

LANGUAGE IN INDIA

Strength for Today and Bright Hope for Tomorrow

Volume 12 : 8 August 2012

ISSN 1930-2940

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Postmodern Perspectives in Salman Rushdie's Select Novels

Fury and Shalimar, The Clown

G. Surya, M.A., B.Ed., M.Phil.



Courtesy: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salman_Rushdie

Understanding Modernism and Postmodernism

Postmodernism is a way of life, a way of feeling, and a state of mind. Those who live in modern orthodoxy will certainly feel disturbed and disillusioned by the 'existing state-of-the art'.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

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Postmodern Perspectives in Salman Rushdie's Select Novels *Fury and Shalimar, The Clown*

Postmodernism is also a broad term used to describe movements in a wide range of disciplines including literature, architecture, visual arts, philosophy, sociology, fiction, design, cultural and literary criticism and music. The term *postmodernism* is notoriously ambiguous, implying either that modernism has been superseded or that it has continued into a new phase in the domain of literature and other arts.

Postmodernism's relation to modernism is typically contradictory. It is neither a simple and radical break from it nor a straight forward continuity with it in aesthetical, philosophical and ideological terms. So, postmodernism is both a continuation of modernism's alienated mood and disorienting techniques and at the same time as an abandonment of its determined quest for artistic coherence in a fragment world : in very crude terms, where a modernist artist or writer terms, the fragmented experiences are expressed through myth, symbol and other figurative devices. Post modernism is used to describe a particular body of literature, written in the mid-fifties and after in America, British and Europe.

Postmodern Literature of India

Postmodern literature of India refers to the works of literature after 1980s. The term 'Post Modernism' seems to have little relevance to modern poetic and dramatic works and used widely in reference to fiction. Postmodern fiction overtly displays its conventions; it lays bare the illusion of reality and its artifice. It also foregrounds the problematic relationship between life, fiction and the very existence of reality. It poses the questions of how the people know or construct history and truth, reality and events. It represents the contemporary experience of the world as a construction, an artifice, a web of interdependent semiotic systems.

Characteristics of Postmodern Literature

Postmodernist fiction is generally marked by one or more of the following characteristics:

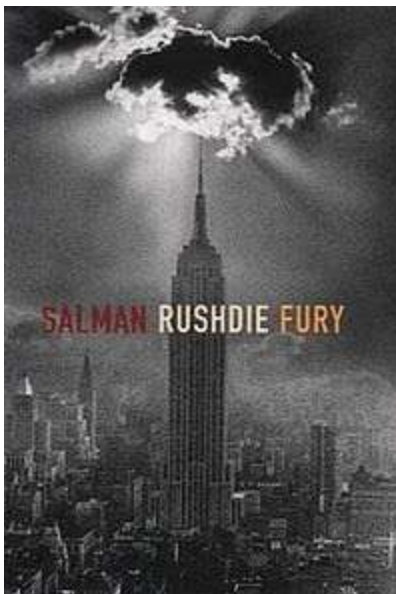
- Playfulness with language.
- Experimentation in the structure of fiction.
- Less reliance on traditional narrative form.

- Less reliance on traditional character development.
- Experimentation with the way time is conveyed in fiction.
- Mixture of ‘highart’ and popular culture.
- Interest in Metafiction, that is, fiction about the nature of fiction.

The hallmarks of the postmodernist fiction are self-reflexivity, metafiction, historiographic metafiction, parody, pastiche, intertextuality, magic realism etc., which are exhibited through a strange kind of narratology that manifests a violent rupturing or subversion of the existing narrative techniques. These terms will be discussed in the body of the present work in relation to Salman Rushdie’s works.

Salman Rushdie and His Works

Salman Rushdie is one of the best-known contemporary writers in the Postmodern English Literary world. His works carry a deep imprint of the complex socio-cultural scene of India as well as his passionate involvement with the history and the politics of India which has induced many critics to consider him as an Indian writer in English. In Salman Rushdie’s *Fury* and *Shalimar, the Clown* the postmodern perspectives have been identified.



The significance of Salman Rushdie's first American novel *Fury* lies in how effectively Rushdie depicts Newyork that has entered the twenty-first century at the height of its global economic success and cultural domination, but in which the consumerist, image-centric hyper reality of the postmodern era has infiltrated every aspect of urban life, intensifying the level of social antagonism inherent within it, hence the novel's title. The four main characters within the novel who all struggle with this antagonism, each fulfill certain roles within the cityscape of Newyork, becoming archetypes of particular social groups or modes of behavior that can be found within the contextualized real-world city.

The twice transplanted protagonist Professor Malik Solanka, a historian of ideas, is an unimaginably wealthy man, who gives up his esteemed seat in Philosophy at King's college, University of Cambridge, to develop a television program about the great philosophers using dolls as the main characters. The interviewer, a blonde female doll named Little Brain, travels through time to interview Spinoza, Galileo and others. Compelled to relinquish control of the doll when it metamorphoses into an industry, the furious Solanka flees London for an apartment on Manhattan's Upper West side, Newyork. It's not only the show-biz version of manifest destiny that brings him to the New world : one night in London he finds himself standing over the sleeping figures of his beloved wife Eleanor and three-year-old son Asmaan, frighteningly close to stabbing them. There's a fury within him, and he fears that he has become dangerous to those he loves. So he steps out of his life, abandons his family in London without a word of explanation, and flees for Newyork. He arrives in Newyork at a time of unprecedented plenty, in the highest hour of America's wealth and power, seeking to "erase" (F 44) himself. But fury is all around him. Cab drivers spout invective. A serial killer is murdering women with a lump of concrete. The petty spats and bone-deep resentments of the metropolis engulf him His own thoughts, emotions and desires, meanwhile, are also running wild.

During the novel, Solanka conducts three love affairs, one with his younger wife, Eleanor, the other with stunningly beautiful women Mila Milo and Neela who are young enough to be his daughters. Solanka is a magnet for gorgeous, articulate women, who all tend to speak in the same didactic monologues. Solanka himself tries to surmount his guilt over having

abandoned a loving wife and son in London and as he becomes involved with two new women. Solanka's appearance in New York set stage for all manner of adventures, most of which generate satire filled with cynicism about the people, politics and culture of Postmodern America.

Rushdie's brilliantly observant portrait of American psyche and contemporary scene is embedded in the novel *Fury*. Salman Rushdie's scalpel cuts sharply to expose the absurdities and tragedies of Postmodern-American life. The form of postmodernism that Rushdie employs in *Fury* is to portray the author – figure is caught in the maelstrom of the postmodern world. The more subtle connection between the way Solanka had earlier constructed his dolls and the way Rushdie used his experience of the fatwa to write this novel *Fury* is explained thus:

Solanka soon learned the value of working, like the great matador, closer to the bull; that is, using the material of his own life and immediate surroundings and, by the alchemy of art, making it strange. (F 16)

Just as Rushdie's novel *The Satanic Verses* took on a life of its own, after offending a large segment of the Muslim world, so Solanka's principal puppet, Little Brain offends the Vatican and is censored before being completely appropriated and commercialized by the media and corporate business. Boyd Tonkin in his "Rev. of *Fury* by Salman Rushdie" pointed to this parallel when he wrote:

... the fatwah advertised in bright red letters what every writer should grasp: that, in modern times, fiction may always seep out into the world of law and politics to 'grow monstrous', as *Fury* puts it. (7)

Since the publication of *The Satanic Verses* each of the novels Rushdie has written post-fatwa reflects some of the "inward silence" and "heaviness" (F 294), either in its narrative construction, or through the experiences of its fictional characters. In *Fury* Rushdie's solipsistic attempt to justify his own actions, is simply his "inward silence" being redirected outward, what the fictionalization of his own life experiences become in relation to that fictional world.

In her account of Rushdie's "Fiction after the Fatwa (2005)", Gonzalez emphasises how the fatwa altered Rushdie's own sense of subjectivity, as it became,

... a central primal trauma irrevocably making of Rushdie a thinker/writer after the fact, a position which colludes with the de-realization of the contemporary post world struggling to signify in its uncanny present, haunted by the spectres of a past familiarity which has now become strange. (20)

The collusion to which Gonzalez refers is particularly evident in *Fury* through the story of Little Brain, Solanka's principal creation that was, "first a doll, later a puppet, then an animated cartoon and afterwards an actress or a talk show host, gymnast, ballerina or supermodel" (F 96) and also "the only one of his creations with whom Solanka fell in love" (F 96). These many incarnations gave life, an identity and a distinct subjectivity to what had been a lifeless doll, a simulacrum within the world of the television programme in which she was to act as host and the "audience's surrogate" (F 17), as she travelled far and wide in her time machine to "goad the great minds of the ages into surprising revelations". (F 17)

Rushdie skillfully stages the rapid breakdown of the distinction between the world Solanka creates and the contemporary political conflict in Lilliput-Blefuscu. He incorporates everything happening to and around him into his narrative, "The Coming of the Puppet Kings", the next major creative project on which Solanka embarks, extends the parallel between Rushdie and Solanka's creative work even further by being a fictionalization of Solanka's own life and experiences. In this back story, Solanka creates a technologically advanced world on the brink of destruction, which would see "that highest of cultures... just then enjoying the richest and most prolonged golden age in its history" (F 161), be engulfed by the rising seas caused by that world's now severely melting polar ice caps. Solanka places Professor Akasz Kronos, "the great cynical cyberneticist of the Rijk" (F 161), into this apocalyptic setting and has him create the Puppet Kings, a race of Cyborgs that were meant to be the salvation of mankind, but

... on account of the flaw in Kronos' character that made him unable to consider the general good, he used them to guarantee nobody's survival or fortune but is own. (F 161)

Using his "Machiavellian daring and skill" (F 162), Kronos sets up his head-quarters on the mountainous island nation of Baburia by negotiating a lease from that nation's ruler, the Mogul. Kronos teaches his creations that they are "faster, stronger, smarter – 'better' " than their human, antipodeans hosts" (F 163), and gives each creation "its own sharply delineated personality" (F 164). But, as a direct result of Solanka's previous disillusionment with the outcome of Little Brain's story, he has Kronos include a Prime Directive in the Puppet Kings' programming, turning them into his slaves, "obliged to obey him, even to the point of acquiescing in their own destruction, should he deem that necessary" (F 163). The Prime Directive fails, and the Puppet kings ultimately turn their backs on their creator. Thus, there inevitably occurs a moment within this secondary narrative where the Mogul and Kronos debate the uncanny nature of life itself, whether all life is necessarily 'natural', or whether "life as brought into being by the imagination and the skill of the living" (Finney 288), can be said to be alive, and therefore, be awarded the same considerations in terms of human rights. This debate soon turns to argument, though, and "reminiscent of the fatwa issued against Rushdie, the Mogul threatens Kronos with death if he doesn't abandon his defence of the world of the imagination (Finney 288). Thus, seemingly forsaken by the very creations he seeks to defend, and in fear for his life, Kronos recants his position, something which Rushdie, however, never did, and this "was greeted by the religious Baburian people as a mighty victory" (F 189).

The reading of "The Puppet Kings" also highlights the fact that the civilisation of the Rijk is simply a fictionalised future America, The island nation of Baburia, and the subsequent political turmoil that takes place there as the puppet kings rise up and overthrow the Baburians, are also a simulation of events on the fictional islands of Lilliput – Blefuscu where, towards the latter part of the novel, the Indo-Lilliputians stage a military coup to oust the Indigenous Elbees. This is a simulation of the real-world coup that occurred in Fiji in May 2000. In *Fury*'s final chapters, Rushdie includes Solanka's decision to follow Neela to her native Lilliput – Blefuscu,

only to find every member of the island's militia donning masks of his own creations, the Puppet Kings, essentially enacting the very simulation on which that story was based. The irony is that, though Solanka's appearance is identical to that of Kronos, he is taken for an imposter of the man who is deemed by the islanders to be the 'real' Kronos: Babur, the leader of the military coup.

Once again, Solanka's fictional creations began to burst out of their cages and take to the streets" (F 225), making "the original, the man with no mask ... the imitator (F 238).

The story of "The Puppet kings", as well as the events on Lilliput – Blefuscu mirror not only life within the fictionalized world of the novel, but also that of the real world from which Rushdie has drawn inspiration. The use of masks is also linked to real-world politics and culture. While the play of masks on Lilliput – Blefuscu is far more elaborate, it is not one of concealment, but of transformation. Thus, through the interplay between simulations and real – world events, Rushdie illustrates how, "the rebellion in Lilliput – Blefuscu parallels the internal psychological rebellion witnessed in the novel's many representative Americans (Finney 287), specifically those, like Jack Rhinehart and Mila Milo, who use Newyork's urban constructs to mask their own subjective traumas. Thus Solanka's

... fictional creations, directly drawn from the political struggles of contemporary life, suffer not the fate of irrelevance or passing fashion, but rather dramatize the extent to which political life has a fictional, cultural valency, as political movements adopt styles dependent on cultural ideologies and the resources of the culture industries (Brouillette 149).

A retrospective analysis of *Fury* throws light on "commodity fetishism" and social "alienation" that Gonzalez identifies in Rushdie's fictionalized Newyork. This sentiment calls to mind the "national ideological cornerstone" (F 184) which is the American Dream. This Dream is particularly evident through Solanka's declarations that he had come to America, to Newyork, "to receive the benison of being Ellis – Islanded, of starting over" (F 51). Neela, an Indo-

Lilliputian also comes to Newyork, like everybody who needed, as a haven to spread their wings. Rather than experiencing the beneficence of the American Dream, all of Rushdie's primary characters are positioned within a corrupted city and the devouring culture for profit within the logic of late-capitalism. Solanka hopes to lose himself in the urbanity and 'Americanness' of Newyork, and in his pre occupation with the lives of others, because he liked the sense of being crowded out by other people's stories, of walking like a phantom through a city that was in the middle of a story which did not need him as a character.

Solanka is only failing himself and it is made explicit through his inability and unwillingness to blend into Newyork's cityscape. Instead of the "gold-hatted figure" that leads the "exemplary American life" (F 82), Solanka's "old-world, dandyish, cane – twirling figure in a straw Panama hat and cream linen suit" (F 4), cements him as a 'un-American' and thus as fundamentally 'other'. Even his British accent is commented by Mila who is aware of her own attempts to fit into the American urban life style, positions him outside of Newyork's frame of reference.

Solanka's behavior also often sets him apart from the crowd, because he cannot overcome the simmering disconnected anger that continued to seep and flow deep within him, threatening to rise up without warning in a mighty volcanic burst. As if it were its own master, he seems to be out of control for most of the novel, often unaware of his own actions, and this leads him to feel an increasing sense of despair about his own life. While Solanka is contemplating how his inferior knowledge about the workings of the contemporary world made of him a fool, he is unconsciously shouting out obscenities. Even after being told what he was doing and having to leave the cafe in which he was sitting at the time, he does not remember doing it, or at least refuses to acknowledge it, merely stating that there was no explanation for the waitress' extraordinary speech. These seeming lapses in self-awareness add fuel to the reader's suspicions and Solanka's own suspicions that he may very well be The Concrete Killer, who stalks the streets of Newyork at night, murdering three sorority girls, "Sky", "Ren" and "Bindy" (F 71), are all members of Newyork's elite, but ultimately, all are turned into trophies, living dolls, by the high-flying society in which they lived.

This fear is solidified through a newspaper headline Solanka later sees in Rhinehart's apartment, which reads "CONCERTE KILLER STRIKES AGAIN. And below, in smaller type: *Who was the Man in the Panama Hat?*" (F 63) Rushdie does not keep the readers in suspense for very long, though, for the unusual sightings of the Panama-hatted man are soon discredited by the police and this is dutifully broadcast to the public. Solanka's unique appearance has become mythologized within the cityscape, all but erasing his own presence in the city, turning him into that "phantom" he had so longed to become. The relevance of these serial murders does not end with Solanka. It also represents the apotheosis of postmodern urban life, in which the regard for humanity is replaced with an increasing indifference. This level of dehumanization is present throughout *Fury*, which becomes a "consensual tragedy" in postmodern subjects.

The "Consensual tragedy" is evident through the novel's other three main characters, Jack Rhinehart, Mila Milo and Neela Mahendra. Jack Rhinehart is shown through Solanka's narration to be severely disillusioned with the urban world in which he finds himself. Rhinehart's abandonment of his life as a war correspondent for a position as a celebrity-gossip journalist, and his obsessive compulsion to seduce wealthy white women, are merely the symptoms of a larger and more profound identity crisis. He had been seduced, and his desire to be accepted into the Whiteman's club was the dark secret from which his anger grew. That fury is seemingly embedded within Rhinehart's character and forcibly shifts his perceptions on the nature of human life. In conversation with Solanka, Rhinehart admits that "now that I'm writing about the billionaires in a coma or those moneyed kids who iced their parents" (F 56). The irony of this admission lies in Rhinehart's collusion with "Horse", "Stash" and "Club" in the murders of the three young women. Rhinehart's acceptance is centred on his attempts to become a part of it himself, for he is so desperate to prove that he is not just a "house nigger" (F 57), to be told "you made it man. You're in" (F 203), that he goes along with their murderous plans, ultimately unaware of the "truth of things", and thus oblivious to his fate: his death at their hands and their attempt to frame him for the murders.

A similar trajectory found in the plot of Mila Milo, an immigrant from central Europe, who submerges herself in the urban world of commodity fetishism become "a postmodern

vampire” (F 41), who was so “sure of her power, confident of her turf and posse’ fearing nothing” (F 4). Mila’s intrinsic connection to the city is made obvious through the epithetical transference of her “piercing green eyes” (F 41) to the city itself. Mila’s subjective power begins to change once she enters her sordid relationship with Solanka, and she becomes increasingly doll-like in her mannerisms and appearance. Mila’s transformation into Little Brain, her favorite childhood doll, is heralded through her realization that Solanka is Little Brain’s creator. Because it is then that both Mila and Solanka embark on a journey into the world of simulation, where they both became merely simulacra for the real objects of their respective desires: Solanka’s own fictional creation, Little Brain, and Mila’s deceased father.

Mila’s justification that “everybody needs a doll to play with” (F 131), make Solanka realizes that this role play is not simply an echo, but a reprise of the seduction of her own father. For Solanka was “by no means the first” of her victims (F 133). Solanka begins to think of her as,

... the spider-sorceress now caught in her own necrophiliac web, dependent on men like him to raise her lover very, very slowly from the dead. (F 133)

Each of these ‘versions’ of Mila-vampire, doll, spider-queen are the masks she chooses to hide behind, masks that were born out of her immersion into the postmodern urban world. But, Mila later lambastes Solanka for taking them too seriously. According to her, they were nothing more than play, “serious play, dangerous play, may be, but play”. (F 173)

Solanka’s lover Neela Mahendra’s image also becomes a matter of contention, which is another example of ‘serious play’ in the novel. While in Newyork, Neela’s beauty had quite a profound effect on those around her, and she could not walk down the street without men repeatedly falling over themselves or being brought to tears by her presence. Just as Solanka fails to become a part of the cityscape, so does Neela’s appearance affect her ability to function within the city? As a consequence, her relationship with Newyork is questioned, for even though she admits that the city had provided her with some means of escape from traumatic encounters with her “boozy father” (F 157), “her roots pulled at her, and she suffered badly from what she called

‘the guilt of relief’ (F 157). She had escaped her father by obtaining a scholarship to study in Newyork, but her mother and her sister had not, and so she still “remained passionately attached” to her family and “to her community’s cause” (F 157).

This passion is one of the elements which Solanka finds so enticing about Neela, for while he had moved to Newyork to escape a past he sought to forget. Neela had used her time in the city to prepare for a return to her past, become actively involved in political demonstrations held in Newyork in support of her fellow Indo-Lilliputians. But, the protests ultimately fail because they degenerate into violence, which Solanka takes as,

... evidence here in Newyork city of the force of a gathering fury on the far side of the world: a group fury, born of long injustice, beside which his own unpredictable temper was a thing of pathetic insignificance (F 193).

This gathering fury reaches its climax in Lilliput-Blefuscu, outside of the city, for Newyork had merely been a staging ground for its dramatic manifestation. Similarly, the climax of *Fury* is reached far from the constructs of the cityscape to which all of the novel’s energy has thus far been confined. For it is on Lilliput-Blefuscu that Neela’s image is fundamentally transformed; her role as the inspiration for Solanka’s primary ‘puppet queen’ forces her to substitute her natural beauty for its own imitation, as she hides behind a mask of herself in order to fit in. Her sacrificial death towards the end of the novel signals the death of that “serious play”, for “not even her beauty could affect the trajectory of the mortars” (F 254-55) that were aimed at the Parliament building in which she stayed behind to ensure the safety of Solanka and the other hostages.

The novel *Fury* fittingly ends when Solanka attempts to catch his son’s attention by bouncing higher and higher on a bouncy castle on Hampstead Heath. Rushdie’s final sentence places Solanka on a jumping castle, shrieking to his son,

Look at me, Asmaan!

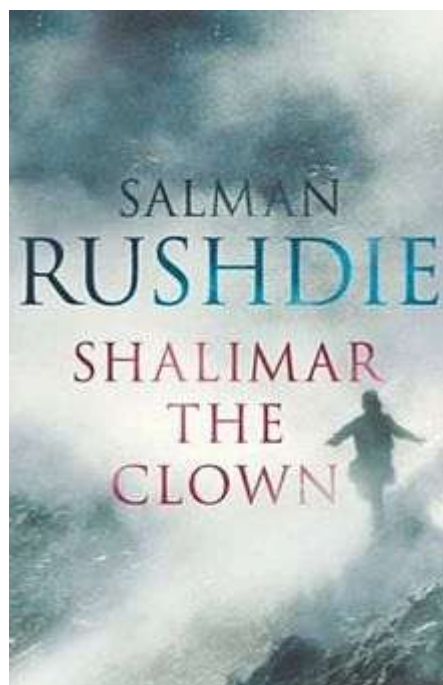
I’m bouncing very well!

I'm bouncing higher and higher! (F 259)

Solanka hanging in the air perpetually is suspended at the moment of his Zenith, anticipating what seems to be the inevitable outcome: our Fall. The significance of the novel is reflected through Solanka's own misusing about the consequences of failure in the postmodern world, and how one should not "contemplate what lay beyond failure while one was still trying to succeed" (F 82). The ending of *Fury* also speaks directly to the nature of urban life, and most particularly, of American life at the end of what has commonly been labeled "the American century".

The correlation between the idea that the twentieth century saw the rise of American cultural imperialism, epitomized through a series of monolithic urban constructions, particularly in Newyork, and the fact that the twentieth century was the most violent to date, is specifically portrayed within the novel *Fury*. The inevitable Fall is signaled by the novel's final words shifted from the realm of fiction and apocalyptic prophecy into the reality of the early twenty-first century, through the terrorist attacks of 9/11 and the literal fall of the World Trade Centre towers.

Thus, through the experiences of the four main characters, Rushdie provides insight into the relationships established between an individual and the urban environment which they inhabit. It is found in Solanka's inability to achieve the escape from his past he so desired, through Rhinehart's inability to distinguish between affection and affectation, in the guises that Mila adopts in her attempts to avoid her own crisis of identity, and in Neela's false hopes that the politicization of her life in Newyork would lead to the fulfilment of her goals and the salvation of her life outside the city. Thus, the novel *Fury* offers a unique perspective on Postmodern America and urban life within a moment of transition between the violence of the twentieth century and the violence of the twenty-first century which was initiated dramatically through the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001.



Shalimar, the Clown

Salman Rushdie's novel *Shalimar, the Clown* presents the story of the communalism of the disputed Indian province of Kashmir, since partition, through the experiences of a set of characters from the fictional village of Pachigam. Rushdie tends to make his characters local, symbolic equivalents for national and international dilemmas and tensions. Through them Rushdie tackles the subject of Kashmir and mirrors an earthly paradise lost to religious extremism and military brutality which has echoed around the world today.

The novel *Shalimar, the Clown* is a novel of love, betrayal, revenge and the agonizing struggle over the contested Himalayan region of Kashmir. Rushdie voices the concept of a borderless world and its implications. He makes a clear account of the wasteful and despoiling struggle over the valley of Kashmir, combined with an impressionistic depiction of Islamist Jihadis terrorism. There is also a second plotline - a love story, a generational drama and tale of passion, adultery and revenge woven in with the larger story of Kashmir. It is a deeply personal novel that evokes the Kashmir that was the homeland of Rushdie's grandparents, Dr. Abdullah alias Babajan and Amir Unnissa Butt alias Ammaji, to whom the book is dedicated. The novel

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presents the story of the communalization of the disputed Indian province of Kashmir since partition, through the experiences of a set of characters from the fictional village of Pachigam. The main characters of the novel include Maximilian Ophuls, Boonyi Kaul, Shalimar, the clown, Pandit Pyarelal Kaul, Pamposh Kaul, Abdullah Noman, Firdaus Noman, Kashmiri, Colonel Kachhwaha and Maulana Bulbul Fakh.

The novel is an ode to the simple, idyllic life of the valley, the land of Rushdie's roots, a land of eternal beauty and charm, that, "... was lost...like paradise, ...Kashmir, in a time before memory" (STC 4). Portrayed as the ideal world with its unique way of life, its 'Kashmiriyat', where differences and divisions were non-existent; a world untouched by hatred and communalism. Peace, love and brotherhood characterize the Kashmiri way of life. It is a life and world of innocence that is betrayed by its own people, and slowly walks down the path to destruction as embodied in the life of Shalimar, the protagonist and his village, Pachigam. Not only Shalimar, but also the other main characters of the novel are highly symbolical, for Rushdie believes that history and the individual, "... interpenetrate and that is how the writer needs to examine them, the one in the context of the other".(qtd. in Gordon Wise 57)

Pachigam, a small village in Kashmir situated in the serene surroundings besides the river Muskadoon, is a quiet, peaceful village. Happy and contented, the people in the village live their lives in blissful oblivion only to wake up to the harsh realities of life when insurgency first reared its ugly head in the valley in the form of Kabalis from Pakistan. The seed of distrust and hatred sown by the fundamentalists and extremists, the by-products of a savage and cruel dissection of the nation, gradually take enormous forms and engulfs the whole valley in its fire. Partition of the nation did not only carve out two nations out of one but it also created a sharp division between two communities. Geographical as well as psychological partition took place, the echo of which still reverberates in the minds and hearts of two nations and two communities.

The drastic transition from innocence to betrayal has been represented by the author through the character of Shalimar, the Clown. Son of the village headman, Shalimar is a sweet innocent boy, "clown prince of the performing troupe" (STC 50); a young boy madly in love with Pandit Kaul's daughter, Bhoomi or Boonyi as she prefers to be called. Shalimar and

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Boonyi's love blooms in the beautiful and pristine environs of the Kashmir valley hidden from the eyes of their elders. When people find out, they uphold the values of 'Kashmiriyat' and bless the young couple. But Boonyi is far from happy. Claustrophobia grips her, and she realizes rather too late that she wants to escape. "She knew then that she would do anything to get out of Pachigam..." (STC 114) The free unbridled spirit inherited from her mother coupled with her youthfulness ill-marks the love story of Shalimar and Boonyi, giving it a tragic turn.

Increasing influence of alien presence on the Kashmiri landscape slowly starts corroding and degrading the values of the valley, the 'Kashmiriyat'. This influence can be seen in the radical preaching's of Bulbul Fakh, the 'iron mullah'; and in the arrival of Maximilian Ophuls on the scene, the representative American presence in the valley. And thus unfolds the tragic events of the tale.

... the story of Max and Boonyi's doomed relationship which can be read as a study in human vanity, selfishness and aggressive mutual need, but also as a parable of the carelessness of American intervention on the subcontinent. Beware the return of the repressed; Rushdie seems to be saying, in often unexpected and violent forms. (Cowley 27)

Mesmerized by Boonyi's beauty, Max arranges for Boonyi and her friends to give a dance performance in Delhi. The performance is only a pretext for Ophuls to get close to Boonyi. Boonyi had been waiting for this opportunity only. Boonyi enters into a relationship with Max in the hope of a better life. As for her heart, she feels that she was, "... tearing it out and breaking it into little bits and throwing it away ..." (STC 194). Though she thought that by her action she had gained release from the village existence that she so detested, yet the stirrings of her heart never let her escape the Kashmir embedded in her very being, her soul. She could not tear out memories of her valley, and her husband who still loved her. As is customary with such superficial relationships the attraction started waning. Boonyi became increasingly alienated and depressed in her "liberated captivity" (STC 201), finding solace in

drugs and food. Her desire to excel herself was but a fantasy lived in the shadow of the glamour and glitter of elite society, which was bound to shatter hopelessly one day.

Boonyi was but a simple, naive village girl with big dreams in her eyes that were terribly misdirected. The path she chose for herself, sooner or later had to lead only to one destination, and that was imminent disaster for its traveler. Boonyi's disastrous flirtation with desire led to an avalanche of catastrophe not only in her life but also in the lives of the people related to her. She loses her identity and tumbles down the path of complete psychotic degeneration, waiting alone in the wilderness for death to truly free her. In the character of Boonyi the readers find the eagerness for liberation, lured by which she symbolizes Kashmir, loses herself courting ruination as a result. The innocence of life in the valley gradually transgresses the boundaries of that innocence and simplicity in the name of false hopes and dreams, and is ultimately betrayed in the process. Betrayal leads to a loss, a loss of identity and hopes, leading to a metamorphosis of life and characters. "Self-creation in times of conflict, one of Rushdie's themes ..." (Roth 19) is represented through all the main characters undergo and grow as per the changes in circumstances. "Metamorphosis was the secret heart of life" (STC 56), but the metamorphosis that occurs in the novel almost but extinguishes the very life, giving place to death instead.

Shalimar, Boonyi's husband represents this metamorphosis from innocence to betrayal in his transformation from an innocent village boy, an artist into a hardcore killing machine. The transformation is thus:

He was as dynamically physical a comedian as ever, but there was a new ferocity in him that could easily frighten people instead of making them laugh. (STC 231)

Leaving his life and family, Shalimar joins the extremists pretending to believe in their cause, but all the while preparing himself for the ultimate aim of his life, to kill Maximilian Ophuls. Listening to the Iron Mullah, he realizes that:

By crossing the mountains they had passed through a curtain and stood now on the threshold of the world of truth, which was invisible to most men. (STC 266)

The 'curtain' is an important symbol that hides as well as separates. A symbol often used as a metaphor for 'Trans-culturalism', it is a boundary that separates two worlds or cultures; and here the curtain separates the innocent, beautiful, multicultural and hybrid world of old Kashmir from the violent, betrayed and divided world of the new terror stricken Kashmir. It divides the actual truth from the illusion of misguided ideology.

The fight for a religious cause just provides a platform for Shalimar to cross over to the other side, to reach his target in America and eliminate him. Like the crusades that were undertaken in by-gone times, the recent fight is also for power and possession. The author here tries to unearth the hypocrisy of war and bloodshed behind every fight, because violence begets violence. Life can be shaped out of love not violence, irrespective of any kind of faith or religious beliefs. Here Rushdie is again reinstating the bare truth of modern life wherein, it is the furies that are ruling men and life everywhere, and so he expresses, "An age of fury was dawning and only the enraged could shape it" (STC 272). Every nook and corner of the world is under the grip of the furies, reasons may differ, but the reactions are always one of rage and disaster, be it in Kashmir or in New York, for now, "Everyone's story was a part of everyone else's" (STC 269).

The story that began in a small remote village of Kashmir progresses to cross half the globe to reach to its climax in America. The American presence is the catalyst that escalates this dance of the furies across the globe. Max represents this presence for he is not only a goodwill Ambassador but also has a secret identity as well, of being involved in the exchange of weapons between America and extremist groups. Shalimar is the resultant fury in this case. The degeneration of Boonyi from her pinnacle of beauty to a psychotic figure in the woods does not evoke any sympathy or cool down the embers of rage in Shalimar's heart. Knowledge of the Ambassador's secret dealings and his views on Kashmir fuels his rage further and gives

new life to his ambition. After killing Boonyi ruthlessly in cold blood, he becomes free to pursue his final target.

The journey from innocence to betrayal reaches its final stages through the pathway of complete destruction. Pachigam ceases to exist. Charged with harboring extremists, the village bears the full brunt of the atrocities of the armed forces. Everyone is killed, people and life is totally obliterated from the place where love had once bloomed and blossomed.

The village of Pachigam still existed on maps of Kashmir, but that day it ceased to exist anywhere else, except in memory” (STC 309)

The furies thus, find a new home in the action of the armed forces meant for protection of people. Rushdie here indicates the pathetic situation of the people of Kashmir who have to bear the atrocities of both the terrorists as well as the forces. It is not only fundamentalism or extremism, which proves to be detrimental for life and country; nationalism can also endanger life and freedom when taken in the stringent sense concerning itself only with selfish aim of possession and power. Bound in these twin chains, an individual lose all, identity, liberty and life. The fury unleashed by their combined powers creates only havoc and destruction wherever they exist. And these furies find another abode in the heart of India or Kashmira.

Shalimar after finally reaching America moves closer to his target by getting employed as Ophuls’s driver. The knife in his hand that had long been thirsty for revenge ultimately finds its target when Shalimar kills Maximilian Ophuls at the doorstep of his daughter. India is also Kashmira, the daughter of Boonyi and Max. Her existence gives a new twist to the revenge tale of Shalimar, for her presence makes his revenge incomplete, for early in the story Shalimar had vowed that if Boonyi ever betrayed him, he would not only kill her and her lover but also the child if any from the relationship.

The death of her father leaves India shocked and furious:

Blood called out for blood and she wanted the ancient Furies to descend shrieking from the sky and give her father's unquiet spirit peace. (STC 331)

Like her mother who left home and family for the sake of a false and borrowed identity, India leaves for Kashmir in quest of her true identity. She returns not as India but as Kashmira:

Kashmir lingered in her, however, and his arrest in America, his disappearance beneath the alien cadences of American speech, created turbulence in her that she did not at first identify as culture shock. She no longer saw this as an American story. It was a Kashmiri story. It was hers. (STC 372)

To avenge the death of her mother and father, Kashmira targets Shalimar not with arrows or knives but with her letters that were her "arrows of hate" (STC 374). She slowly kills Shalimar's ego, which is the real cause of her parents' death. Yet his hurt ego fails to find satisfaction in their death because his efforts to obliterate their presence are negated by Kashmira, a living reminder of both Boonyi and Max.

Hatred can never extinguish the Life Force. It lives on in the hearts of people, like it does in Kashmira. Kashmira embodies the emergence of a new beginning from the chaos and turmoil of betrayal to the arrival of a bright new dawn, full of hope and regeneration. Her presence is an indication by the author that Kashmir will not be lost; it will emerge from the darkness into the light of true freedom and hope for its entire people, a new life. Kashmira symbolizes this new beginning in her realization and acceptance of her true identity, in her love for Yuvraj, and ultimately in her emerging victorious by executing the hatred and violence of Shalimar. She was no longer a prisoner of fury when she lets her arrow find its mark. "She was not fire but ice" (STC 382). She had already killed Shalimar with the glimpse of truth, and the one she kills with her arrow at the end of the novel is but a shadow of that man.

... grappling imaginatively with the shock of 9/11 and the wars that have followed (Cowley 17),

Rushdie's Focus on the Recent History

Rushdie has portrayed the recent tragic history of Kashmir with poignancy and sensitivity in the novel. In the story of his characters is intertwined the story of Kashmir, its life and culture, and the degeneration of this Paradise. Making the 'personal bleed into the political', Rushdie has once again voiced his concern for the modern world at large and Kashmir in particular, lamenting the loss of love, innocence and brotherhood. The novel *Shalimar, the Clown* looks forward to several beginnings: reflecting on what has been lost in Kashmir; it also looks forward to a time when the words Muslim and Hindu will once more be merely "descriptions" rather than "divisions". (Cowley 27)

The novel is not only an odyssey from innocence to betrayal but also an affirmation and belief on the resilience and strength of the human spirit, a belief in the future. Truly a trilogy of innocence, betrayal and new beginning, *Shalimar, the Clown* is a story portraying the life cycle of death in life and life in death, a perpetual cycle of birth, destruction and regeneration. It represents a new life, a new beginning with the dissolution of all divisions and segments. Now,

There was no India. There was only Kashmira, and Shalimar the clown. (STC 398)

Thus, in the novel *Shalimar, the Clown* Rushdie's critique of fundamentalism and his mourning for its casualties are most effective in the beautifully narrated sections on the transformation of Kashmir. When Rushdie depicts Kashmir's transformation from the poly-vocal and diverse community that orients itself around Kashmiriyat to a ruin of wasted lives, he shows the readers the fragility of social bonds and culture in the face of willful ignorance and violence. The terror, the feeling of fury at the waste of life, and the dread that fill the sections on the destruction of Kashmiri society are depicted with a depth that evokes the same emotions in the reader.

Postmodern Features of Salman Rushdie's Fiction

Salman Rushdie's fiction is described as postmodern, precisely because it questions realist modes of knowledge and representation. Rather, by focusing on Rushdie's use of formal literary devices such as unreliable narration, digression, irony, repetition, satire, allegory and intertextuality, this chapter considers how Rushdie's novel *Shalimar, the Clown* questions about the historical, social and political worlds it presents.

Salman Rushdie's handling of narrative techniques in the select novels *Fury* and *Shalimar, the Clown* appear to be concerned with politics. The novels have passages of explicitly political narrative. His narrative technique is most intimately based on realizing the world of political and domestic history in a moment of postmodernist practice. Rushdie's use of postmodern devices in his novels reveals the originality of his insight and awareness of the human predicament in the postmodern age. Intertextuality, allusions, magical realism, parody and pastiche and the unveiling of layers and layers of meaning have all become a narrative mode of his novel. Salman Rushdie's impressive artistic ability forces any reader to enjoy his novels. Thus Salman Rushdie's novels *Fury* and *Shalimar, the Clown* bring into perspective the role that the political events play in the growth and relationships of individuals with self, family, society and the nation. His mingling of fact and fiction reveals a sense of history and a firm grasp of politico-cultural and historical materials and proves his genuine artistic creativity.

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12 : 8 August 2012

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