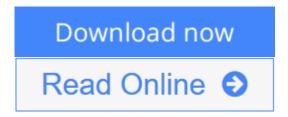


Shalimar the Clown: A Novel

By Salman Rushdie



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"Dazzling . . . Modern thriller, Ramayan epic, courtroom drama, slapstick comedy, wartime adventure, political satire, village legend-they're all blended here magnificently."

-The Washington Post Book World

This is the story of Maximilian Ophuls, America's counterterrorism chief, one of the makers of the modern world; his Kashmiri Muslim driver and subsequent killer, a mysterious figure who calls himself Shalimar the clown; Max's illegitimate daughter India; and a woman who links them, whose revelation finally explains them all. It is an epic narrative that moves from California to Kashmir, France, and England, and back to California again. Along the way there are tales of princesses lured from their homes by demons, legends of kings forced to defend their kingdoms against evil. And there is always love, gained and lost, uncommonly beautiful and mortally dangerous.

- "A commanding story . . . [a] harrowing climax . . . Revenge is an ancient and powerful engine of narrative." $\,$
- -The New York Times Book Review
- "Absorbing . . . Everywhere [Rushdie] takes us there is both love and war, in strange and terrifying combinations, painted in swaying, swirling, world-eating prose that annihilates the borders between East and West, love and hate, private lives and the history they make."
- -Time
- "A vast, richly peopled, beautiful and deeply rageful book that serves as a profound and disturbing artifact of our times."
- -San Francisco Chronicle
- "Marvelous . . . brilliant . . . a story worthy of [Rushdie's] genius."

 —Detroit Free Press

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Shalimar the Clown: A Novel By Salman Rushdie Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Starred Review. For Westerners, Rushdie's latest may be better heard than read. While readers might stumble over the Kashmiri, Indian and Pakistani names and accents, Mandvi glides right through them, allowing us to engage with Rushdie's well-wrought characters and sagas. Mandvi has a calm, quiet storyteller voice, often employing tempo to express emotional states and to make long, complex sentences entirely clear. In fact, one realizes he is nearly invisible (until he reads a few lines in a Romance language), leaving us to relish the sounds and images and rhythms of Rushdie's language. The book begins at the end, with the murder of the former American ambassador to India, Maximilian Ophuls, now a counterterrorist expert, then introduces his murderer, Shalimar the Clown, Kashmiri actor and acrobat-cum-terrorist, and Ophuls's illegitimate daughter, India, who brings the book to a conclusion as terror-filled and ambiguous as our own future. Suspense and tension are superbly built and layered through mythology and plots of lust and jealousy intertwined with cultural, religious, national and international affairs. Rushdie does get polemical for a while, even didactic; his writing in these sections sometimes sounds speechifying. Yet we come away with a mostly lyrical parable that offers us a way of grappling with the realities of our time and place, a way of refracting history through multiple lenses.

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From Bookmarks Magazine

Like some of the post-9/11 literature, *Shalimar* delves deep into the roots of terrorism and explores the turmoil generated by different faiths and cultures attempting to coexist. How can nations, Rushdie asks, go from near-peaceful ethnic and religious acceptance to violent conflict within a mere generation? Critics agree that Rushdie has brilliantly unraveled the construction of terrorists: some of them fight for ideas; others fight to fulfill vows or, if they are men, to reclaim their wives.

Shalimar is at once a political thriller, folk tale, slapstick comedy, wartime adventure, and work of science fiction, pop culture, and magical realism. In shimmering (if sometimes baroque) language, Rushdie invokes clever satire and imaginative wordplay. Yet, despite its diverse genres and styles, Shalimar is, at heart, a story of love, honor, and revenge—and the global consequences of such emotions and actions. Critics particularly praised Rushdie's shocking description of Shalimar's transformation into a cold-blooded Islamic terrorist, from his participation in training camps to forced humiliations before Taliban leaders. Similarly, wrenching descriptions of pre- and post-war Kashmir, his homage to a paradise lost, confirm Rushdie's brilliant powers of observation and keen social insight. Some reviewers felt that some characters lacked psychological depth or complete plausibility, or were too allegorical, but most described Shalimar as convincingly real—too real, even.

In the 21st century, *Shalimar*'s painful, terrifying themes are both fantastical and devastatingly real. To evidence otherwise, Rushdie offers a note of cautious optimism: people can work out their differences if left alone by ideologues or fanatics. *Shalimar* provides a timely, ultimately idealistic, message for our times.

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From **Booklist**

Before the eyes of his grown daughter, a former (and famous) American ambassador to India is stabbed to death by his enigmatic chauffeur, the Shalimar of the novel's title. What contemporary novelist knows more than Rushdie about the political-religious tensions besetting the globe since the middle of the twentieth

century and, specifically, how such tensions not only affect personal lives but also, in many instances, *create* the lives many people lead? The historically shaped lives of Maximilian Ophus, born into a wealthy Jewish family in Strasbourg, France, and later a Resistance hero and vastly popular diplomat, and Shalimar the Clown, who grew up in the devastatingly beautiful (but Hindu-Muslim disputed) Kashmir region of India, intersect, and why one is compelled to take the other's life seems to be the perfect material for Rushdie's cosmopolitan, sociopolitical consciousness. To characterize the novel as "rich" seems inadequately broad as a general description of a Rushdie book, including this one. Let it stand, however, as a cogent descriptor of Rushdie's sheer and magnificent talent. His beautifully metaphoric language and sly sense of humor keep his complex plot, with its layers of personal and cosmic meaning, tightly woven. *Brad Hooper Copyright* © *American Library Association. All rights reserved*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Albert Parks:

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Paula Daniels:

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