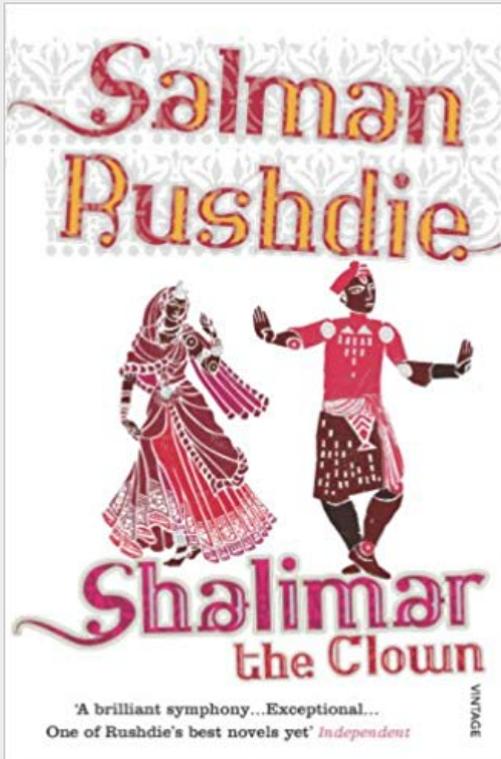


Shalimar the Clown by Salman Rushdie



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Los angeles, 1991 maximilian ophuls, one of the makers of the modern world, is knifed to death in broad daylight on the doorstep of his illegitimate daughter india, slaughtered by his kashmiri driver, a mysterious figure who calls himself shalimar the clown the dead man is a world war ii resistance hero, a man of formidable intellectual ability and much erotic appeal, a former united states ambassador to india, and subsequently americas counter-terrorism chief the murder looks at first like a political assassination but turns out to be passionately personal this is the story of max, his killer, and his daughter - and of a fourth character, the woman who links them, whose story explains them all the story of a deep love gone fatally wrong, destroyed by a shallow affair, it is an epic narrative that moves from california to france, england, and above all, kashmir at its heart is the tale of that earthly paradise of peach orchards and honey bees, of mountains and lakes, of green-eyed women and murderous men: a ruined paradise, not so much lost as smashed lives are uprooted, names keep changing - nothing is permanent, yet everything is connected spanning the globe and darting through history, salman rushdies majestic narrative captures the heart of the reader and the spirit of a troubled age



Reviews of the **Shalimar the Clown** by Salman Rushdie

1. Tegore

I can think of no one writing today with as vivid an imagination, such compelling story-telling skills and such an amazing ability to weave incredible fictional characters into world history as Salman Rushdie. *Shalimar* is slow in spots, and I was let down by the ending, but much of it was a magical carpet ride through the rise and terrible fall of Kashmir that thoroughly impressed me. I still prefer *Midnight's Children*, a breathtaking piece of fiction, but *Shalimar the Clown* is pretty darn good.

2. Halloween

Mr Rushdie is a supreme novelist, and this is a dense but highly enjoyable novel. The author tells the story unconventionally and does not follow a straight narrative arc; rather, he circles back and forth to the key events. He uses the novel as a means to describe a great deal of brutal historic events, mainly those that have devastated the contested land of Kashmir. At times, you wonder whether those historic events serve the story and the characters, or whether the story serves the author's interest in describing those key and cruel events. Mr Rushdie is very conventional in the tradition of the great 19th century novelists; he seems to be the omniscient and highly opinionated narrator of it all. A very good book which will tell much about the cruel history of Kashmir. BUT, if you want to start with one novel by this excellent author, his supreme work is and always will be *Midnight's Children*.

3. Harley Quinn

If you're familiar with Salman Rushdie's works you should read this one. It is a colorful narrative tale about a group of individuals involved directly or indirectly in the India Pakistan conflict over Kashmir. As usual Rushdie

weaves the tale through the perspective of various characters all of whom have marvelously intricate personas. It reminded me a bit of the movie *Syriana* (which is based on an ex-CIA operative's memoir) in that it plausibly explains a like-able character's entry into a terrorist organization. Rushdie also posits another example of religion (though this could be any extreme dichotomy of ideas) dividing a community because of disparate treatment by outsiders. Without spoiling too much, I think the book will both intrigue you and keep you on edge.

4. Gela

Shalimar the clown is basically a story of two villages in disputed Indian Kashmir, one Hindu and one Muslim, and the lives of their people as first pastoral happiness, then bitter civil war, then terrorism and eye-for-an-eye retribution and bitter revenge devastate life as it was known. In the center is a young couple, Boonyi and Shalimar, who fall in love; and the breaking of their bond and life together is mirrored by the complete breakdown of all that is decent and good around them.

The book starts slow, and Rushdie's writing style, while perhaps well chosen for the locations and people he is here portraying - definitely otherworldly and a deft mixing of narrative and legend - unfortunately does not help it take off. Characters are introduced which may well be colorful but which may be hard to relate to; there is a lot on village history, kings and princes and times and events of long ago which do not seem to add significantly to the progression of the story.

And then things pick up. One selfish act takes place - and everything changes. We are reintroduced to the world: names are discarded, changed, picked anew, fresh with meaning; identities, titles and roles are altered; all that was stable is now unstable, fact and legend are now intertwined, the known world is violated, dishonored, destroyed, set ablaze and a newer and much much uglier one takes its place. Nobody is who they were, all names are lies, honor and personal values are reduced to murder, not only for Shalimar, but for old Misri, for the General, ultimately even for Kashmira. "No more mister nice guy," says the commander of Abu Sayyaf late in the book, and he means it. The gloves are off, no punches are pulled; the story relentlessly becomes more serious and violent. It's not pretty.

The characters are all richly imagined, expertly drawn, and each evolves,

impacted by the world around them - and therefore typically for the worse. Especially the degeneration of Shalimar from a seemingly innocent and dumb but loveable man-boy to a driven homicidal maniac is superbly executed; no doubt Rushdie has had quite some time to work on putting such a character on the page. Rushdie can write with humor, sarcasm, sensitivity and sometimes very movingly; his occasional lapses into technique trickery can therefore leave one a little annoyed. But Rushdie is a writer of exceptional talent, just sometimes a little unevenly applied.

It is a tragic, tragic tale - all the more important that people should also realize that it may as well be the truth.

5. Anarahuginn

Having enjoyed *Satanic Verses* and *The Moors Last Sigh*, I looked forward to another odyssey from Rushdie and was not disappointed. As is typical, he challenges our assumptions about people, culture, and social norms. I appreciated his portraits of Kashmir and the difficulty of blended culture between Islam and others.

The "real" story tells about all of our status as fallen from grace and undeserving of forgiveness.

6. Nejind

I have no idea what this book is about. Maybe I'm too concrete but there was nothing that grabbed me in the beginning chapters. Could barely decipher characters or even a plot. What is the mystery? Too much background that is close to impossible to follow to get to anything that grabs me.

7. Zeli

What a refreshing piece of literature! Salman Rushdie infuses his rich, sensory, often magical descriptions and style into a wonderful storyline that ties together many people, beliefs, and many worlds.

That's not to say he gives ample and fair treatment to each (nor does he need too)...although the characters whose beliefs he clearly despises are the least defined and in fact, sometimes blandly stereotypical. This tendency markedly detracts from the overall wonder of the book. I'm speaking specifically of Shalimar and the ambassador's wife, who, it seems, can barely utter a coherent phrase without resorting to language only apropos for the estate's fox hunting outings.

Still, a great writer, and a great, compelling read that pulls you into a different world in a way in which you can see the "difference" both clearly and almost personally...so much so that very quickly it no longer seems different. I think in fiction writing, that's called "success."

8. Very interesting story though the descriptions are a bit long sometimes

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