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# Radicalisation and Vengeance: Salman Rushdie's Exploration of 9/11 in Shalimar the Clown

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***Abstract:*** This article undertakes a postcolonial reading of Salman Rushdie's Shalimar the Clown (2005), foregrounding its complex engagement with radicalisation, imperial violence, and the fractured identities of the post-9/11 world. While existing criticism often treats the novel as a narrative of terrorism and revenge, this study argues that Rushdie constructs terrorism not as isolated ideological extremism but as a historical and political continuum rooted in colonialism, militarisation, and the global geopolitics of the War on Terror. Drawing on theoretical frameworks from Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, Frantz Fanon, Gayatri Spivak, Achille Mbembe logics of Western counterterror discourses after 9/11. By integrating postcolonial theory directly into literary interpretation, this article situates Shalimar the Clown as a key text in understanding how personal grief, cultural dislocation, and historical injustice converge into political violence in the twenty-first century., Aamir Mufti, and Ananya Jahanara Kabir, the article demonstrates how the novel makes visible the psychic and material conditions under which violence emerges. The paper proposes that Shalimar the Clown maps radicalisation through three intersecting forces: (1) postcolonial trauma and imperial residue in Kashmir, (2) fractured diasporic and hybrid identities in the era of globalisation, and (3) the necropolitical

**IndexTerms:** SalmanRushdie, Shalimarthe Clown, postcolonialism, Kashmir, radicalisation, terrorism, diaspora,identity,necropolitics,9/11,globalisation,empire.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Salman Rushdie's Shalimar the Clown (2005) has frequently been read as a narrative about terrorism, revenge, and fractured identity. Yet, in the two decades since its publication, the novel has acquired renewed significance as a literary articulation of the geopolitical anxieties shaping the post-9/11 world. Published four years after the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, the novel intervenes in a moment when cultural, political, and scholarly discourses were increasingly preoccupied with defining "terrorism," policing Muslim identities, and reasserting Western sovereignty through the War on Terror. Within this climate of securitisation, Rushdie's narrative offers a profound counterpoint. Rather than depicting terrorism as religious fanaticism or civilisational pathology, Shalimar the Clown examines the historical sedimentation of colonial rule, militarisation, and cultural erasure in Kashmir. It emphasises how personal betrayal, colonial violence, and geopolitical structures entangle to produce the radicalisation of its protagonist, Shalimar.

To frame this inquiry, the article aligns itself with a postcolonial methodology grounded in the works of Edward Said (1978), Homi Bhabha (1994), Gayatri Spivak (1988), Frantz Fanon (1963), and contemporary theorists such as Achille Mbembe (2003), Aamir Mufti (2007), and Ananya Jahanara Kabir (2009). These theorists illuminate how Shalimar the Clown exposes the ideological and material forces that shape the lives of postcolonial subjects, particularly those inhabiting zones of prolonged conflict. Rushdie constructs Kashmir as a space where identity, nationhood, and memory collide, producing a political landscape marked by what Mbembe terms "necropolitics"—the power of the state to decide who

may live and who must die. Within this setting, Shalimar's descent from a gentle, community-rooted performer into an international assassin becomes legible not as individual pathology, but as a tragic embodiment of historical injury and political abandonment.

The central argument of this article is that Shalimar the Clown illustrates how terrorism arises from a multilayered convergence of personal grief, cultural displacement, and structural violence. The betrayal of Shalimar by his wife Boonyi is neither a solitary emotional rupture nor merely a domestic tragedy; it is symbolically entwined with Kashmir's political disintegration and the trauma inflicted by competing hegemonies. Boonyi's entanglement with Max Ophuls, a cosmopolitan diplomat and emblem of Western liberal imperialism, amplifies this connection, rendering Shalimar's eventual radicalisation a narrative of both personal and geopolitical revenge.

The novel's exploration of diaspora further complicates its politics of identity. Characters such as India/Kashmira, born of Boonyi and Max's encounter, inhabit hybrid, liminal spaces characteristic of Bhabha's "third space," where cultural identities are perpetually negotiated and destabilised. This hybrid subjectivity, far from producing liberation, generates an acute sense of alienation intensified by the racialised and securitised atmosphere of the post-9/11 West. By situating diasporic identity within the globalised networks of surveillance, suspicion, and counterterrorism, Rushdie interrogates what Mufti calls the "crisis of Muslim modernity."

Finally, the assassination of Max Ophuls in Los Angeles—one of the novel's most striking narrative gestures—reveals how violence circulates between the global North and the global South. It exemplifies how unresolved colonial histories and ignored local conflicts can erupt into transnational acts of terror. In this sense, the novel positions terrorism within a global system of unequal power relations, critiquing the reductive binaries of "civilised" versus "barbaric," "victim" versus "perpetrator," that dominate Western post-9/11 discourse.

This article seeks to reposition Shalimar the Clown within postcolonial literary studies by demonstrating how Rushdie's novel demands a critical rethinking of the relationship between terrorism and postcolonial subjectivity. Moving beyond symptomatic readings focused solely on political violence, the following sections will trace how the novel represents radicalisation as a product of cultural erasure, historical trauma, and geopolitical domination. Through a sustained engagement with postcolonial theory, this article argues that Shalimar the Clown is not only a narrative of revenge but also a profound meditation on empire, identity, and the costs of belonging in a fractured world.

## II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK & LITERATURE REVIEW

A rigorous postcolonial theoretical foundation is central to understanding how Shalimar the Clown constructs radicalisation, identity fragmentation, and geopolitical violence. Rushdie's novel operates at the intersection of multiple critical traditions—postcolonial theory, trauma studies, terrorism studies, and diaspora theory—necessitating an integrated framework that situates literary representation within histories of empire, militarisation, and global insecurity. This section draws upon Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, Frantz Fanon, Gayatri Spivak, Achille Mbembe, Aamir Mufti, Ananya Jahanara Kabir, and Elleke Boehmer, whose contributions illuminate the novel's engagement with violence, identity, and colonial residue.

### 2.1. Edward Said: Orientalism, Representation, and the Muslim "Other"

Edward Said's Orientalism (1978) provides a crucial foundation for understanding how Rushdie critiques the post-9/11 securitisation of Muslim identities. Said argues that the West constructs the East as irrational, dangerous, and inferior—a discursive mechanism that legitimises imperial domination. In Shalimar the Clown, these orientalist logics shape both Max Ophuls' positional superiority and the broader U.S. response to global terrorism. The characters from Kashmir—Shalimar, Boonyi, and others—are repeatedly framed by Western institutions as exotic, volatile, or primitive, reducing their complex histories to simplified identities.

After 9/11, what Said terms the "dangerous Muslim stereotype" intensified into a global security apparatus. Rushdie exposes this shift by showing how Shalimar's identity becomes unintelligible to Western observers, who see him not as a product of colonial violence but as an archetypal terrorist. Said's insights are essential for interpreting how Rushdie dismantles these representational binaries, challenging the reductive frameworks that dominate Western discourse.

### *2.2* Homi Bhabha: Hybridity, Ambivalence, and the Third Space

Homi Bhabha's theories of hybridity, ambivalence, and the "third space" illuminate the fractured identities that populate Shalimar the Clown. Boonyi, for instance, embodies a hybrid subjectivity caught between tradition and modernity, Kashmir and the West, agency and subjugation. Her move from Pachigam to Delhi and then to Los Angeles reflects a journey through multiple cultural spaces where identity becomes fluid yet precarious. According to Bhabha (1994), the hybrid subject occupies an ambivalent position—neither fully inside nor outside dominant cultural structures.

India/Kashmira, born of a Kashmiri mother and a European-American father, represents a quintessential "third space" subject whose identity is continually negotiated across geopolitical histories. Her existence challenges the purity of national, cultural, or ethnic categories. Yet hybridity here is far from liberatory; instead, it generates confusion, displacement, and vulnerability. Through these characters, Rushdie demonstrates how postcolonial identities are constructed in the gaps between cultures—gaps often exploited or weaponised by global power structures.

### 2.3 Frantz Fanon: Colonial Violence, Trauma, and the Birth of the Radical

Frantz Fanon's work on violence, trauma, and decolonisation is indispensable to decoding Shalimar's radicalisation. Fanon argues that colonial power inflicts psychological wounds that manifest as rage, resentment, or violent resistance. In The Wretched of the Earth (1963), he writes that the colonised subject internalises humiliation until violence becomes a means of reclaiming agency.

Shalimar's transformation mirrors Fanon's model:

- His personal humiliation (Boonyi's abandonment)
- His community's dislocation (Kashmir's militarisation)
- His cultural erasure (loss of Kashmiri syncretic traditions)

Fanon insists that colonial violence produces its own counter-violence; Rushdie extends this insight into the post-9/11 world, showing how modern terrorism emerges from unresolved colonial wounds and geopolitical marginalisation.

### 2.4 Gayatri Spivak: Subalternity and Gendered Silencing

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's question "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988) provides a framework for analysing Boonyi's narrative trajectory. Boonyi exemplifies the gendered subaltern whose agency is repeatedly constrained by patriarchal, communal, and imperial structures. Though she seeks freedom through her relationship with Max Ophuls, this attempt at self-definition is swiftly co-opted by the West's fascination with exoticised female bodies.

Boonyi's silence—her inability to articulate her trauma—reflects what Spivak identifies as the structural muting of subaltern women. Her final years, spent in marginalised isolation, embody the tragic fate of the postcolonial female subject whose desires are subsumed within larger political narratives. Through Spivak's lens, Boonyi becomes more than a transgressor; she is a casualty of intersecting systems of power.

### 2.5 Achille Mbembe: Necropolitics and the Militarised Landscape of Kashmir

Achille Mbembe's concept of necropolitics—the power to determine who lives and who dies—provides a critical lens for understanding the militarised space of Kashmir. In Shalimar the Clown, the valley is depicted as a landscape of constant surveillance, checkpoints, disappearances, and extrajudicial killings. This aligns with Mbembe's argument that in zones of occupation, sovereignty manifests primarily through the administration of death.

Rushdie portrays Kashmir as a territory where ordinary life is suspended, and death becomes an everyday possibility. The state's necropolitical power shapes Shalimar's identity, stripping him of civic agency and rendering violence not simply a choice but an existential condition. In this framework, radicalisation emerges as a response to living under a regime where the state monopolises violence and denies political dialogue.

### 2.6 Aamir Mufti: Muslim Modernity and the Crisis of Belonging

Aamir Mufti's work on Muslim identity in the aftermath of colonial modernity deepens our understanding of Rushdie's characters. Mufti argues that modern nation-states forcibly redefine Muslim identity either as a national minority, a threat, or a cultural outsider. In Shalimar the Clown, Shalimar embodies the Muslim subject who becomes alienated from both national and global communities.

After 9/11, this crisis intensifies: Muslim diasporic identities in the West become racialised and securitised. India/Kashmira, though born into privilege, is also affected by this atmosphere of suspicion. Her father's assassination thrusts her into a political context where Muslim identities are pathologised. Mufti's insights explain the precariousness and vulnerability experienced by Rushdie's characters as they navigate the global politics of the post-9/11 world.

### 2.7 Ananya Jahanara Kabir: Memory, Performance, and Loss in Kashmir

Ananya Jahanara Kabir's work on Kashmir emphasises how cultural memory, performance, and syncretism are eroded by militarisation. This is central to understanding Rushdie's portrayal of Pachigam as a vibrant community rooted in dance, performance, and religious coexistence. Shalimar's early life as a tightrope walker symbolises balance, harmony, and aesthetic beauty—qualities shattered by political violence.

Kabir helps us read these cultural motifs as embodiments of Kashmir's lost pluralism. The destruction of performance traditions parallels the destruction of identity itself, suggesting that radicalisation is partly a response to cultural dislocation. Kabir's framework situates the novel within broader debates on memory, loss, and the fragmentation of Kashmir.

### 2.8 Elleke Boehmer & Alex Houen: Postcolonial Terrorism Studies

Scholars such as Elleke Boehmer and Alex Houen extend postcolonial studies into the domain of terrorism. Boehmer argues that terrorism in postcolonial literature often emerges from conditions of political marginalisation and cultural dispossession. Houen further links terrorism to historical processes of imperialism and globalisation.

Rushdie's novel reflects these insights by tracing the global circuits of violence connecting Kashmir to Europe and the United States. Terrorism here is not an isolated phenomenon but part of a transnational network shaped by colonial histories, Cold War politics, and post-9/11 security regimes.

Together, these theorists demonstrate that Shalimar the Clown must be read as a postcolonial narrative where radicalisation is inseparable from geopolitical structures.

## III. LITERATURE REVIEW

While Shalimar the Clown has been the subject of considerable scholarship, most existing studies fall into three categories:
(1) Analyses of terrorism and violence.
(2) Explorations of identity, diaspora, and globalization.
(3) Discussions of Kashmir's political history.
However, few works integrate these themes through a robust postcolonial theoretical lens. This article fills that gap.

### 3.1. Terrorism and Radicalisation in Existing Scholarship

Several scholars have examined Shalimar's descent into terrorism. Critics highlight: Khan (2006): Radicalisation as rooted in Kashmir's political trauma, Raziq (2010): Challenges Islamophobic readings of terrorism, Daniel (2007): Emphasises global War on Terror discourses Milbank (2006): Connects Shalimar's identity to diasporic alienation.These studies recognise the political dimensions of Shalimar's violence, yet many treat terrorism as a thematic focus without embedding it firmly within postcolonial theory or necropolitical analyses.

### 3.2. Kashmir as a Postcolonial Battleground

The Kashmir conflict is central to the novel and has received scholarly attention. Critics such as Robinson (2010) and Faris (2008) focus on Kashmir as a contested national space entangled in religious, political, and territorial disputes. Yet these readings often stop short of engaging with theoretical frameworks such as Mbembe's necropolitics, Kabir's cultural memory studies, or Fanon's psychological theories of colonial violence. This article brings these frameworks into direct conversation with Rushdie's narrative.

### 3.3. Diaspora, Hybridity, and Post-9/11 Identity

Scholars such as Milbank (2006) and Kureishi (2005) have explored the novel's diasporic dimensions, particularly India/Kashmira's hybrid identity. Their arguments draw on Bhabha's theories but do not thoroughly examine how hybridity becomes destabilising in a securitised post-9/11 context. This article extends these readings by incorporating Mufti's work on Muslim modernity and crisis, as well as contemporary diaspora theory, to argue that identity in the novel is shaped by global-security anxieties.

### 3.4. Gaps in Existing Scholarship

Current research on Shalimar the Clown has notable limitations:

1. Lack of integrated postcolonial theory — most analyses refer to theory but do not sustain a deep theoretical engagement.
2. Insufficient attention to necropolitics — Kashmir's militarisation is under-theorised.
3. Limited discussion of gendered subalternity — Boonyi's narrative is often misread as moral failure rather than structural silencing.
4. Weak integration of terrorism theory — few scholars examine terrorism as a postcolonial phenomenon rooted in empire.
5. Minimal analysis of 9/11's global securitisation — especially its effects on diasporic Muslim identity.

This article addresses these gaps by employing a comprehensive theoretical framework that positions Rushdie's novel within global postcolonial debates on violence, identity, and imperialism.

## IV. DISCUSSION

### 4.1. Radicalisation and the Postcolonial Wound: Personal Betrayal as Historical Trauma

Rushdie's portrayal of Shalimar's radicalisation has often been interpreted as the outcome of personal betrayal—Boonyi's infidelity and her eventual abandonment of the Kashmiri village of Pachigam. However, a closer examination through postcolonial theory reveals that Shalimar's individual wound is entangled with larger histories of colonial dispossession, cultural ruptures, and political occupation. His descent into violence cannot be isolated from the context of Kashmir, a region defined simultaneously by its aesthetic beauty and its political devastation. To understand Shalimar's transformation, it is essential to interpret the personal wound as part of what Fanon describes as the "psycho-affective violence" produced under colonial regimes.

Shalimar's early life represents the last vestiges of a harmonious, syncretic Kashmir—one characterised by shared Hindu-Muslim practices, traditional performances, and communal interdependence. When Boonyi chooses to leave Pachigam for Delhi—and eventually for the world of Max Ophuls—her departure symbolises a rupture not only in their marriage but also in the communal fabric of Kashmiri life. Her yearning for modernity, autonomy, and mobility reflects what Bhabha calls the ambivalence of the postcolonial subject. For Boonyi, escape promises self-definition, but for Shalimar, her departure embodies a betrayal of cultural belonging. When she leaves, the symbolic balance that defined Shalimar's identity—represented through his tightrope performances—is irrevocably broken.

The betrayal is further amplified by the identity of Boonyi's lover. Max Ophuls, a diplomat, activist, and former Resistance hero, represents the power, privilege, and seductive allure of the West. Boonyi's attraction to Ophuls is partly an attraction to the seemingly limitless possibilities of cosmopolitan modernity. Her mobility—geographical, sexual, and social—echoes the desires of many postcolonial subjects who perceive the West as a space of liberation. Yet this aspiration is laced with danger. Spivak's theorisation of subalternity is particularly relevant here: Boonyi's attempt to "speak" her desire is co-opted by the dominant powers she wishes to enter. She becomes, paradoxically, both agent and victim—her body used for political leverage, her autonomy overwritten by the patriarchal and imperial frameworks she attempts to challenge.

Shalimar experiences her departure not simply as emotional betrayal but as cultural and political emasculation. Fanon posits that the colonised male subject often interprets the loss of control over the colonised female body as a symbolic loss of national or cultural integrity. Boonyi's involvement with a Western diplomat thus becomes a metonym for Western intrusion into Kashmiri identity and sovereignty. Her body becomes, in Spivak's terms, the site upon which competing ideologies—traditional Kashmiri values, patriarchal expectations, Western liberalism, and global capital—are enacted. For Shalimar, the betrayal becomes inseparable from the broader narrative of Kashmir's subjugation under multiple regimes of power.

As Shalimar begins to internalise his humiliation, the forces of political radicalisation gain momentum. He joins a militant organisation not merely out of ideological commitment but because this identity provides a sense of restored agency. Fanon famously asserts that violence can become the language of the colonised when all other forms of expression are denied. Rushdie complicates this claim by suggesting that Shalimar's violence is both a reclamation of agency and a symptom of deeper psychological fragmentation. It is not just that Shalimar becomes violent; rather, violence becomes the only register through which he can articulate the trauma of his broken identity.

By the time Shalimar reaches Los Angeles to assassinate Max Ophuls, his personal wound has been fully absorbed into a global political movement. He is no longer merely a betrayed husband—he is a trained assassin carrying the weight of colonial history. This transformation reveals the deep entanglement between personal trauma and structural violence. Rushdie thus demonstrates that terrorism, far from being individual pathology, is a complex phenomenon rooted in personal suffering that is framed by historical injustices.

### 4.2. Kashmir as Necropolitical Space: Militarisation, Death, and the Politics of Control

Kashmir is not simply the setting of Shalimar the Clown; it is the central axis around which the novel's politics of violence revolve. Through its depiction of Kashmir's villages, border checkpoints, military installations, and social fragmentation, Rushdie constructs the region as a necropolitical zone in Achille Mbembe's terms—an area where the state's power is expressed through the capacity to administer death.

The novel's opening descriptions of Pachigam emphasise lush landscapes, cultural vitality, and an almost mythical sense of harmony. This idyllic portrayal is central to understanding how devastating the subsequent militarisation becomes. As the region becomes increasingly occupied by military forces, the beauty of Kashmir is gradually replaced by a landscape of fear, suspicion, and surveillance. The Army's presence is pervasive and dehumanising; villagers live in constant anticipation of violence. The checkpoints and curfews described in the novel signify what Mbembe identifies as "spatial apartheid"—the fragmentation of land into zones of control and subjugation.

Rushdie's depiction aligns with real-world accounts of Kashmir, where civilians often find themselves caught between rival armies, militant factions, and geopolitical agendas. The death and disappearances that define daily life in the novel underscore the fragility of human existence in such a space. In Kashmir, life itself becomes conditional; the state decides who may exist without fear and who must live with the perpetual possibility of death. Shalimar's radicalisation, therefore, is inseparable from the necropolitical environment in which he is raised.

The novel repeatedly describes the transformation of Shalimar's body—once agile, graceful, and expressive—into a hardened instrument of violence. His physical change parallels the militarisation of Kashmir's geography. The tightrope walker who once symbolised balance and artistic harmony becomes a militant whose body is fashioned by the demands of warfare. This corporeal transformation illustrates Fanon's claim that colonial spaces produce bodies habituated to violence. The political training Shalimar receives from militant groups is, therefore, not a departure from his cultural environment but a continuation of it.

In Rushdie's narrative, state violence and insurgent violence exist in a symbiotic relationship. The actions of militants are framed as reactions to the oppressive conditions imposed by militarisation. Yet the novel refuses to romanticise militancy; it displays its brutalities, contradictions, and moral ambiguities. Shalimar's participation in violence becomes increasingly indiscriminate, suggesting that the necropolitical environment gradually transforms individuals into instruments of death regardless of their initial motivations.

Kashmir is thus portrayed as a liminal space—one where the categories of "civilian," "militant," and "victim" blur. This ambiguity challenges Western discourses that seek clear moral binaries in conflicts involving terrorism. Rushdie uses Kashmir to highlight the complexity of political violence and to critique simplistic narratives that ignore the intricate histories of occupation and resistance. In doing so, the novel illustrates how local conflicts become globalised in the postcolonial world.

### 4.3. Diaspora, Hybridity, and Identity in the Post-9/11 Global Order

The death of Max Ophuls in Los Angeles marks a crucial narrative shift—one that moves the novel from the localised violence of Kashmir to the global politics of the post-9/11 world. The American city becomes another site of cultural fragmentation, securitisation, and identity contestation. Through characters such as India/Kashmira and the broader representation of diasporic communities, Rushdie examines how globalisation and migration complicate notions of belonging and destabilise cultural identities.

India/Kashmira, as a hybrid subject, embodies Bhabha's "third space" identity. She is the product of two worlds—one marked by the privilege and power of Western modernity, the other by the trauma of colonised Kashmir. Her very name—India—reveals the impossibility of ascribing a singular, stable identity to her. Her dual heritage becomes even more complex in the post-9/11 context, where Muslim identity becomes racialised and securitised. Although she is not Muslim herself, she remains entangled

in the politics of her parents' identities, especially after witnessing the assassination of her father by a Kashmiri militant.

Hybridity in this novel is not liberatory; it is destabilising. India/Kashmira's struggles reflect Mufti's argument that Muslim identity—and by extension, identities linked to Muslim-majority regions—functions under the perpetual shadow of suspicion. Her hybrid identity places her at the centre of a cultural conflict she neither caused nor fully understands. This crisis of identity is emblematic of the broader experiences of diasporic subjects navigating globalisation's unequal terrains.

Rushdie extends this critique to examine how Western societies construct the figure of the "terrorist." After 9/11, the West's response to terrorism became marked by racial profiling, Islamophobia, and expansive security regimes. The novel underscores this shift by juxtaposing Shalimar's concealed presence in Los Angeles with America's panic over foreign threats. Rushdie's depiction challenges readers to reconsider the assumptions underlying Western counterterrorism narratives. Shalimar, though framed as a terrorist, is also a product of global inequities, historical annexations, and political neglect.

Diasporic identity is further complicated by the novel's portrayal of cultural memory. India/Kashmira inherits fragmented memories—her mother's cultural roots, her father's cosmopolitan life, and her assassin's historical wound. This fragmented inheritance forces her to reconstruct a sense of self from competing narratives. Her journey exposes the emotional and psychological burdens placed on diasporic subjects who must navigate histories they did not live yet are compelled to carry.

This section of the novel thus interrogates the politics of global belonging. It asks: who is allowed to belong in the West? Who is marked as suspect? And how does the global War on Terror reshape the identities of those living in diaspora? Rushdie's nuanced portrayal demonstrates that the post-9/11 world is defined by new borders—psychological, cultural, and political—that complicate the movement and identity of postcolonial subjects.

### 4.4. Global Networks of Violence and Empire: From Kashmir to Los Angeles

One of Rushdie's most significant narrative decisions is transporting Shalimar from Kashmir to the United States. This shift symbolically emphasises the transnational circuits through which violence travels. Terrorism, in the novel, is neither geographically confined nor politically isolated; it is part of a global system shaped by imperial history and contemporary geopolitics.

Max Ophuls represents this global system. His career as a diplomat is built upon Western involvement in postcolonial regions—a legacy of intervention, manipulation, and surveillance. He becomes both symbol and agent of imperial power. His relationships with women from colonised spaces—particularly Boonyi—reinforce Said's critique of Orientalist desire, where the "East" becomes an object of fascination and possession.

Shalimar's assassination of Ophuls is not merely personal revenge; it is allegorical. Through this act, the novel interrogates the global implications of political violence. The assassination disrupts the illusion of Western invulnerability and exposes the interconnectedness of global conflicts. It suggests that the consequences of colonialism and foreign policy cannot be contained within national borders.

In this framework, the United States is not the neutral arbiter of global order; it is an active participant in the perpetuation of violence. Rushdie critiques the post-9/11 narrative that situates the West as victim and the Muslim world as aggressor. Instead, he reveals how imperialism, Cold War politics, and contemporary geopolitical strategies contribute to radicalisation. The violence that begins in Kashmir eventually manifests in Los Angeles, illustrating that global injustices produce global consequences.

Moreover, Shalimar's presence in the United States highlights the failings of the global War on Terror. Despite heightened security, surveillance, and fear, the U.S. fails to recognise the complex histories that shape political violence. Rushdie's narrative thus cautions against simplistic understandings of terrorism and advocates for a deeper engagement with its historical and political roots.

Through this transnational movement, Shalimar the Clown asserts that violence is not restricted to militarised zones; it circulates through global networks of power. The novel reveals the interconnectedness of personal trauma, local conflict, and global politics, challenging readers to reconsider how terrorism is defined and understood in the modern world.

## V. CONCLUSION

Salman Rushdie's Shalimar the Clown offers one of the most compelling literary meditations on terrorism, identity, and postcolonial violence in the early twenty-first century. Published at a moment when global politics were rapidly transforming under the pressures of the War on Terror, the novel resists reductive narratives that frame terrorism as irrational fanaticism or civilisational clash. Instead, Rushdie situates radicalisation within a densely layered structure of historical trauma, colonial residue, cultural disintegration, and global geopolitical interventions. This article has argued that Shalimar's transformation from a gentle Kashmiri performer into an international assassin cannot be understood in isolation from the necropolitical conditions of Kashmir, the psychological impact of colonial violence, and the cultural fractures of the post-9/11 world.

By employing a comprehensive postcolonial theoretical framework—including Said's critique of Orientalism, Bhabha's concepts of hybridity and ambivalence, Fanon's theory of colonial violence, Spivak's analysis of subalternity, Mbembe's necropolitics, and Mufti's insights on Muslim modernity—this study demonstrates that Shalimar the Clown must be read not merely as a narrative of revenge but as a critique of global structures of domination. It reveals how personal grief becomes inseparable from collective trauma, how cultural identities are eroded by militarisation, and how global powers participate in cycles of violence that render individuals like Shalimar both victims and perpetrators.

Kashmir, as depicted in the novel, emerges as a quintessential postcolonial battleground—a space where sovereignty is contested, where memory and culture are under siege, and where death becomes a primary instrument of political control. The valley's transformation from a landscape of coexistence and performance into a militarised zone of surveillance and fear aligns with Mbembe's theory of necropolitics, where the state's power is enacted through its capacity to administer life and death. Shalimar's radicalisation must therefore be interpreted as a consequence of living under conditions where traditional social structures collapse and political agency is systematically denied.

The novel also interrogates the complexities of diaspora and hybrid identity in a globalised yet securitised world. Characters such as India/Kashmira embody the tensions that arise when cultural memory, racialised identity, and geopolitical violence intersect. Her struggle to reconcile her hybrid lineage reflects Bhabha's notion of the "third space," but it also exposes the vulnerabilities that hybrid subjects face in a world marked by Islamophobia, racialised suspicion, and political fragmentation. Rushdie uses the diasporic setting of Los Angeles not as a neutral backdrop but as a site where global conflicts converge—where the legacy of empire meets the emerging anxieties of the War on Terror.

The assassination of Max Ophuls stands as the novel's most potent symbol of transnational violence. It signifies the collapse of the illusion that Western nations exist outside the historical consequences of their imperial and geopolitical interventions. By locating the climax in the United States, Rushdie emphasises that global systems of oppression produce global repercussions. The violence that begins in Kashmir does not remain contained; it travels across continents, disrupts national borders, and challenges Western narratives of innocence and victimhood.

Ultimately, Shalimar the Clown implores readers to confront the uncomfortable truth that terrorism cannot be understood without addressing its historical, political, and emotional roots. Rushdie exposes the failures of a global order that seeks to combat terrorism without examining the deeper injustices that produce it. His narrative calls for a re-evaluation of the categories of "terrorist" and "victim," urging a move beyond binaries that obscure the structural violence inflicted by states, empires, and global capital.

This article contributes to existing scholarship by integrating a robust postcolonial theoretical foundation with close textual analysis. It demonstrates that the novel functions as a critique of

contemporary global politics, a meditation on cultural loss, and a profound exploration of the human psyche under conditions of extreme pressure. Through its examination of radicalisation, Kashmir, diaspora, and empire, this study positions Shalimar the Clown as a key text for understanding the shifting terrains of postcolonial identity and global violence in the twenty-first century.

Future research may deepen this inquiry by exploring comparative studies with other post-9/11 texts, examining gendered radicalisation, or analysing the novel's aesthetics of violence through trauma theory. Nevertheless, this study establishes that Rushdie's work remains crucial for scholars seeking to understand how literature can illuminate the complex entanglements of personal trauma and global politics. Shalimar the Clown stands not only as a narrative of tragedy but also as a critical intervention in postcolonial debates on sovereignty, identity, and justice.

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