

**INTERPLAY OF 'LOVE' AND 'ANTI-LOVE' IN SALMAN RUSHDIE'S  
*SHALIMAR THE CLOWN***

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**ABSTRACT:** *The lines - "They killed you," Zoon Misri told Boonyi ... "They killed you because they loved you and you were gone." (SC 235) – epitomize the interplay of love and anti-love in Salman Rushdie's Shalimar the Clown. This paper aims to study how this unique interplay falls in line with Hillis. J. Miller's concept about polar opposites. The love between Boonyi and Shalimar in this novel, like a membrane, 'divides inside from outside' into constructive and destructive forces and yet joins in 'a hymeneal bond' and allows 'an osmotic mixing', making love constructive, love destructive, love hatred, love revenge, love joy, love humiliation, love pain, love violence, love pleasure, love suffering, love source of life, love death and so on. This paper analyses how this queer juggling of love and anti-love catches up with that of Miller's explanation about the logic of the 'para' (Miller 443).*

**KEYWORDS:** Love, Anti-Love, An Osmotic Mixing, Uncanny Antithetical Relation

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## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Interplay of 'Love' and 'Anti-love' in Salman Rushdie's *Shalimar the Clown***

Is love desire? Is love pleasure? Is it ambition? Is it power? Absolutely no! It is pure sensitivity – being sensitive to the other without getting caught in the shenanigans of ego. When love is entangled in the grip of ego, one thinks about his/her wants and the conflict with the other begins, and this disrupts the sense of belonging. When the sense of belonging is disturbed, love turns into anti-love. In anti-love, love becomes destructive, turning down its natural constructive features. Is anti-love hatred then? Not exactly. Unlike hatred, anti-love keeps the connecting bond as alive and active as it is seen in true love. Hatred, on the other hand, being destructive as anti-love is, ruptures the connecting bond absolutely. Salman Rushdie very obviously exemplifies these operations of love and anti-love in his novel, *Shalimar the Clown*. Boonyi, the protagonist as a teenage girl, is portrayed as an object of love with all exuberant features. All shower abundant love on her without being sensitive to what she needs, and when she crosses the authenticated frontiers to grab what she aspires for, all her near and dear ones turn against her. She, thus, becomes an object of anti-love. This paper aims to depict this interplay of love and anti-love and analyse it under the limelight of Hillis. J. Miller's theory.

The lines - "They killed you," Zoon Misri told Boonyi ... "They killed you because they loved you and you were gone." (SC 235) – epitomize the interplay of love and anti-love in this novel. This paper aims to study how this unique interplay falls in line with Miller's concept about polar opposites:

The uncanny antithetical relation exists not only between pairs of words in this system,... but within each word in itself. It reforms itself in each polar opposite when that opposite is separated out, and it subverts or nullifies the apparently

the unequivocal relation of polarity which seems the conceptual scheme appropriate for thinking through the system. (443)

Rushdie, in this novel, shows how love is antithetical in its function and demonstrates that love too, is one such word which cannot acquire its real meaning without its counterpart 'anti-love'. The hostile environment of hatred, war, violence and disharmony is prophesied by Nazarebaddoor in which Boonyi and Shalimar fall in love, head over heels. Their love germinates in the context of hatred and violence. Rushdie meticulously takes the readers to the spot where Shalimar and Boonyi fall in love beneath the 'unbroken' sky of Kashmir, bathing relentlessly in the clarity of mountain sunlight on the refreshing banks of the 'talkative' little river, the Muskadoon whose water is sweet and freezing cold as it tumbles down from the high eternal snows. A glimpse of the darker and sadder side of their love bond is flashed momentarily in the clear blue sky of joy when Rushdie links, rather sarcastically, the shadow planets and the origins of love in Noman Sher Noman or Shalimar the Clown:

Until he found out about the shadow planets Noman Sher Noman had never understood how to think about love, how to give names to its effects of moral illumination and tidal fluctuation and gravitational pull. The moment he heard about the cloven dragon many things became clear. Love and hate were shadow planets too, noncorporeal but out there, pulling at his heart and soul. (SC 46)

At the age of fourteen, a time of their glory, Boonyi and Shalimar discover that they had been in love for their whole lives. Boonyi looked 'like a poem'(SC 100), was 'thunder and music' (SC 101) and was valued as 'inestimable treasure'(SC 51), 'a garden of earthly delights'(SC 193) and 'pearl of great price'(SC 51). Her dance was 'all perfume and the look of her was emerald' (SC 101). Even her contempt smelt 'like spring rain' (SC 101) and her voice showered 'like silver' (SC 101). Boonyi, with her girl friends Himal, Gonwati and Zoon, is compared to 'Radha with the milky gopis' (SC 100). On the other hand, Shalimar had taken his professional name, Noman Sher Noman after the expiration of apprenticeship, setting Noman the child aside to be his 'new adult self' (SC 46). He is shown with dreams, filled to the brim, to make his father feel proud of him. He is his father's 'lucky charm' and 'magic talisman' (SC 58) which makes Abdullah Noman say, "With you beside me I am invincible." (SC 58) Thus, Rushdie makes Boonyi and Shalimar fall in love in an atmosphere which is totally, seemingly devoid of hatred, love's counterpart, but the possibility of love cleaving apart into a constructive as well as a destructive force is faintly drawn by Rushdie on the fluid surface of Shalimar-Boonyi love-story, with the lightest shades possible, and as such, the possibility of love turning into a destructive force flickers for a moment before the readers to disappear immediately like dreamy fumes. This is done when Rushdie gently and ambiguously equates love to grabbing: "She was the earth and the earth was the subject and he had grabbed it and sought to bend its destiny to his will." (SC 47) In another occasion, before they both make love for the first time, Rushdie compares Shalimar's anticipations with a brief glimpse of Shalimar's predicament in prison, which is to follow towards the end. His great expectations – "My father's love was the first phase ...It carried me as far as the treetops. But now it's your love I need. That's what will let me fly." (SC 58) – are contrasted with a glimpse of his shattered aspirations which are destined to overpower him later:

"He gave me his same leonine middle name," Shalimar the assassin wrote many years later, "but I do not deserve to bear it. My life was going to be one thing but death turned it into another. The bright sky vanished for me and a dark

passage opened. Now I am made of darkness, but a lion is made of light.” He wrote this ...Then he tore the paper to bits. (SC 60)

Here, the reader gets a clear indication that this titanic pair is destined to meet a titanic fall. Instead of discussing anything more about their fall, Rushdie shifts the attention of the readers to witness their union, where only love reigns in the deceptive absence of its counterpart.

As said by Miller about binary opposites, the subdivision of love and anti-love and their revelation, as if they are fissured already within themselves, can be felt in Booyi-Shalimar relationship. Rushdie reveals the uncanny antithetical relation of love and anti-love as fissured within each one of them. The love between Shalimar the Clown and Boonyi, so far expressed through ‘the silent careful language of forbidden desire’ (SC 47), in the deceptive absence of its counterpart, anti-love, takes the shape of a debate, as it subdivides into desire and restraint: “The shadow dragon were fighting over him, Rahu the exaggerator and Ketu the blocker battling for mastery of his heart.” (SC 60) But, Boonyi’s interpretation of life gives the story a different direction and the desire takes over them, finally in the meadow of Khelmarg. The inner confrontation of and debate between desire and restraint (subdivisions of love) in Boonyi result in the triumph of desire:

It was better to be done with magic lines and to confront your destiny. Lines in the dirt were all very well but they only delayed matters. What had to happen should be allowed to happen or it could never be overcome. (SC 50)

Their consummated love, after the desire’s dragon head had won over them, subdivides into love as a constructive force (resembles love itself) and a destructive force (resembles anti-love itself). Anti-love becomes apparent in Shalimar’s resolute declaration, almost resounding like an oath, after their first act of love-making: “Don’t leave me,” he said rolling over onto his back and panting for joy. “Don’t you leave me now, or I’ll never forgive you, and I’ll have my revenge, I’ll kill you and if you have any children by another man I’ll kill the children also.” (SC 61)

In Shalimar’s case, love remains constructive as long as Boonyi is in his custody. When Boonyi leaves Shalimar to join Max, love as a destructive force takes charge. This further subdivides into parasitical love and anti-love, echoing Miller’s theory of binary opposites: “... each “single element”, far from being unequivocally what it is, subdivides within itself to recapitulate the relation of parasite and host of which, on the larger scale, it appears to be one or the other pole.” (Miller 444) This subdivision is apparent in his eyes when Boonyi returns from Max’s custody. His look has hatred and contempt mingled with grief, hurt and ‘a terrible, broken love’ (SC 222) and ‘something else, something she didn’t understand’ (SC 222). This something else had already provoked him to leave Pachigam to kill Boonyi which is temporarily put off by his brothers’ convincing words. He ceases to love her, but is unable to throw her out, still hating her for deserting him. When they fall in love, they see each other with their eyes closed, touch each other without making physical contact, hear one other without a word spoken aloud: “... each would always know what the other was doing and feeling.” (SC 258) This channel of communication remains open throughout even when their love turns into anti-love:

A channel of communication had been opened then, and though their love had died the channel was still functioning, held open now by a kind of anti-love a force fuelled by strong emotions that were love’s dark opposite: her fear, his

wrath, their belief that their story was not over, that they were each other's destiny, and that they both knew how it would end. (SC 258)

Even when he is miles apart from her, he greets her every night. His hatred for Boonyi, caused by her infidelity, further subdivides into pangs of love and revenge. His heart burns with revenge and fury, but he is unable to get away from her either: "*There you are*, he greeted her every night. *You can't get away from me.*" (SC 258) Revenge takes the shape of beastly acts as he joins the terrorists group in Pakistan, but he continues his telepathic conversation with her:

But he couldn't get away from her either. He spoke to her silently as if she were lying by his side, as if his knife were at her throat and he were confessing his secrets to her before she took them to her grave, he told her everything, about the finance committee, the billeting, the impotence, the fear. It turned out that hatred and love were not so very far apart. The levels of intimacy were the same. (SC 258-59)

The murderous fury of Shalimar, his possession by the devil, burns fiercely in him and carries him forward to murder Max and Boonyi, but his bond with Boonyi remains constant and unbreakable as he sheds tears after killing Boonyi. The tears he sheds after killing them is a clear indication that love and anti-love are absurdly fissured within him. The bond is kept alive which becomes obvious when he sheds tears while confronting Kashmira, daughter of Max and Boonyi. Kashmira's voice and emerald eyes remind and rekindle the love he had for Boonyi: "He wanted to reach out to her. He didn't know what he wanted. She let her hair down and there were tears in his eyes... she was the same and not the same, but she was still alive." (SC 323) But, soon he is reminded of his oath which suppresses the capacity to love in him: "How beautiful she was. He would love her if he still knew how to love. But he had forgotten the way. All he knew now was slaughter. *I'll kill the children too.*" (SC 323) Here, Shalimar's unbreakable bond with Boonyi further subdivides into hatred and admiration for Kashmira, the bond connecting him with Boonyi further intensified, but benumbed. Though he hates Kashmira and sets her as his final target of revenge, the channel of communication which was always open between him and Boonyi, is once again re-established between him and Kashmira: "He had found her mother in her and now that mother within was hearing his silent demented scream." (SC 340) It is through this channel of communication, Kashmira is able to sense his distorted mind, haunted by contradictory forces of love and anti-love in varied hues: "... his voice, she felt, was a disembodied non verbal transmission of static and internal dissension, tinged with hatred and shame, repentance and threat, curses and tears like a werewolf howling at the moon." (SC 340) Through this telepathic channel, extended to her from her mother, she is able to sense his inner contradictions which are nothing but the subdivisions of his true and deep love for Boonyi: "He had no answers for her. He was in inchoate, contradictory, storm clouded. He was a hunted animal living in a ravine, like a coyote, like a dog. He was starving and thirsty. He was venom and blood." (SC 341)

Shalimar's hatred for Kashmira further divides into revenge and his bond with Boonyi becomes as hard as frost in him. His revengeful attitude makes him proceed towards Kashmira to kill her, his love bond with Boonyi becoming totally benumbed at this stage. Shalimar's hatred and revengeful acts are put off, finally, when Kashmira kills him with her golden bow and Kashmira- Yuvraj love affair is set free to bloom in its natural form. The pure love of Shalimar (in the superficial absence of hatred) passes through various subdivisions of its own self within itself, allowing osmotic mixings and hymeneal bondings among themselves which finds proof in Shalimar's final letter to Kashmira on her thirtieth birthday, putting the past into the present

tense : “*Everything I am your mother makes me, the letter began. Every blow I suffer your father deals.*”(SC 392)

In Boonyi's case, Miller's theory takes a different shape. At the age of fourteen, she is described as 'thunder and music' put together. The 'music' in her makes her fall in love with Shalimar, when anti-love, love's counterpart is totally deceptively absent:

Now all his thoughts were coiling around this girl, Boonyi, to whom he planned to bring good luck for all the days of their lives. The words *Hindu* and *Muslim* had no place in their story... In the valley these words were merely descriptions, not divisions. The frontiers between the words, their hard edges, had grown smudged and blurred...This was Kashmir. (SC 57)

Boonyi loves Shalimar because she finds him to be the 'most beautiful boy', handsome, funny in his clowning, pure in his singing, graceful in dancing and gravity-free on the high rope and wonderfully gentle by nature:

“This was no warrior demon! He was sweet Noman... She loved him because his choice of name was his way of honouring her deceased mother as well as celebrating the unbreakable connection of their birth. She loved him because he would not – he could not!- hurt any living soul. How could he cause her harm when he would not harm a fly?” (SC 50)

In the illusory absence of its counterpart, her love for Shalimar subdivides into Platonic love and desire, forming another pair of binary opposites. The 'music' in Boonyi blinds her even when Shalimar declares to take revenge if she happened to leave him in future: “What a romantic you are,” she replied carelessly. “You say the sweetest things.” (SC 61)

When separated from Platonic love, the desire takes over her, which is fuelled by her dead mother's vision of the 'unshackled future' (SC 53) and 'vision of freedom' (SC 53) which she could not enter in her life time. The words of her dead mother's ghost, calling itself the dream of the mother, embolden Boonyi to cross the 'powerful line' (SC 50): “A woman can make every choice she pleases just because it pleases her, and pleasing a man comes a poor second, a long way behind,” she said. “Also, if a woman's heart is true then what the world thinks doesn't matter one jot.” (SC 53) This dream of Pamposh could not be accomplished by Boonyi in her life time but it is passed over to Kashmira and the unshackled future that shone in the horizon like a promised land becomes a reality in Kashmira-Yuvraj love song: “That's because in this relationship I'm the guy,” she told him sweetly, “and you, my dear, are the girl.” (SC 392) Their intercontinental love affair did not get affected by this remark, but, they were for the most part content with each other.

When desire takes over love in the case of Boonyi and Shalimar, they both are locked in the wedlock arranged by their parents and villagers. As such, she finds herself arrested in the captivity of love, to which freedom of betrayal is the counterpart. The 'thunder' in Boonyi tempts her to escape before her wedding with Shalimar. While the wedding arrangements are going on, she sits wide awake, staring furiously at the ceiling, wishing the walls of the house to dissolve so that she could escape. The marriage seems to her 'a lifetime jail sentence'(SC 114) as she is overwhelmed by claustrophobia. Besides her deep love for Shalimar, her married life, village life, life with her father chattering away by the Muskadoon and with her friends dancing their gopi dance, life with all the people in Pachigam, she was longing for something: “ ... life with all the people amongst whom she had spent... was not remotely enough for her,

didn't begin to satisfy her hunger, her ravenous longing for something she could not yet name..” (SC 114) She longs for a fairy, a ‘djinni’ or a piece of once-in-a lifetime luck so that 'she would move faster than fortune' (SC 114), *'away from this slow death and slower life, away from Shalimar the clown'* (SC 115).

Boonyi's adventurous and ambitious streak combined with her love for freedom, inherited from her mother, makes her reject this captivity and she finds, later on, torn apart between binary opposites - whether to remain faithful to Shalimar and rejoice captivity or to betray him to join Max and celebrate freedom. She chooses the latter, willingly in accordance with her inner free spirit, and her choice of freedom has further subdivisions, too - captivity in freedom and freedom in captivity. There is irony in this, because Boonyi's daring is the single quality Shalimar admires the most. He had fallen in love with her as she was rarely afraid, she reached out for what she wanted and grabbed it and didn't see why it should elude her grasp. This same quality of Boonyi crashes and smashes them down to bits and Shalimar notices this, long back, that the loss of her virginity had given birth to something reckless in her, which he equates with a kind of 'wild defiant uncaringness' (SC 93) and 'a sudden exhibitionism' (SC 93) leading towards folly. Yes, he was right in foreseeing her recklessness as Boonyi casually bids good-bye to him while boarding the bus to Delhi to join Max: “... she knew it was an ending. He understood nothing, did not foresee the breaking of his heart.” (SC 190) His true and intense love blinds him completely to suspect her and her traitorous soul. The reason why Boonyi leaves him is that she knew his love, though true, would lead 'her nowhere, would change nothing, would not take her where it was her destiny to go' (SC 190). Boonyi had always given him her best and he always felt lit up and in return. Boonyi never received anything best which she thought she deserved. In fact, Shalimar had never made an attempt to know what she wanted, but in Max's case, he knew what she wanted and Max offered them in abundance, though for a short span of time. True love and loving truly is not adequate to keep the love alive, fresh and eternal, but knowing to love, mastering the art of receiving and reciprocating love and leading the loved one to reach his/her destination are the true hallmarks of true love, in which Shalimar miserably fails. Shalimar, in the love-story, plays the passive role of a grabber and Boonyi remains the ‘grabbee’, and this causes an irreparable crack in their relationship: “She gave him her best, brightest smile and he lit up in return, as always. This was how she would remember him, his beauty illumined by love.” (SC 190)

In Max-Boonyi relationship, a very crude artificiality creeps in as their relationship does not start with love, as it happens in Shalimar-Boonyi relationship. Though Max-Boonyi relationship does concentrate on each other's wants, it is devoid of true love. Therefore, Boonyi remains a ‘grabbee’, and Shalimar and Max become the grabbers, leading Boonyi to her tragic end, not able to reach her mother's ‘vision of freedom’ (SC 53) and ‘a promised land’ which she could not enter. Boonyi makes an attempt to reach this dream, but fails, whereas, her mother Pamposh hid all these dreams behind her ever smiling face and her facade of contended calm. Their dreams that ‘pleasing a man comes a poor second, a long way behind’ (SC 53) get accomplished through Kashmira in her relationship with Yuvraj. Boonyi and Pamposh remain as ‘grabbees’ and men around them shape their destinies whereas Kashmira becomes the grabber, as the destinies of Yuvraj, her lover and Shalimar, her arch-enemy, revolve around her.

Boonyi in her pursuit to become a grabber, a professional dancer, to her surprise, finds herself captive in Max's custody, which she had misunderstood for freedom: “... her heart scolded her. What she thought of as her former imprisonment had been freedom, while this so-called

liberation was no more than a gilded cage.” (SC 195) When Max, during the passage of time understands that Boonyi did not love him and that she had only exposed her body like any common whore, there is a crack in their relationship which leads to his abandonment of Boonyi later.

Boonyi’s choice of false freedom leads her to inner degradation and its counterpart, inner up-gradation (satisfaction or enlightenment) remains absent:

*Don’t ask for my heart, because I am tearing it out and breaking it into little bits and throwing it away so I will be heartless but you will not know it because I will be the perfect counterfeit of a loving woman and you will receive from me a perfect forgery of love. (SC 194)*

Her inner degradation leads her to a situation, devoid of happiness and hope, where only misery reigns. She slides towards ruin, slowly first and with gathering speed later. Her misery is seen at its height when she accuses Max helplessly on the day of their last meeting: “I am your handiwork made flesh. You took beauty and created hideousness ... I am the meaning of your so-called love, your destructive, selfish, wanton love.” (SC 205)

Boonyi’s miserable situation leads her to decay (both physical and mental) and ‘the exuberant energy’ (SC 168) she possessed initially, totally vanishes. In Max’s ‘liberated captivity’ (SC 201), her beauty dims, her hair loses its lustre, the chewing of tobacco ruins her smile, her mind gets clouded with opium, her skin coarsens, her teeth rots, her body odour sours, her head rattles with pills, her lungs are full of poppies and her bulk increases every week, every hour. The general education she had requested as part of her deal with the ambassador ceases as Boonyi lives with her belly full of food and her head in a chemical spin always, which is an ‘astonishingly self-destructive behaviour’ (SC 203) and ‘a deliberate suicide attempt’ (SC 203). The jewel of Kashmir, thus decays into ‘a stinking foam mattress’ (SC 203), where its counterparts, blooming of beauty and youthfulness, are absent.

Boonyi’s decay finally, pushes her to live like a ghostly figure in the secluded, abandoned and ruined hut of Nazerabaddoor in Pachigam, where her phantom mother becomes her perpetual companion:

*She slowly became competent in practical matters, but her hold on reality grew correspondingly more erratic, as though something inside her refused to grasp that the world in which she was getting to be so self-sufficient would never turn back into the one she wanted, the one in which she could fold her husband’s love around herself while also wrapping him up in hers. (SC 238)*

When pushed into this world of the ‘Living Dead’, all humanly feelings and acts of hers dwindle away from her. She goes outdoor naked on summer nights and dances with her dead mother like wolves, challenging Shalimar to love her or kill her: “She could do this because everybody knew she was mad.” (SC 241)

When all her humaneness in Boonyi becomes numb, she waits, though defenseless, vulnerable and fragile, like a ‘thunder’ for the thunderbolts of Shalimar to befall her:

*He said: Don’t leave that hut, the place of your exile, or you will release me from my oath and I will return, I will certainly know and I will certainly return.*

She said: *I'll stay here and wait and I know you will return.* (SC 259)

The oath, taken by Shalimar that he would not kill Boonyi as long as Pyarelal (Boonyi's father) and Abdullah (Shalimar's father) were alive, delays her death. Shalimar's crossing the Tragbal Pass to wage war under the leadership of Bulbul Fakh, is a form of waiting so that he could fight enemies until he is free to return and take her unfaithful life. But, this waiting and delaying meant more than that for both of them. For Shalimar, it is also another way of being with her:

While he was away his thoughts returned to her and they could commune as they once had. And even if his thoughts were murderous this prolonged communion often felt, strongly felt to her, like love. All that remained between them was death, but the deferment of death was life. All that remained between them, perhaps, was hatred, but this yearning hatred-at-a-distance was surely also one of love's many faces, yes, its ugliest face. She began to entertain fantasies of earning his forgiveness and winning back his heart. (SC 263)

Here, love masked as anti-love and vice-versa are reminiscent of Miller's explanation of the double antithetical relation of 'host' and 'guest'. According to Miller, if host is both eater and eaten, he has the double antithetical relation of a host and a guest whereas guest is perceived in the bifold sense of 'friendly presence and alien invader' (Miller 442). Delaying and waiting, in Shalimar-Boonyi love story, makes love and anti-love exchange their positions as a 'friendly presence' and an 'alien invader' randomly. As only death exists between them after betrayal, love seems like loving-hatred and deadly-love. Anti-love itself looks like loving-revenge and yearning in love. There exists love in death and death in love.

Boonyi, in her exile in Nazarebaddoor's hut, could have opted for other ways to reach her death, but the 'music' of her love for Shalimar makes her to wait for him. As soon as she senses his proximity, she prepares herself like a poem for his arrival. Her preparations are like songs of waiting, set to the tune of music of her love: She prepares a meal out of the last kid goat, dressed with her choicest herbs; she bathes in the mountain stream and braids her hair with flowers; she wears no clothes intentionally so that he could read her body like a book and know that she loved him still; she stirs the pot of food on the low fire, waiting to remind him of the time spent by the Muskadoon, of what had happened in Khelmarg and of the village's bold defence of their love; and finally, when he comes, she greets him and commands him to kill her immediately. Thus, the 'thunder' and 'music' in her come to the surface, but with different dark shades.

The love between Boonyi and Shalimar, thus, like a membrane, 'divides inside from outside' into constructive and destructive forces and yet joins in 'a hymeneal bond' (Miller 443) and allows 'an osmotic mixing' (Miller 443), making love constructive, love destructive, love hatred, love revenge, love joy, love humiliation, love pain, love violence, love pleasure, love suffering, love source of life, love death and so on. This concept catches up with that of Miller's explanation about the logic of the 'para':

Each word in itself becomes separated by the strange logic of the "para", membrane which divides inside from out-side and yet joins ... making the strangers friends, the distant near, the dissimilar similar, the Unheimlich heimlich, the homely homey, without, for all its closeness and similarity, ceasing to be strange, distant, dissimilar. (443)

The depiction of love as both constructive and destructive force in this novel illustrates the pathetic predicament of man in the postcolonial era. It gives way for discussion about human follies, crimes, forgiveness, repentance, understanding, and justice in the post-modern era which is done elaborately by Kashmiri when she comes to know the real cause of her father's murder. The questions raised by her are the ones that nag each one in this post-modern world where mass killings, bomb-blasts, murders, wars and other terrorist activities have become casual and routine activities. One wonders like Kashmiri:

What is justice? Was comprehension necessary before judgment? Did her father's murderer understand the man he killed? And if he felt, he had, does that make his actions defensible? Will not understanding drag justice in its wake? (SC 341)

Her inner turmoil represents that of the victims of violence in the present era: "Her desire to understand the killer had been fighting against more vengeful longings." (SC 341) A part of her understands that taking a life is never trivial and ever profound even in an age of interminable slaughters. She mourns, along with Rushdie and the readers, the death of hard-won ideas, the sovereignty of the individual, the sanctity of life beneath the piles of bodies, buried beneath the lies of warlords and priests. Amidst mourning, she is unable to excuse the dreadful deed of Shalimar, but still wishes to comprehend the assassin who had altered her condition with severe finality. The state which she reaches towards the end of her inner turmoil mirrors that of the mass victims of the mass violence and killings of today's world: "No, she told herself, understanding and justice were unrelated things, like repentance and forgiveness. An understanding man could also be unjust. A woman might see her father's killer repent, truly repent, and still be unable to forgive." (SC 341)

The answers and solutions to such agonies can be sought in the healing, garrulous talks of Pandit Pyarelal Kaul and his ascetic recommendations to improve the human race, by the banks of the loquacious Muskadoon:

Man is ruined by the misfortune of possessing a moral sense, ... Consider the superior luck of the animals... They neither know nor shape their own nature; rather, their nature knows and shapes them. There are no surprises in the animal kingdom. Only Man's character is suspect and shifting. Only Man, knowing good, can do evil. Only Man wears masks. Only Man is a disappointment to himself. (SC 91-92)

Here, the philosophy of good and evil gives approval to Miller's theory about words and their counterparts: "There is no parasite without its host." (441) This coincides with Derrida's concept of binary opposites and Rushdie's comprehension of interplay of dualities in human life: "For every snake, there is a ladder; for every ladder, a snake" (MC 428) and "For every O' Dwyer, ... there is a Shaheed Udham Singh, and for every Trotsky a Mercader awaits." (SC 30)

The Moor in *The Moor's Last Sigh*, rejects the world since he is rejected by his parents and betrayed by his beloved, Uma Sarasvati. He, in Hazare XI, becomes an embodiment of 'beating'. In *Shalimar the Clown*, Abdullah's training and encouragement to do 'something impossible' (SC 93) and his ability to hold everyone 'all in the palm of his hand' (SC 46) enable Shalimar to become the most admirable performer on the tightrope. He dreams of flying in the air without the rope, with Boonyi's love. But, betrayal and rejection render him defenceless,

vulnerable, fragile and humiliated, to finally become an embodiment of ‘fire and death’ (SC 262). Love functions as both constructive and destructive force in Boonyi’s case, too: she degenerates into a ghostly figure waiting for death at the hands of her lover, who was once the ‘poem’ of Kashmir. Rushdie’s concept about love and anti-love in this novel coincides with Miller’s argument about the words such as ‘parasite’ and ‘host’. A word like ‘parasite’, says Miller, calls up its apparent opposite, ‘host’: “It has no meaning without that counterpart. There is no parasite without its host.” (Miller 441) On the whole, all the tragedies and comedies of life are to be found under the spell of causal-effects of ‘Love’, confirming Rushdie’s statement through Saleem Sinai, in *Midnight’s Children*:

One day, perhaps, the world may taste the pickles of history. They may be too strong for some palates, their smell may be overpowering, tears may rise to eyes; I hope nevertheless that it will be possible to say of them that they possess the authentic taste of truth ... that they are, despite everything, acts of love. (MC 64)

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