional to the monolithic or from repressive to the political.

Flapping Eagle brings the conflicting forces of life together. After destroying the rational kingdom of the patriarch *Grimus*, who misuses the power of the magical Stone Rose in controlling the activities of the island’s dwellers, he attempts to resolve the

conflict between Reason and Emotion, and Rationality and Imagination. He says: “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. (*Grimus* 252)

Reality is “a timeless and spaceless community of spirits which perceive each other”.(Ritvo 43) The problem with the Calf Island’s ruler, Grimus is his obsession with the conceptualization of “dimensions” in order to fully control the movement of the immortal inhabitants. This is read as a patriarchal and monolithic discourse from the side of Grimus. Also, it tells us about the idea that there are no choices of experiences for the inhabitants who look the same thing and do the same activities. For this, Flapping Eagle leaves the K town:

I am leaving K. It is a town made mad by a machine. Soldiers, policemen, actors, hunters, whores, drunks, wasters, philosophers, menials, morons, artists, farmers, shoe-salesmen, artists, united by their common inability to cope with the world they have had imposed upon them. (*Grimus* 217- 218)

Flapping Eagle’s power lies in his “fictive obsession” to explore the history of K town. He embarks on knowledge and enquiry to discover the truth. He is obsessed with a desire to “refute the Grimus myth” (*Grimus* 148). As long as there is a creative fiction, there will be a hope for re-creation of reality. Grimus himself on the Calf Island builds his power of controlling people from his invented myths and fictions in which the inhabitants believe. The relationship between fiction and reality is a central theme initiated in the paper. It is connected to the function and the primary interest of the postcolonial writer to build up his “fictional countries”.

Nonetheless, *Grimus*, like much of Rushdie’s work, undermines the concept of a “pure culture” by demonstrating the impossibility of any culture or philosophy existing in sterile isolation. This profoundly reflects the poststructuralist approach to culture which gains an overt expression in Mr. Virgil’s comment on the limitations of aesthetic theories that attempt to suppress their own contingencies:

Any intellect which confines itself to mere structuralism is bound to rest trapped in its own webs. Your words serve only to spin cocoons around your own irrelevance.”(*Grimus* 91)

Rushdie relentlessly draws attention to the provisional status of his text’s “truth” and, of course, the provisional status of any received account of reality, by using meta-text that foreground the unnaturalness and bias of the text’s construction as an entity. Rushdie has argued that “one of the things that have happened in the 20th century is a colossal fragmentation reality”. (qtd. in Afzal-Khan 154) Hence, *Grimus* incorporates magic realism in order to transgress distinctions of genres, which mirrors the state of confusion and alienation that defines postcolonial societies and individuals.

Grimus is a critique of the concept of pure culture and monolithic history. Axona represents the authoritative vision of history which excludes any other interpretations,

and everything recorded is fact and truth. We notice that Axona is governed by strict laws of morality and discrimination. “All that is Unaxona is Unclean” (*Grimus* 24). Beside this, god Axona has a law of punishment against those who might think to break the law of “purity” in the town. As a result, Flapping Eagle and his sister, Bird-Dog were exiled from Axona, simply because they broke the law and challenged the “oneness” and stagnation of the Axona system. Mr. Eagle is treated as a stranger simply because “first, my confused sex; second, the circumstances of my birth; and third, my pigmentation” (*Grimus* 18). Life and history in Axona are controlled by a pre-determined rule that prevent people even to dream or think of the world outside the kingdom. Axona town is represented as a closed world of rigidity and insularity. In other words, the traditional system in Axona does not accept the “difference”.

Substantially, life is changeable, history is multifarious, truth is not absolute or final, reality has many versions, and culture is hybrid and has never been pure. These meanings and concepts are metaphorically and fancifully embodied in the character of Mr. Eagle—the symbol of alterity and social change. He has been described as thus:

He was the leopard who changed his spots; he was the worm that turned. He was the shifting sand and the ebbing tide. He was moody as the sky, circular as the seasons, nameless as the glass ... He was the Eagle, prince of birds, and he was also the albatross. She clung round his neck and died, and the mariner became the albatross ... Several times he changed the name he gave to people. (*Grimus* 31-32)

He is looking for new ideals of identity, freedom, history and new culture, “I am looking for a suitable voice to speak in” (*Grimus* 32). To him, history is made of many voices and spoken by many languages. The protagonist, his sister and the other eternal birds are introduced as “anti-history” figures who act against the conventional history, which silences their voices and causes them to suffer their loss, “Frustration was building with Flapping, the frustration of centuries.” (*Grimus* 35)

Contrary to the rational and fanatically religious Axona which embodies rigidity and insularity of historical truth and experience, K town is the magical world “full of secrets” (*Grimus* 20). It is a fictional life which is different from the reality experienced in Axona. It is a town, which is based on power of technology where things operate automatically and by gesture.

K town has a different type of life and reality in which the dwellers have different ways of living. It is a place of fantasy and fulfillment of desire. For instance, though Dolores O’ Toole is a Catholic woman, she decides to follow her love desire. On the other hand, Mrs. Cramm is an eternal woman who submits her soul and body to the protagonist, Eagle. The sexual relationship between the two is part of the energetic life. This relationship is also an example of loose freedom on one hand, and cultural assimilation on the other.

K town is also a place of revelation and harmony. For the character, Ignatius Gribb, Calf Island “came as a happy revelation, here he found his self-respect and she

returned her love”. (*Grimus* 171) Ignatius Gribb describes this sort of power as “the supreme gift of the human race” (*Grimus* 161). Joel Kuorti comments that immortality in K town is based on obsession (43). Everyone is obsessed with his way of thinking. These examples tell that the secular life has many shapes of reality and that there is no one determined version of truth, and historical experience is not subject to the pre-determined rules and ordains of law. Moreover, the pluralistic views of these people signify a rejection of one imposed sort of life. The story of “K” inhabitants embodies the concept of “simultaneity of secular time” in Benedict Anderson’s famous article, “Whose Imagined Community?” (24)

This contrastive image of Axona and K town represents two visions of historical representations. The first is a traditional view of history based on religious or divine truths. The second, however, identifies the fictive view of history that celebrates variety and difference. Yet, both visions evolve out of the extreme polarities. Historical truth is not a universal phenomenon or imaginary event. History is fact and fiction, a factual record and human experience, and a narration and interpretation. Subsequently, Mr. Eagle continues his “search of history” (*Grimus* 107). He denies the view of patriarchs and expresses a feeling of nostalgia for his past. This may tell us that the creation of new countries of free living can be achieved within the limits of temporality and spatiality. He says, “To be in “K” was to return to a consciousness of history, of good times, even of nationhood” (*Grimus* 130). Flapping Eagle becomes weary of immortal life at Calf Island, he decides to regain his nature as a human being and then re-create the land of Phoenix. Now he acts as a mortal being “I- Eagle”. After experiencing “the vicarious joys and agonies of countless lives”, he decides to use “the thought- forms” in giving “the Phoenix a new life, a new beginning.” (*Grimus* 251)

The alternative vision that Rushdie provides through the experience of the Eagle is manifested in his projected reconciliation and resolution between Eagle the mortal and Eagle the immortal, and between Axona where historical truth is projected as a certainly given fact and Calf Island the place of illusionary truth. Subsequently, we come to notice that Grimus-Eagle discovers that the people in the Calf Island are powerless and unable to draw the kind of life they want because their individuality is separated from the collectivity. He sees their fear of change: “the people of K reduced to a blind philosophy of pure survival, clutching obsessively at the shreds of their individuality, knowing within themselves that they were powerless to alter the circumstances in which they lived. (*Grimus* 251)

These lines show clearly the significance of the idea of re-imagining the past and how the Eagle emerges from his present home at “Calf Island” into the history of Phoenix to ‘redeem’ and ‘reform’ that history. We read in the passage that there is a longing for another history. The protagonist says, “To be in “K” was to return to a consciousness of history, of good times, even of nationhood” (*Grimus* 130). Joel Kuorti in her essay, “A View of History,” argues that this longing connects the individual’s identity to the national imagination (64). Flapping Eagle, Elfrida, Gribb, and Irina Cherkassov scuff off their immortal life in search for a new kind of earthly life, “It was because I thought life was sacred that I drank the elixir. One cannot take life.” (*Grimus* 146)

The novel appears as a fictionalized picture of the writer's attitudes towards change and search for new realities. Flapping Eagle, experiences an unsatisfactory life in Axona. Similarly, he decides to break the sameness and mechanical material life on Calf Island by resurrecting the island without Stone Rose, the technological instrument at the hand of Grimus by which he controls life on the island. He rejects the views of god Axona as well as Grimus' because he seeks freedom from the force of authority.

Grimus presents a "multiple society" (Reddy 5) through a polyphony of voices. Each one of those characters represents a particular view of life and creates various versions of realities that cannot be interpreted by a single monolithic view. Joel Kuortti contends that the major problem of the Eagle is that he is burdened with history in terms of collective thoughts and that because of this he loses his home and belongings and things he owns. He is destined to be destroyed by racial, cultural, religious and political forces of history (65). Therefore, the Eagle searches for history not as a homogenous and "transparent truth" but as a process constructed from an endless number of events and stories. To develop this idea further, Rushdie seeks in his novel to undermine the authority of history by the use of fantasy, since fantasy represents a kind of truth where "real history is just another ideological fantasy." (64)

Rushdie's concern in this particular novel is the desire to offer an alternative version of history of the subcontinent and the postcolonial history in general by reworking the authorial view of historical experience and factual knowledge, and by simultaneously creating a fanciful image of historical realities similar to the postcolonial subcontinental history. The theoretical foundation of this is his rejection of what might be termed as "the totality of history" which results in "the loss of the individual". On this basis, Rushdie comes to establish his vision of history on the individual's position and role in society. The conventional history represents collective ideology which gives no regard to the individual's position in society, nor does it answer his hopes and expectations. Such an approach to history also depresses the individual, who, as a result, becomes without entity, family and history. In the light of this thought, the Eagle keeps searching for a history that privileges the "oneself" and the individual as a real element in history. The Eagle suffers the totalitarian and authorial history of Axona, and revolts against the mechanically assimilated history of Calf Island. In both "versions", this "fragmented subject" has not been given his weight as a "maker" of history or as a core of incidents against what is imagined as unified, complete and consistent with itself. By demythicizing the historical myth and mythicizing the ordinary events, Rushdie is instrumentally showing possible visions of history and realities.

By insisting on representing his protagonists as time-travelers and truth-seekers, Rushdie attempts to deconstruct the given facts and truth and subverting the concept of pure culture, absolute facts, and insular central pattern. Thus, his characters are either rebellious dissents or non-conformists. Consequently, if Axona represents the conventional view of history and Calf Island is the mythical version of history, the "I-Eagle" is the alternative history—a history formed out of recreating the "present" Calf Island and re-imagining the "past" Axona. This level of history implies that there is a room for interpreting its facts. Also, it implies that there is no final version of truth. Simply, Rushdie's method is based on exposing the problems of the individual and his

sufferings under the “authentic history”, which is very often collective and repressive. His approach of analysis deals, in brief, with the social and cultural realities in terms of ideas and visions and without any restrictions of dates, events and quantifiable time. Also, it highlights the role of the individual whose business is to search for alternative possibilities on the Earth. Through the Proustian device of “reclamation” Rushdie struggles “to bring the past back and recreate it.” (Durix 12)

The alternative history in the novel takes three forms in Eagle’s thoughts. First, the level of science with which he works to change the conditions and reality of the island governed by the tyrannical ruler, Grimus. The second is the level of politics in which he decides to go back to Phoenix to liberate it from repression. The third one is the level of fiction as a tool to create new realities. (Kuortti 34)

Fantasy, as alternative version of history in the hands of Rushdie, is closely allied with the fictional world of the novel and its controlling theme – i.e. search for the self and history. In this case, “fantasy is not the same febrile phantasmagoria but an energetic dramatization of a better future by people living in a concrete world” (Habegger 6). Therefore, fantasy in the novel does not oppose real conditions, but reflects them. Actually, it is rooted in the real conditions themselves—in the concrete social relations. Commenting on Rushdie’s use of fantasy in the novel as a form of alternative reality, Syed Mujeebuddin notes that “in positing the real with the fantastic and story with history, Rushdie is presenting the reader with an ‘anti-history’ (131). Rushdie neither debunks the conventional histories of the glorious past nor acknowledges the fictionalization of historical reality.

Axona is an allegorical version of history of India in which “Rushdie’s religious allegory is absorbed quickly into the political one because religion has always been a potent weapon in the hands of those who ruled India” (Banerjee 24). Religious truth, according to Rushdie, does not represent the universally historical truth since religion cannot escape the politics of collectivity. In his manipulation of the idea of timelessness and its relation to the concept of history, Rushdie suggests that there is a space of spatiality and temporality to create possible simultaneous versions of historical realities.

From the postmodernist view, *Grimus* translates the idea of authentic experience through Rushdie’s approach to historical representation. Rushdie uses the idea of hyper-reality in representing reality as a natural and authentic experience. Life in Calf Island, therefore, is an excellent example of an authentic experience out of the limits of space and time in which the inhabitants fulfill freely and naturally their desire; they live their desire and not only dream of it. In so doing, Rushdie deals with the postcolonial issues in a realm of postmodernist world. Rushdie’s postmodern world is seen as the alternative world where the symbol and image become reality itself. In this way, Rushdie has provided another vision of Indian history in particular and postcolonial world in general. To develop it further, Rushdie’s approach to myth and history includes the postmodern concept of hyper-reality—reality as an image. Hence, as a fictional writer, his primary concern is to represent the historical veracities in a different way. It is significant to consider that Rushdie’s opinion on the relation between novel and history is based on the

idea that “knowing the world is a necessary first step towards changing it.” (*Imaginary Homelands* 14)

From the postcolonial perspective, Rushdie tries to subvert the historical colonial accounts with its cons and pros by means of creating alternative histories and realities. The history of migration is also of Rushdie’s main concerns in the treatment of history. The idea of alternative history takes into account the possible histories of immigrants as fragmented subjects who have experienced different forms of realities and divided between their national longing and the new cultural environment. This is just exactly the case of Flapping Eagle and his companions who have been expelled from their national land and experienced the life of migrancy, exile and assimilation in the Calf Island. Moreover, the instability of Eagle’s character is also related to the idea of “unstable identity”. His identity is made of different cultures. His identity is a process of cultural assimilation. “Several times he changed the name he gave to people. His face was such, his skin was such” (*Grimus* 32). Therefore, Rushdie’s view of alternative history includes themes such as assimilation, alienation, loss, and longing. Despite of his postcolonial propensity, Rushdie’s treatment of the compelling issues of migration, exile, political freedom, social change, and suppression of women and individual as historically fragmented experiences and stories underpin his engagement with the postmodern world. Fed up with her monotonous life of sameness on the Calf Island, Elferida bursts out profoundly:

I don’t like it [...] it’s too pretty, too neat. I do not care for stories that are so, so tight. Stories should be like life, slightly frayed at the edges, full of loose ends and lives juxtaposed by accident rather than some grand design. Most of life has no meaning so it must surely be a distortion of life to tell tales in which every single element is meaningful (*Grimus* 141).

Postmodernism denies “the fixity of the past, of reality, of the past apart from what the historian chooses to make of it, and thus of any objective truth about the past” (Himmelfarb 72). In other words, history is regarded as a text, “a discourse which consists of representations...” Louis Montrose explains the historicity of texts and the textuality of history in the following lines:

By the historicity of texts I mean to suggest the cultural specificity, the social embedment, of all modes of writing [...]. By the textuality of history, I mean to suggest, firstly, that we can have no access to full and authentic past, a lived material existence, unmediated by the surviving textual traces of the society in question [...]; and secondly that those textual traces are themselves subjective to subsequent textual mediations when they are constructed as the ‘documents’ upon which historians ground their own texts, called ‘histories’. (20)

The postmodern view of history thus “rejects the idea of “history” as a directly accessible, unitary past and substitutes for it the conception of “histories” as an ongoing series of human constructions” (Cox and Reynolds 4). Moreover, Himmelfarb develops the idea further to suggest that:

To ‘demythiciseze’ or ‘demystify’ this history, postmodernism has to expose not only its ideology—the hegemonic, privileged, patriarchal interest served by this history—but also its methodology, the scholarly apparatus that gives it a specious credibility. (160-61)

At the end of the novel Mr. Eagle eventually declares: “I want to return to the human race” (*Grimus* 55). Thus, the alternative history in the novel takes the shape of “resolved conflicts” and balanced attitudes between given facts and fictional truths or between factual knowledge and mythical thought.

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