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***THE RELUCTANT FUNDAMENTALIST'S* DEPICTION OF THE POSTMODERN**

by

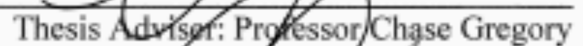
Kathryn Nicolai

A Thesis Submitted to the Honors Council

For Honors in English

April 2020

Approved by:



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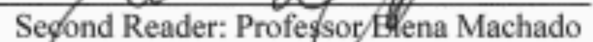

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Abstract

In this thesis, I examine postmodern fiction in the wake of 9/11. Specifically, I investigate initial predictions of how postmodernity would end after 9/11, Jean Baudrillard's hyperreality, 9/11 as a semiotic-saturated event, 9/11-novels' representations of hyperreality and postcolonial intersections with postmodern texts. These focuses are analyzed in Mohsin Hamid's novel *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. The novel chronicles the protagonist, Changez's life before, during and after 9/11 and how his perspective on America's capitalist-centered society and his own identity shifts in the wake of the attacks. After 9/11, Changez undergoes a demystification with America's nostalgia-based regression and returns to Pakistan. Similar to other 9/11 novels, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* utilizes allegories to display hyperreality and postmodern tropes. The novel is distinct, however, because it is told from the point of view of a Pakistani immigrant to an assumed American audience. Therefore, this novel directly confronts the grand narratives and preconceptions surrounding 9/11 and predominately Muslim countries. The postmodern tropes allow for an acute interrogation of the historicizing of 9/11 and what role fiction has in creating and re-imagining history. Published in 2007, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* offers a more recent and contemporary portrayal of 9/11 fiction. The novel allows us to see how postmodern tropes have evolved and remained after 9/11. The trends of 9/11 literature and contemporary fiction generally can be understood through this text.

Introduction

September 11—for all the physicality of planes impacting on giant skyscrapers and for all the suffering caused to victims and their near and dear—is ultimately a semiotic event, involving the total breakdown of all meaning-making systems – Kristiaan Versluys, Out of the Blue

9/11 immediately spurred conversation of drastic change in art forms and criticism, including literary fiction. A mere 20 days after 9/11, cultural critic-at-large Edward Rothstein asked in *The New York Times* how scholarship would be altered: "Cataclysms not only cast shadows over human victims but also shake the foundations of intellectual life" (2001). Rothstein argued that post-9/11 scholarship threatened both postmodernist and postcolonialist scholarship. Of course, this was speculation, as Rothstein was writing too close to the attacks to truly know what comprehensive shifts would come. However, Rothstein was not alone in his prediction that 9/11 would cause a major intellectual shift that would end postmodern thinking. My thesis seeks to address how predicted shifts away from postmodernism have or have not been fulfilled contemporarily. General themes associated with postmodernism include self-reflexivity, irony, parody, equivalence of high and low art, retro fascination, questioning grand narratives, temporality and late capitalism (Felluga, 2011). Brian McHale, American critic and author, noted the transition from modern to postmodern fiction as a transition from epistemology to ontology. McHale states postmodern fiction,

> Raises questions about the very status of reality and the world: 'What is a world?; What kinds of world are there, how are they constituted, and how do they differ?; What happens when different kinds of world are placed in confrontation, or when boundaries between worlds are violated?' (Malpas, 2005).

These questions relate to readers' ontological uncertainty of text's fictional representations of reality, destabilizing the fixed boundaries between the real and fictional. Metafiction, a common trope of postmodern literature "comments on and investigates its own status as fiction as well as questioning our ideas of the relation between fiction, reality and truth," according to prominent postmodern thinker, Linda Hutcheon (Malpas, 2005). Postmodern fiction largely questions the relationship between truth and reality. This includes questioning its own contribution and relation to the binary of truth and reality. The novel at the focus of my thesis, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* exemplifies metafiction through various hyperreal and narrative tropes.

In *The Postmodern,* Simon Malpas of Edinburgh University states, "The attack on the World Trade Center on 11 September 2001 marked, for some thinkers, [postmodernism's] last rites and final burial" (2005). One thinker who saw 9/11 as postmodernism's last burial was Roger Rosenblatt who wrote the widely read *Time Magazine* article that states, "One good thing could come from this horror: it could spell the end of the age of irony." Rosenblatt argued that postmodernists could no longer contest reality; it was impossible to contest whether the planes crashing in to the World Trade center or the havoc that ensued was real or not. Even the prominent postmodern author Don DeLillo wrote two months after the towers fell, "This catastrophic event

changes the way we think and act, moment to moment, week to week, for unknown weeks and months to come, and steely years" (2001).

As time pulls us farther away from the events of September 2001 scholarship has pondered if the foreseen shift in art form and postmodernism ever actualized. Pulitzer Prize winner for Criticism Michiko Kakutani notes the lack of drastic artistic changes scholars anticipated after 9/11 writing in *The New York Times*, "Ten years later, it is even clearer that 9/11 has not provoked a seismic change in the arts" (2011). As more time passes, the ability to understand 9/11's impact on literature is more clear. Ten years after 9/11 and the various predictions that postmodernity would seize to exist, Kakutani cements that the predicted changes in art post-9/11 never transpired.

Harold Pinter's 2006 Nobel Lecture "Art, Truth, and Politics" maintains the postmodern and hyperreal notion that in art a thing is neither true or false. Speaking only five years after 9/11, and one year before *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* was published, Pinter addresses how the war on terror affects the postmodern notion of a blurring between true and false stating, "These assertions still make sense and do still apply to the exploration of reality through art. So as a writer I stand by them but as a citizen I cannot. As a citizen I must ask: What is true? What is false?" In other words, Pinter maintains that the postmodern blurring of truth and reality as an artistic technique is still valid and prominent in the post-9/11 era, but not a valid political rhetorical technique. This highlights the fears and dissociations attached to postmodern thought in the wake of 9/11.

Acknowledging the critical debate surrounding the death of postmodernism after 9/11 Malpas writes, "In our rapidly changing world, the challenges that confront critical

thinking might best be understood with ideas drawn from postmodern theory" (2005). This confirms the contemporary moment is still portraying postmodern technique. Carlos Gallego expresses a similar sentiment as Malpas noting the various viewpoints on postmodernism post-9/11. Gallego writes, "Whether the present historical moment marks the beginning or end of the postmodern is debatable and highly speculative at this point; what remains evident, however, is that 9/11 has inspired a reassessment of postmodernity" (2010). Postmodernism relevance in evident.

Nonetheless, the prominence of this question—is postmodernism dead—and the various scholars who maintain the lack of anticipated literary change post-9/11 makes my thesis an imperative addition to academic discussion through its analysis of how postmodernism functions in contemporary literary works. Following trends in contemporary American fiction such as Junot Diaz, Chimamanda Ngozi Adiche, Hamid "could be said to invert the immigrant narrative by having the protagonist explain why he left the US" contributing to post-9/11 shifts to celebrate "the literary and cultural productions of all peoples who have fallen under the sway of the US imperium" (Medovoi, 2011). If we are to truly understand the (non)death of postmodernism and/or its evolution in contemporary work, I believe it is imperative to explore how it functions in the 9/11-focused novel *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* by Mohsin Hamid written contemporarily in 2007.

French theorist Jean Baudrillard, seen as one of the most prominent and well-known postmodern thinkers, also saw 9/11 as something unrivalled in history. 9/11 was "the ultimate event, the mother of all events, the pure event uniting within itself all the

events that have never taken place" (2001). Baudrillard argues that 9/11 was poignant because of the global spectacle it created. The attack was both physical and symbolic in its representation of global political ideologies clashing. According to Baudrillard' *The Spirit of Terrorism*, the attack was symbolic in nature. The 'spirit of terrorism' attacked capitalism, Western hegemony and globalization.

I do not seek to use Baudrillard's theory to propose that the events were not real—they were. There was real physical impact on the World Trade Center, dreadful deaths and extreme suffering for all impacted. I seek to understand how alongside this reality, 9/11 functions as a semiotic-saturated event that resulted in 9/11 novels utilizing literary representations of hyperreality.

The postmodern elements of hyperreality I seek to focus on are scarcely mentioned in existing scholarship surrounding *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. Therefore, my in-depth postmodern reading and analysis of the novel is an attempt to both better understand postmodernism's role in contemporary 9/11 fiction and more specifically *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. The postmodern analysis of the novel does not seek to undermine any existing scholarship focused on the postcolonial reading of the novel, but rather expand on how this postcolonial scholarship works in conjunction with the postmodern elements (such as hyperreality) existing in the novel. Understanding how postmodern literary elements works alongside postcolonial intents and acts of subversion is pertinent to contemporary American fiction. Fiction's intersection with political discourses surrounding Middle East and South East Asian affairs (considering current political matters such as the Muslim Ban, war in Afghanistan, peace talks with the

Taliban) make this thesis a crucial addition to current dialogues on postmodernism role in contemporary literature.

Changez, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*'s protagonist, is a Pakistani Muslim who comes to the United States to study at Princeton and is employed at a highly respected valuation firm, Underwood Samson after graduation. The novel chronicles Changez's life before, during and after 9/11 and how his perspective on America's capitalist-centered society and his own identity shifts in the wake of the attacks. Martin Randall, author of *9/11 and the Literature of Terror* notes that "Hamid's novel is one of the first attempts to reconfigure the attacks through the eyes of a non-Westerner whose thoughts and feelings about 9/11 are strikingly ambiguous and finally ambivalent" (2011). Randall, proposes that Hamid, unlike DeLillo or other well-known authors, was able to reshape the literary conversation around 9/11 through a non-Western narrator that does not perpetuate ideas of American innocence prior to 9/11. The novel is modeled after Camus' last novel *The Fall*. Like Camus' main character Jean-Baptiste, the novel is told in second person as Changez addresses an ambiguous American character at a café in Lahore. Camus' use of ambiguity in also accentuated by Hamid.

Throughout the novel's frame monologue, Changez reflects on his young adulthood in America. As an Ivy graduate, Changez had "the feeling that my life was a film in which I was the star and everything was possible" (Hamid, 2007). This hypermediated experience of the real repeats as Changez understands various experiences through film references. After graduation a group of Princeton students travel to Greece where Changez starts a romantic relationship with Erica. Their romance continues when Changez starts working

in New York at Underwood Samson post-graduation. Erica brings Changez in to her elite social network. Changez notes his identity adapting when he joins the prestigious social rankings of New York and starts working in the city's respectable finance sect. Specifically, Changez notes his Pakistani identity decreases once he starts working for Underwood Samson. Underwood Samson follows the maxim to "focus on the fundamentals," which is understood as only taking in to account financial factors when valuing a company (Hamid, 2007). After 9/11 Changez's admiration with his American corporate job and elite social New York network is demystified. Immediately after the attacks, Changez is racially profiled by the TSA at the airport for being a Pakistani with a beard. Simultaneously, Erica undergoes a nostalgia-based deterioration after 9/11 longing for her high school ex-boyfriend Chris who recently died. This nostalgia serves as a mirror for America's nostalgia-based regression post-9/11. Understanding America's post-9/11 nostalgic regression recognizes oppressive notions of what it means to define one's self as American and its harmful impact for people of color. As Erica psychologically breaks down, she cuts ties with Changez. During a work trip, Changez meets Juan Bautista who works at the publishing company his firm values. Bautista urges Changez to acknowledge how Changez's work in the American finance sector impacts non-Western countries like Pakistan. These myriad of factors cause Changez to return home to Pakistan, where he becomes a professor and activist, who supports anti-American policy.

I seek to analyze *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* specifically through Baudrillard's idea of hyperreality. Hyperreality is the idea that images have replaced reality. Our world is so saturated with images that it has altered our perception of reality. Our perception of

reality is the semiotic-saturated world of images. Because this is our understanding of reality, there is no recognition of this false-sense of reality, which Baudrillard explains as the hyperreal. Baudrillard carved prominence for himself among postmodernist thinkers for his ideas of simulacra that state that "we have lost our ability to make sense of the distinction between nature and artifice" (Felluga, 2011). Simulacra takes the form of hyperreality in Baudrillard postmodern thought. Baudrillard explains the significance of hyperreality as "the object and the sign have become indistinguishable, and we have thereby replaced reality with simulation and the hyperreal" (Malpas, 2005). Signs and symbols act as the real, according to Baudrillard. In other words, there is an equivalence of signs and symbols and reality. Malpas further explains Baudrillard's concept explaining hyperreality is "the fantastical creations of media, film and computer technologies have come to be more real for us, and to interact more fundamentally with our experiences and desires, than the hitherto predominant realities of nature or spiritual life" (2005). The signs and symbols in media bear become more real than real. Media representations of the real that predominate realities includes the advertisement industry. Advertisements' use images to interact with our desires and markets products to you based on their symbolic meaning; "when one desires or purchases a commodity, one is not simply buying the object itself, but also the signs, images and identities that go along with it" (Malpas, 2005). For instance, you might buy a product from a commercial with your favorite actress in it because you think it will make you feel like that actress. However, you are consumed in the simulation that you think the advertisement is real. You believe you can also embody the same reality as the actress in the advertisement.

This shows one's identity as a construction based on the appropriation of signs. The ability for signs, symbols (discussed throughout this thesis as the symbolic, imaginary or fictional) to predominate the real will be a major focus in my dissection of the postmodern in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist.*

I aim to apply postmodern theory, specifically Baudrillard's ideas of hyperreality, to *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, where mirroring distinct entities creates a question of what is 'real' and what is 'false'? What are the differences between binaries? How do these binaries impact our world? Hamid provokes these questions through hyperreality's evocation in allegory of the novel as well as the major influence of using media and pop culture to understand real experiences. The construction of fictional characters to represent real politics and countries evokes hyperreality and examines the distinctions between the real and imaginary. In an essay collection published in 2016, Hamid confirmed this intent of blurring stating, "I want to bring my imagined world back into our world, to share it, to have a reader enter it and shape it, to open a space for experimentation and imagination that crosses the boundaries of the self, of the real, of time" (2016). The use of postmodern tropes and hyperreality in Hamid's novel centering on 9/11 speaks to larger tropes of hyperreality's function in the event itself. Postmodern thinker Slavoj Žižek notes the prominence of the media to overtake reality that occurred during the coverage of 9/11. There was a gap in American's understanding of the tragedy caused by how the event was represented by the American media. Commenting on this portrayal Žižek writes,

> While the number of victims—3,000—is repeated all the time, it is surprising how little of the actual carnage we see—no dismembered bodies, no blood, no desperate faces of dying people . . . in clear contrast to reporting on Third World catastrophes, where the whole point is to produce a scoop of some gruesome detail: Somalis dying of hunger, raped Bosnian women, men with their throats cut. (2013)

Media constructs our perception of reality. We are presented images and summaries of world events. However, after 9/11 Žižek points out that the level of carnage and sensational "gruesome detail" that is shown of third world foreign countries in the East was not represented when 9/11 occurred (2013). The image that repeated in American media was the planes hitting the tower and the Twin Towers collapsing. There was no carnage seen, "no dismembered bodies, no blood, no desperate faces of dying people," despite 3,000 victims having lost their life in the tragedy. We hear the number, but we don't see the carnage. When our world is image-saturated, when image controls perceived reality – this distinction is profound. American media can create a gruesome reality of the East; however, when this gruesomeness is on American soil, with American citizens the standards change. The manipulation of reality changes. Instead of focusing on the individual bodies, the spectacle of 9/11 was understood through the image of the falling towers that represented a larger symbolic collapse and threat to American hegemony and capitalism.

Baudrillard's postmodern theory has been criticized for its lack of acknowledging anything real. For instance, Eric Touya de Marenne critiques Baudrillard's ideas of

history's cyclical nature that promoted colonialist and hegemonic agendas and the adherence to "the idea of revolution and the posture of opposing tradition are worth celebrating but should never be confused with actual change or progress" (2004). I maintain that there is no question that history is real, antihegemonic progress is not real progress, nor that there is no distinction between true and false. My focus on understanding hyperreality in fictional literature on 9/11 is not to disprove that 9/11 actually happened, but to explore questions of representations and the implications of narration, in attempt to make strides forward. I value Baudrillard's analysis of how the West abuses semiotics in order to maintain supremacy and oppression. It is not a fiction that postcolonial postures and actions constitute real change or progress. My use of Baudrillard's scholarship, specifically through *The Reluctant Fundamentalist's* postcolonial themes, is to better understand how hyperreality and semiotics allows us to dissect operating forms of oppression.

Supplementing my analysis will include the work of Michael Koppisch, Janet Wilson, Elora Halim Chowdhury, Elizabeth Anker and Simon Malpas. Each of these thinkers offers a unique interpretation of 9/11 that I use to found my unique argument. Understanding the existing conversation surrounding Changez's evolving identity, the role of the narrator and 9/11 novel's use of allegory has allowed me to make the case for hyperreality, postmodern notions of identity in flux and the ability for allegories to support a postcolonial reimagining of East/West binaries discussed by Edward Said and Samuel Huntington.

Michael S. Koppisch's "Mohsin Hamid's the Reluctant Fundamentalist: Mimetic Desire in a Geopolitical Context," discusses Hamid's relation to Camus' *The Fall* and how desire and mediated identity causes Changez's identity shifts throughout the novel. The in-depth analysis of how Changez's desires force shifts in his identity create a platform for me to apply my thoughts that Changez's shifting identity is created from desires that are produced in a hyperreal world. Changez's notions of the American dream are created from wanting to feel like he is a character in a movie achieving success.

"Mohsin Hamid: The Transnational Novel of Globalisation" an article in *The Contemporary British Novel since 2000* by Janet Wilson discusses *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* as a "post-postmodern performativity based on an affective need to respond to this undermining of the 'real'" (2017). Wilson discusses the assimilation of the spectacle of 9/11 through media coverage. This is the most explicit discussion of Hamid's work in relation to postmodern notions of hyperreality and will be foundational as I expand my argument outward from this particular plot point to a larger discussion of postmodern acting through the novel's allegory.

Elora Halim Chowdhury's article, "Reading Hamid, Reading Coates: Juxtaposing Anti-Muslim and Anti-Black Racism in Current Times" analyzes Hamid in conjunction with author Ta-Nehisi Coates, focusing on the subversion of a white western audience. Chowdury analyzes anti-black and anti-Muslim racism in contemporary America. Specifically, Chowdury discusses how Changez's identity fluctuates as racism proliferates against Muslims post-9/11. This argument is imperative for my second

chapter when I analyze the second person narrative addressing a white Western audience and its attempts to subvert preconceived notions of the context of 9/11.

9/11 is "what might be deemed the quintessential postmodern event," according to Elizabeth Anker, and "if a distinctive feature coheres the burgeoning genre of the 9/11 novel, it is a reliance on self-conscious political allegory to grapple with the perception of historical rupture and decay induced by 9/11" (2011). Anker's survey of allegories in 9/11 fiction is rooted in disappointment reducing 9/11 to a representation of spectacle. Although I grant that proponents of Anker's argument are right to worry of the genre's exclusivity in discussing representation and spectacle, I still maintain that the postmodern tropes and hyperreality utilized in 9/11 fiction, specifically, Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* should be commended for their recognition in our inability to aptly represent the semiotic based event.

I use Simon Malpas' *The Postmodern* to connect scholarship surrounding *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* to major postmodern tropes. This book outlines various prominent postmodern thinkers and their ideologies. The application of these ideologies to existing scholarship and the novel propelled my discussion of the text's depiction of postmodern ideas, including but not limited to hyperreality. The evolution of postmodernity outlined by Malpas is also relevant to my discussion of postmodernity in contemporary fiction.

The discussion of West/East binary and the East as the Other is a predominate postcolonial topic founded by Samuel Huntington in *Clash of Civilizations* and Edward Said's *Orientalism*. Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations* discusses how "Islam is

represented as the West's main other and is 'seen as a source of nuclear proliferation, terrorism, and, in Europe, unwanted migrants'" (qtd. Ahmed). Edward Said's *Orientalism* discusses how "Islam has always been regarded as belonging to the non-West or Orient, and hence has been looked at 'as if it were one monolithic thing, and then with a very special hostility and fear'" (qtd. Ahmed). In other words, Huntington's and Said's work both maintain how Islam has been constructed and regarding as the non-West associated with "hostility," "terrorism" alongside other negative stereotypes (qtd. Ahmed). Chapter 2 discusses how Hamid, in alignment with Huntington and Said's foundational scholarship, works to undo this strict binary. This function is astutely noted previously in academia: "The Reluctant Fundamentalist collapses Orientalist assumptions and impedes expectations that many readers hold about ethnic literature" (Chiu, 2014). However, I seek specifically to interrogate how postmodern tropes and themes work to sustain postcolonial intents of creating a definition of the East that is not "one monolithic thing" (qtd. Ahmed).

Building on the stated scholarship, I structure my thesis as follows. Chapter 1 analyzes the allegory of the novel in connection to hyperreality. Character's symbolic representations for larger national and historic figures discussed are analyzed to show how symbolic and corporeal notions blur in the novel. The individual and the nation become indistinguishable. On the one hand, the novel is about the characters changing identities and conflicts that arise during 9/11. On the other hand, the characters' symbolic representations tell a story of the violence of capitalism, America's nostalgic decline post 9/11 and postmodern notions of identity being constructed and lacking stability. This is

shown through the specific analysis of character such as Changez (Genghis Khan, changes), Erica (America), Underwood Samson (United States) and Juan Bautista (Camus' Jean-Baptiste). Each of these characters and their significance is seen in subtitled sections to receive adequate analysis and consideration. As Changez navigates variant spaces his identity shifts, illuminating postmodern thought on the construction and malleability of identity. This is analyzed through Changez's attempts to Americanize himself at Underwood Samson and with Erica. Underwood Samson's slogan of "focus on the fundamentals" (language commonly associated with Islamic terrorism) questions perceived differences between the East and the West that are magnified after 9/11 as well as the global impacts of Unites States' capitalism (Hamid, 2007). Erica's dangerous nostalgic decline is noted when she is unable to have sex with Changez unless she is imagining her late boyfriend, Hamid's mirrored language when discussing Erica and America and a nurse's explanation of Changez that for Erica, her late boyfriend feels real.

Chapter 2 focuses on the second person narrative of the novel and the frame story line that derives from Camus' *The Fall.* The novel's frame is a conversation Changez has in a café in Lahore with an ambiguous American character that is suspected to be a part of the CIA. This second person narration in the frame dually creates a conversation between Changez and a suspected white American audience. Throughout the dialogue between Changez and the American the history of America's role in predominately Muslim countries, such as Pakistan is interrogated. Hamid ambiguity also works to challenge the reader to rethink why they may perceive Americanness as whiteness. This speaks to larger postmodern themes of readers being active participants in the text.

Readers' perspectives and preconceived notions of 9/11 are altered through this second person narrative. The author as a character in the novel is also be explored in connection to postmodern thought. Hamid's derivation of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* from Camus seeks to point out postmodernism stylistic rather than chronological definition. Camus's 1956 novel employed many of the same postmodern techniques used by postmodern authors in the late 20th century and early 21st century. This point strengthens my argument of postmodern's contemporary function and use. My argument is amplified through Hamid's starting his one-sided dialogue with the American when Changez states, "Excuse me, sir, but may I be of assistance?" (Hamid, 2007). This mirrors the first sentence of Camus' *The Fall*. Jean Baptiste asks, "May I, monsieur, offer my services without running the risk of intruding?" (1957). Postmodern elements are also used to dismantle the East/West binary and the concept of the foreigner through specific diction and reciting of history.

In the conclusion, I speculate about hyperreality's function in exposing postmodern elements in Hamid's work. I summarize my argument that postmodern literary techniques supplement postcolonial dialogues and dismantle hegemonic forms of thinking. I hope this conclusion spurs continued dialogue on the role of hyperrealism in 9/11, postmodern fiction and postmodernism in contemporary writing. Understanding postmodern notions connected to 9/11 and America's reaction allow a more comprehensive understanding of the events, its aftermath and the genre's contentious (non)existence posterior to 2001. This understanding of postmodern literary fiction and the utilization of hyperreality will allow for better understanding of literary techniques on

various political and cultural topics in the future to be better understood relationally. This speculation on hyperreality's function in exposing postmodern tropes in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* founds a series of questions and explorations on postmodern and postcolonial literature's relationship previously and the current moment.

Chapter 1

The novel's main characters function as an allegory to larger political entities and themes connected to 9/11 "deemed the quintessential postmodern event" (Anker, 2011). As Anker notes, "If a distinctive feature coheres the burgeoning genre of the 9/11 novel, it is a reliance on self-conscious political allegory to grapple with the perception of historical rupture and decay induced by 9/11" (2011). The postmodern tropes and hyperreality utilized in Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* recognizes the event's semiotic saturation. Allegories create a self-reflexive interpretation of how semiotics played a role in American misconception and nostalgia post-9/11. *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*'s use of allegory functions to subvert normalized understandings and viewpoints of the event, perpetuated by American media, through a non-Western narrator's confrontation of the Western readers' preconceptions. Therefore, there is a conscious subversion of the postmodern trope to highlight how the spectacle tainted Americans understanding of 9/11.

The literary use of hyperreality and allegory in 9/11 novels comments on the postmodern discussion of literatures role in construction reality in fictional texts (Malpas, 2005). This postmodern discussion continued as "9/11 novelists also questioned the capacity of language, and by extension their own novels, to construct meaningful civic engagements with contemporary events" (Holloway, 2008). Hamid comments on the semiotic nature of 9/11 and its misconstruction and misunderstanding by American media while simultaneously contributing to a linguistic narrative and construction of what happened during 9/11. Hamid's narrative is a metacommentary on semiotics that seeks to

highlight representation and narrative uncertainties in order to draw readers' attention to their own understanding of narrative constructions of 9/11.

Underwood Samson

After graduation, Changez starts working at the financial valuation firm Underwood Samson that is symbolic of an American violent capitalist space. There is vast competition among Changez's peers at Princeton for a job offer from Underwood Samson. The company is reputable and highly praised for their ability to value businesses "with a precision that was uncanny" (Hamid, 2007). Changez is selected from a vast pool of applicants to interview at the firm; "Over a hundred members of the Princeton Class of 2001 sent their grades and résumés to Underwood Samson. Eight were selected—not for jobs, I should make clear, but for interviews—and one of them was me" (Hamid, 2007). The job is highly coveted. There are only eight spots for interviews and even fewer spots for job offers. The stratification of choosing so few employees points to David Waterman assertion: "It is perhaps no coincidence that Underwood Samson might also be abbreviated US, representing a violent capitalist space" (Waterman, 2009). The exclusive, elite characterization of the valuation company is representative of the exclusionary practices of American capitalism. Underwood Samson takes pride in their reputation and selectiveness. New employees (Changez among them) are told, "We believe in being the best. You were the best candidates at the best schools in the country" (Hamid, 2007). Underwood Samson prides itself on "being the best" in the same way the Unites States functions as a hegemonic power that consistently identifies with "being the

best” on the world stage. Name symbolism underscores Hamid’s repetitive hyperreal technique of infusing discussions of the ‘real’ United States capitalism with the fictional New York finance company.

Retrospectively, Changez notes how his identity as an immigrant from Pakistan was utilized in the American education and capitalist system. As an international student, Changez needed much more impressive credentials than his American peers to be accepted to Princeton. As an international student an acceptance to Princeton was akin to an open door to America’s capitalist corporate world after graduation;

> We international students were sourced around the globe […] until the best and brightest of use had been identified […] in return, we were expected to contribute our talents to your society, the society we were joining. And for the most part, we were happy to do so. I certainly was, at least at first. (Hamid, 2007)

According to Changez, if you are an international student accepted to Princeton you were the “best and the brightest” (2007). As the “best and the brightest” you were sought out to be utilized in America’s corporate society after graduation. Changez’s academic prowess grants him access to the highest ranks of America’s education system and later, through his acceptance to Underwood Samson, America’s capitalist structure. As an immigrant, Changez’s acceptance in to the ranks of American society is based solely on his use unparalleled use value.

Initially, Changez is overjoyed to be offered a position at the Underwood Samson. Thrilled, Changez states, “Underwood Samson had the potential to transform my life […] making my concerns about money and status things of the distant past” (Hamid, 2007).

For Changez being hired by the elite firm creates ability to reach success ("money and status"). At Princeton his economic status required he "held down three on-campus jobs [...] and prepared for my classes throughout the night" (Hamid, 2007). Underwood Samson grants him ample opportunity. The acknowledgement that "Underwood Samson might also be abbreviated US" and phonetically sounds like Uncle Sam, America's mascot creates an understanding that it is dually the United States that "had the potential to transform [Changez's] life" (Waterman, 2009; Hamid, 2007). Specifically, the "violent capitalist space" Changez is welcomed into within the Unites States' elites is perceived as being able to change his life. Changez is fulfilling the American Dream, where through hard work and meritocracy everyone has access to economic mobility. For Changez, the American Dream happens as he enters the high ranks of the United States' corporate world. The story of Changez's evolution as a participant and fulfillment of the American Dream is immediately at the forefront of the novel to be unraveled, questioned and scrutinized.

Through ironically mirroring violence of American capitalism to 'fundamentalists,' a title often associated with Islamic terrorist groups, Hamid questions perceived differences of violence in America and the Middle East, the East and the West, that was especially exacerbated after 9/11. Hamid uses the postmodern technique of irony when he gives Underwood Samson, the main allegorical representation of the United States in the novel, the company mantra of "focus on the fundamentals," which Changez describes as "Underwood Samson's guiding principle, drilled into us since our first day at work. It mandated a single-minded attention to financial detail, teasing out the true nature

of those drivers that determine an asset's value" (Hamid, 2007). Changez is taught to perceive his work strictly in financial terms, negating any moral and human impact, speaking to the insistent brutality of capitalism. Moreover, Underwood Samson's motto speaks to capitalism's tenants through language of fundamentalism, an ideology associated with Islamic terrorist groups. Using language commonly associated with Islamic terrorists, Hamid intimates at America's capitalism, that is preached as one of the tenants of democracy as embodying a similar violence and domination that terrorists' groups seek. It is uncomfortable for American readers to question their assumptions that capitalism can somehow mirror the tenants of terrorism. Hamid appropriates the semiotics of 'fundamentalism' to discuss American capitalism making an assumed American audience uncomfortable and challenging their beliefs.

Juan Bautista, the owner of a book publishing company Changez values for Underwood Samson, makes a similar point to Changez that is instrumental in how Changez continues to perceive his perpetually changing identity. During lunch, Juan Bautista notes the harm Changez partakes in through his employment at Underwood Samson; "'Does it trouble you," he inquired, 'to make your living by disrupting the lives of others?'" (Hamid, 2007). Juan Bautista continues by telling Changez a story about janissaries who were captured during childhood (noting the disparity to Changez who left home when he was eighteen, old enough to remain attached to his home country) by the Ottoman empire; "'they fought to erase their own civilizations, so they had nothing else to turn to'" (Hamid, 2007). Juan Bautista directly compares Changez's employment at an American finance company to janissaries who fought for the Ottoman empire against

their own civilizations. Inferring Changez's work at Underwood Samson is at the detriment of his home country and those similarly situated on the world stage. Juan Bautista's words cause Changez to reflect: "I was a modern-day janissary, a servant of the American empire at a time when it was invading a country with a kinship to mine and was perhaps even colluding to ensure that my own country faced the threat of war" (Hamid, 2007). Changez notes the Unites States finances as its main ability to assert dominance over other countries on the world stage; "Changez allows us to understand how neoliberal globalization operates as a form of imperialism" (Morton, 2013). Working at an elite financial company like Underwood Samson, Changez was participating in "facilitating this project of domination" (Hamid, 2007). The symbolism of Underwood Samson as the United States' and the harms of capitalism is apparent at this moment in the novel.

Erica

Erica, Changez's love interest and peer at Princeton, functions as a symbol of Am(Erica) within the novel's allegory. Erica and Changez first meet on a graduation trip to Greece with mutual friends. Their romance continues after graduation in New York, where Erica ushers Changez into her elite social network. However, Erica is unable to fully commit to Changez romantically because of residing trauma from the death of her last boyfriend, Chris the previous year. After 9/11, Erica "was disappearing into a powerful *nostalgia*" for Chris. Changez notes "America, too, was increasingly giving itself over to a dangerous nostalgia at the time" (2007). Through Erica's character, Hamid

explores America's changes post-9/11, the danger of nostalgia and nostalgia's distortion of the real/imaginary. Chris is a name interpreted as representing America's founder Christopher Columbus (Lasdun, 2007) as well as Christianity (Medovi, 2011). Erica's nostalgia for Chris is symbolic of America's nostalgia for a previous, colonialist, racist, discriminatory, hegemonic, mythologized America prior to 9/11.

The inability for Erica (and Erica's body) to accept Changez is symbolic of crossing national and political boundaries. Changez and Erica struggle to have a romantic relationship. Erica has not had sex since Chris. When Changez and Erica first have intercourse Changez "found it difficult to enter here; it was as though she was not aroused. She said nothing while I was inside her, but I could see her discomfort, and so I forced myself to stop" (2007). The physical act of Changez entering Erica has symbolic undertones of trans-continentalism. Anker notes: "If Changez represents the foreign intruder his 'penetration' of Erica, which is sexualized and eventually consummated, merely pushes her over the edge into a precipice that has long intoxicated her" (2011). Anker draws a connection to Changez as a "foreign intruder" causing a regression in Erica, paralleling America's nostalgic regression after the foreign intrusion of 9/11. I think this metaphor could extend to America's post-9/11 unacceptance of Changez—being profiled by TSA, shouted at in ethnic slurs and prompted by colleagues to shave his beard. Erica and Changez's difficulty with sex is emblematic of national conversations surrounding America's exclusionary acts rejecting non-white, Muslim identities. For Erica, her intimate relationship with Changez also speaks to her inability to separate the imaginary and the real. In order for Changez and Erica to successfully have sex Changez

has to pretend to be Chris. Only then, Erica is able to pleasurably have intercourse with Changez; "her body denied mine no longer; I watched her shut eyes, and her shut eyes watched *him*" (2007). Erica's inability to be physically aroused unless she submerges herself in the imaginary is a profound exhibition of the hyperreal. The imaginary version of Chris in Erica's mind arouses her more than the corporeal man she is in bed with underscoring the dangers of nostalgia.

Hamid discusses Erica and America's nostalgia-based deterioration through similarly structured, mirrored passages to show their distinct connection within the allegory of the novel. Erica's nostalgia increases after 9/11; Erica tells Changez, "The attacks churned up old thoughts in my head […] I keep thinking about Chris" (2007). Discussing Erica's waning mental state post-9/11, Changez reflects, "I never came to know what triggered her decline—was it the trauma of the attack on her city? the act of sending out her book in search of publication? the echoes raised in her by our lovemaking? all of these things? none of them?" (2007). In the same way Changez questions Erica's decline, Changez expresses similar uncertainty about America's nostalgia post-9/11; "What your fellow countrymen longed for was unclear to me—a time of unquestioned dominance? of safety? of moral certainty?" (2007). The root of the cause for both Erica the character and America the nation to deteriorate from a longing for the past is uncertain and likely has a complex and multitude of answers. However, through a mirrored structure of questioning their nostalgia, Hamid is pointing readers to grasp the individual's representation of the national. This is reiterated by Anker, who notes that many 9/11 novels use allegory as a literary technique. Anker writes, "Hamid's

metaphor rebukes Erica- America' s self-involved desires for a lethal combination of amnesic denial and numbing nostalgia" (2011). To question Erica's nostalgia is in part to question America's nostalgia and vice versa. Recognition of the novel's allegory is underscored through mirrored language and syntax. The mirroring of structure is emblematic of the mirroring of Erica and America. Hamid's manipulation of individual character's representing national bodies provokes postmodern contemplation of representation and the novel's formation of 'reality' versus 'artifice.' The construction of fictional characters to represent real politics and countries is a nod to hyperreality and questioning of distinctions between the real and imaginary.

Hyperreality is underscored when Erica's imagined romance with Chris starts to feel more real to her than reality. Questioning Erica's perception of her romance with her late boyfriend, Changez notes, "Perhaps the reality of their time together was as wonderful as she had, on more than one occasion, described to me. Or perhaps theirs was a past all the more potent for its being imaginary. I did not know whether I believed in their love" (2007). Here, Changez notes the power of the imaginary that creates a love unmatched because it no longer exists in real life. Chris now solely lives in Erica's imagination. Erica longing for and remembering what used to b, becomes captivated with the imaginary. Nostalgia's distortion of the real and the imaginary is further shown towards the end of the novel when Erica is institutionalized for her mental state. When Changez visits the institution, a nurse explains to him that Erica loved "what the nurse or I might call deceased; for Erica he was alive enough" (2007). Erica's nostalgia based in a blurring of the real and the imaginary (hyperreality) is further explained by the nurse

stating, "It was difficult for Erica to be out in the world when in her mind she was experiencing things that were stronger and more meaningful than the things she could experience with the rest of us" (2007). Erica's nostalgia makes it so that her mind's imagination for her continued romance with Chris bears equal, if not more prominence than real experiences with real people, such as Changez. Chris is Changez's "dead rival," who ends up winning Erica's love (2007). This exhibits Steven Best and Douglas Kellner's idea from *The Postmodern Turn* that when confronted with the real or false one "prefers the false, the illusionary . . . as somehow better, sexier, more exciting—more real" (1997). The inability for Chris to exist in real life makes him an impossible love interest to defeat— "somehow better, sexier, more exciting—more real." In Erica's mind, the best parts of Chris exist. Their romance is idealized and void of problems, fights or heartbreak. Changez existing in reality ensures that his existence cannot compare; the reality of not exactly meeting Erica's expectations, wants or needs is inescapable. Erica's hyperreal distortion of her romantic life is seen when she "placed [Changez] in the past tense" (2007). This linguistic tactic is obviously ironic as Changez is still alive, but used in the past tense when Erica speaks. Yet, Erica's boyfriend Chris, who has been dead for a year still exists in the present dually in her imagination and her speech. Word's ability to construct a fused fiction/reality is seen through Erica's use of language.

Erica's longing for a lost love mirrors America's longing for mythologized past after 9/11. In the same way Changez notes Erica's idealization of Chris in her imagination, Changez questions the truth in the America longed for post-9/11, noting Americans were "scrambling to don the costumes of another era […] I felt treacherous

for wondering whether that era was fictitious, and whether—if it could indeed be animated—it contained a part written for someone like me" (2007). This amplifies the danger of nostalgia to recreate a mythological past, that perhaps never existed. Changez stating that the past America longed for might not have "a part written for someone like me" intimates that the American longed for is an exclusively white, not diverse America where a Pakistani immigrant like Changez would not be permitted or accepted. There is immense danger in a nostalgia that seeks to exclude and aggrandizes a mythological past of white power and privilege. Through hyperreality we are able to note a danger in how the imaginary starts to resemble the real, particularly in the political realm, as noted by Pinter in the introduction. Prominent postmodernists' comments on American reactions after 9/11 align with various aspects of the nostalgia-based deterioration Hamid exhibits.

After 9/11, Changez notes "There was something undeniably retro about the flags and uniforms, about generals addressing cameras in war rooms and newspaper headlines featuring such words as *duty* and *honor*" (2007). Particularly, Changez notes the dissemination of American flags following the attacks;

> Your country's flag invaded New York after the attacks; it was everywhere. Small flags stuck on toothpicks featured in the shrines; stickers of flags fluttered from buildings. They all seemed to proclaim: *We are America*—not New York, which, in my opinion, means something quite different—*the mightiest civilization the world has ever known; you have slighted us; beware our wrath*. (2007)

Immediately following the attacks, David Foster Wallace, famous for his role in the postmodern literary movement, wrote, “Everybody has flags out. Homes, businesses. It’s odd: You never see anybody putting out a flag, but by Wednesday morning [the day after 9/11] there they all are” (2001). Wallace highlights, similar to Hamid, a perplexing association with the American flag and its symbolism of extreme patriotism and a country at war. The symbolic proliferation of the flag and patriotism after 9/11 connects to Susan Sontag’s focus on the media’s harmful coverage of the attacks, “The unanimity of the sanctimonious, reality-concealing rhetoric spouted by American officials and media commentators in recent days seems, well, unworthy of a mature democracy” (2001). Sontag’s illumination of “reality-concealing rhetoric” resembles Hamid highlighting American media headlines that focused on “duty” and “honor” after 9/11. Sontag deliberately finds media commentators at fault for a lack of “the acknowledgment that this was not a ‘cowardly’ attack on ‘civilization’ or ‘liberty’ or ‘humanity’ or ‘the free world’ but an attack on the world’s self-proclaimed superpower, undertaken as a consequence of specific American alliances and actions?” (2001). This directly correlates to Baudrillard’s *The Spirit of Terrorism* stating the attack was symbolic in nature. The ‘spirit of terrorism’ attacked capitalism, Western hegemony and globalization. And the American media reiterated this sentiment. Sontag attempts to dissociate the ‘symbolic’ with the ‘real,’ critical of the American media’s inability to do so, disagreeing with Baudrillardian ideas that it is at all feasible in a media-saturated world. Sontag sees the attacks as “a consequence of specific American alliances and actions” a point unheard in the media’s “reality-concealing rhetoric” (2001).

Changez

Within the novel's allegorical structure Changez (a pun for changes) is emblematic of postmodern ideas about identity. Throughout the novel, Changez continually oscillates between identifying as Pakistani and American. This oscillation is underscored by Changez feeling distinctly Pakistani and un-American at Princeton, but fully American when he starts working in finance in New York; "I was, in four and a half years, never an American; I was *immediately* a New Yorker" (Hamid, 2007). As Changez navigates variant spaces his identity shifts, illuminating postmodern thought on the construction and malleability of identity. After 9/11 and the widespread discrimination against Muslims it caused, Changez questions his changing identity stating, "I lacked a stable core. I was not certain where I belonged—in New York, in Lahore, in both, in neither" (Hamid, 2007). Describing postmodern thought on identity Ian Gregson writes, "The most important postmodernist take on identity questions arises from the deconstruction of concepts of inner or underlying essence. What is being deconstructed, therefore, is the idea of a stable core of self (like a soul) which is present throughout an individual's life and what constitutes their true being" (Gregson, 2004). Changez's iteration in the novel that he "lacked a stable core" precisely resembles Gregson's emphasis of postmodernists' deconstruction of "the idea of a stable core of self" (2004). Changez's shifting identity throughout the novel resembles postmodern thought that one does not have a destined "true being" or "stable core," but rather an evolving and adaptable self.

Changez's perpetually evolving identity is epitomized when he first starts working in finance at Underwood Samson and starts replicating an American disposition. Changez is enamored by the idea of identifying as American, seeking to change his behavior to match his American colleagues'. On Changez's first business trip he "attempted to act and speak, as much as my dignity would permit, more like an *American*," which resulted in him learning "to cut the front of lines with an extraterritorial smile" and "to answer, when asked where I was from New York" (2007). Changez actively alters his behavior to be more like his rude and entitled American colleagues. Cutting to the front of lines and saying he is from New York (not Pakistan his home country) are indicative of his understanding that he must distance himself with his Pakistani identity in order to feel that he can identify as American and the privileges associated with that identification. Changez starts acting the same way he criticized his peers at Princeton in the beginning of the novel. Changez called his peers "devoid of refinement […] conduct[ing] themselves in the world as though they were its ruling class" (Hamid, 2007). The juxtaposition between Changez's initial disgust with acting like the world's "ruling class" and eventual reenactment of these same acts asserts the postmodern trope of identity as wavering and unstable. Furthermore, Changez's ability to manipulate his behavior to accrue to a particular identity is emblematic of Judith Butler's ideas on identity, particular gendered identity, as nothing more than the repetition of particular actions that are encoded through societal messaging to make up and project one's identity. Western hegemonic coding and messaging confers that being American grants one privileges and superiority. This prompts Changez to shift his behavior to

mirror an American identity. At Underwood Samson, Changez reaches the "American myth of the successful businessman" (Koppisch, 2018). Changez seeks to cement his identity to equate himself to this "America myth" projected as desired and dominant.

The implications of Changez identifying as American can be further questioned through the historic exclusive and oppressive act of defining American identity through whiteness and Christianity. Reiterating his American identification prior to 9/11, Changez notes his ability to feel fully American working at Underwood Samson. On a business trip Changez is the only non-American among his colleagues, but feels his "Pakistaniness was invisible, cloaked by my suit, by my expense account, and—most of all— by my companions" (Hamid, 2007). Professional, monetary and elite social status allow Changez privileges in American society. His Pakistani identity is "cloaked" by his white companions, his access to money and his appearance as a businessman (Chowdhury, 2018). It is imperative to note that to be privileged in American society Changez's non-White identity must be "cloaked." Acceptance in to elitism and privilege in America is historically white, and for Changez this is no different. Chowdhury amplifies this idea: "This is the paradox of assimilation and the myth of the melting pot. It assumes that to become American you must become more white/Christian" (2018). This is further proved when Changez's boss Jim tells him, "We came from places that were wasting away […] They try to resist change. Power comes from *becoming* change" (2007). Jim advocates for manipulating identity— not to be, but to "*become*." The "change" Jim wants Changez to enact is a distinct American identification with appearing more white and less Pakistani, more Christian and less Muslim. Understanding this notion in the context of

America's nostalgic regression post-9/11 recognizes the amplified oppressive notions of what it means to define one's self as American and its harmful impact for people of color.

Changez's changing identity, representative of postmodern thought, is also evident when he returns to Pakistan to visit his family after a few months working in New York. Changez recognizes his shifting identity; "*I* had changed; I was looking about me with the eyes of a foreigner, and not just any foreigner, but that particular type of entitlement and unsympathetic American who so annoyed me when I encountered him in the classrooms and workplaces of your country's elite" (Hamid, 2007). The Americanness he sought to mimic at the start of his employment is recognized as loathsome when he returns home to Lahore. Changez has the feeling "I had become possessed" (Hamid, 2007). This underpins postmodern thought that identity lacks a uniform self or being, but rather is able to be continually constructed and changed. Noting a feeling of being possessed informs the reader of Changez's inability to find a true self because one does not exist. Changez's adaptable identity does not fully erase past notions of self and connections to his home country. This connection to home prompts Waterman's dissenting assertion that Changez is representative of an unalterable true self that exists beyond culturally-performed identity. I grant that Changez partakes in facades of culturally-performed identity and "is still very much in touch with his origins, his personal history becoming increasingly disturbing and intertwined with the political as the rich layers of his past continue to inform his present – and future – sense of self" (Waterman, 2009). It does not necessarily follow that Changez possesses a true self. Instead, Changez exists as an amalgam of his performed behavior, and his Pakistani

identification for the first eighteen years of his life makes him unable to erase his past. Changez showcases his amalgamated identity when he describes, “Princeton made everything possible for me. But it did not, *could* not, make me forget such things as how much I enjoy the tea I this, the city of my birth” (Hamid, 2007). Princeton allows Changez to enter corporate America, reenacting the performances of his colleagues. However, this culturally-performed identity does not erase Changez’s experiences and identity in Pakistan. Changez’s acknowledgement of his shifting identity is at the core of his internal conflict. Recognizing identity as performance as he shifts between Pakistan and America creates self-alienation that he seeks to dispel. Navigating Pakistani and American identities continually asks questions of Changez. As political tensions rise post 9/11, Changez’s identity construction still relies on the roots of his home and family in Pakistan and the experiences he had growing up there. As the novel progresses, this complication of identity remains pertinent to how Changez understands himself.

Changez’s shifting identity is furthermore understood through the perception of himself through a Western(hegemonic) lens of popular culture references and expressions. Changez, during his first work trip flying first class, compares himself to “a veritable James Bond—only younger, darker, and possible better paid” and refers to himself as his bosses, “fair haired boy” (Hamid, 2007). Changez’s understanding of his identity through James Bond and a “fair haired boy” underscore postmodern ideas that the real has become infused with signs of the real— hyperreality. It is obvious that Changez does not have fair hair, but uses the idiom that signifies one who receives preferential treatment. The application of the phrase to Changez is clearly ironic as white

men who have fair hair are historically privileged in society. To apply the phrase to himself, Changez is fitting himself into a language system created within a white context, that does not include diverse races or ethnicities (that historically have not been privileged in society). Likewise, James Bond is not a real person; James Bond is a fictional representation of a real person. James Bond is a *white* representation of a slick and powerful secret service agent. Yet, Changez sees James Bond as an apt comparison to his lived experience. This mirrors Best and Kellner's description of Baudrillard's hyperreality stating, "In 'TV World,' for instance, the image or model of the Doctor (the simulated Doctor) is sometimes taken for the Real Doctor; thus Robert Young, who played Dr. Welby received thousands of letters asking for medical advice and later appeared in ads where he advised readers on the wonders of decaffeinated coffee" (1991). The actor Robert Young becomes encoded with his fictional character's attributes. To fuse the fictional world with reality, as Changez does with James Bond and the public does with Robert Young are exemplary forms of hyperreality.

Fusing the fictional world with reality is furthermore seen when Changez describes Erica when he first meets her. Changez notes, "she belonged more to the camp of Paltrow than to that of Spears" (Hamid, 2007). The novel' use of American pop cultural references fuses high and low culture. Movie and pop stars used to understand characters in the novel blend genre and acknowledge that all forms, including literature, of constructing the real rely on semiotics. American readers are able to understand Changez's description of Erica as more Paltrow, elusive and unattainable, than Spears, unruly and boisterous, acknowledges semiotics and audience. Hamid is clearly addressing

an American audience familiar with American pop culture as well as utilizing this pop culture to point out how we understand reality and identity through mediated depictions of real people. The majority, if not all, of Hamid's American audience do not *know* either celebrity, but they do know how they portray themselves in the media and in their work. This portrayal of identity is perceived as the celebrities' *real* identities. Changez's understanding of reality through fiction is also understood when he visits Erica in the Upper East Side and the "exclusive shops, attractive women in short skirts walking tiny dogs" feel familiar because of "the many films that had used it as a setting" (Hamid, 2007). The Upper East Side portrayed in film becomes its realized form. This hyperreal inability to separate the real from the artificial is employed by Hamid to highlight semiotics generally, and more specifically to 9/11.

The most important portrayal of hyperreality throughout the novel is Changez's perception of 9/11. Watching the twin towers fall Changez "saw what at first I took to be a film. But as I continued to watch, I realized that it was not fiction, but news" (2007). Connecting the destruction of 9/11 to the destruction seen in films and fiction creates a postmodern reading of how 9/11 was understood. No violence of this degree had ever occurred on American soil. The only comprehension of such an event was through American cinema. David Foster Wallace made the same comparison as Changez to seeing 9/11 through cinematic comparisons when he wrote,

> No one else seems to notice Bush's weird little lightless eyes seem to get closer and closer together throughout his taped statement, nor that some of his lines sound almost plagiaristically identical to statements made by Bruce Willis (as a

> right-wing wacko, recall) in *The Siege* a couple years back. Nor that at least some of the shock of the last two hours has been how closely various shots and scenes have mirrored the plots of everything from *Die Hard I-III* and *Air Force One* to Tom Clancy's *Debt of Honor*. Nobody's edgy or sophisticated enough to lodge the sick and obvious po-mo complaint: We've Seen This Before. Instead what they do is all sit together and feel really bad, and pray. (2001)

Wallace has the same initial reaction to 9/11 as Changez— the "po-mo complaint: We've Seen This Before" (2001). This is not to suggest that the September 11th attacks don't bear variant or extreme consequences in comparison to Hollywood productions of destruction in *Die Hard I-III* and *Air Force One* to Tom Clancy's *Debt of Honor.* The attacks bear immense heartache, strife and political consequence. However, Changez and Wallace's connection to the images on television of 9/11 to Hollywood's construction of violence and destruction speak to hyperreality unconstrained reign. Even during an event as horrific as 9/11 the public's inability to separate their understanding of the world, from mediatized, fictional versions of reality show how fictional narratives construct how we understand reality. When Changez watched 9/11 occur on the news, he matched it to the only form of extreme violence and destruction on American soil he knew—fiction. This blurring of fiction and reality during 9/11 continued when Changez's compares American media's coverage of bombing Afghanistan. The media's "partisan and sports-event-like coverage" reminds Changez "of the film *Terminator*, but with the roles reversed so that the machines were cast as heroes" (Hamid, 2007). In the same way during the coverage of 9/11 Wallace notes, "Various shots and scenes have mirrored the plots of everything

from *Die Hard I-III* and *Air Force One* to Tom Clancy's *Debt of Honor*," Changez sees bombing Afghanistan as mirroring the *Terminator.* This blurring is a direct representation of hyperreality. Postmodern ability to note this conflation of the imaginary with the real allows for a better understanding in how Americans and the global public reacted to 9/11, and how it was impacted by the media and cinema.

Understanding 9/11 as a quintessentially postmodern event is further seen in Changez's reaction to the collapse of the twin towers. Connecting 9/11 to fiction continues when Changez states, "At that moment, my thoughts were not with the victims of the attack—death on television moves me most when it is fictitious and happens to characters with whom I have built up relationships over multiple episodes" (Hamid, 2007). The death of the Americans in the world trade center don't impact Changez the same way the deaths of fictional characters do who Changez has "built up relationships over multiple episodes" (Hamid, 2007). The relationship Changez builds with characters on television does not equate to the relationships built with New Yorkers who Changez shares the same streets, subway cars and city with. He feels like he knows fictional characters more than real people he physically passes every day. At the foreground of Changez's reaction to 9/11 is media and television's ability to manipulate our constructions of reality. Feeling more sorrow for the death of television characters than the New Yorkers in the World Trade Center is obviously oxymoronic and troublesome. The thousands of corporeal deaths in New York are real, immense, and devastating losses for real people, where deaths of television characters bear no impact on the 'real' world. However, the ability for television to feel as real, if not more real than reality causes

Changez to feel more hurt for television characters he comes to know (despite being fictional) than the anonymous real New Yorkers killed during 9/11. Changez draws attention to hyperreal forces at work. Additionally, Baudrillard's notion of hyperreality during 9/11 are seen when Changez was "caught up in the *symbolism* of it all, the fact that someone had so visibly brought America to her knees" (2007). The importance of symbolism and visibility of 9/11 enforces a postmodern understanding of the event's semiotics. The significance of attacking the corporeal World Trade Center speaks to a symbolic attack on the Western world's capitalist structures. The visibility of the event is also significant. The image of the attacks was repeated on American media and news programs. The image of the falling towers became infused with the symbols of an attack on America and a birth of a war on terror. Changez's narration of his reaction to 9/11 creates an understanding of how the event was understood and constructed.

The repetitive use of understanding reality through Western popular culture and film is also seen after 9/11 when Changez describes living in New York after 9/11 was "like living in a film about the Second World War" (Hamid, 2007). The postmodern understanding of Changez's understanding of reality through film references of previous wartime is discussed by Wilson who states, this comparison is a "temporal disassociation from the present moment and the grand narratives of History, as mediatised images of the past inform and overwhelm the present" (2017). Changez sees it apt to comprehend post-9/11 New York as synonymous to a World War II movie, clearly blurring and fusing the boundaries between fiction and reality. The postmodern understanding that our reality is no longer disparate from its fictional representations is proven through Changez's

narration and description of his experiences that blur representation/image/fiction with reality/truth, equating to hyperreality.

Changez, symbolic of a postmodern thought on unstable identities is easily interpreted as a pun on changes. However, Waterman adds to our understanding of Hamid's use of name symbolism stating, "While Western readers, whether anglophone or francophone, recognize the etymological root of the verb 'to change', less obvious to these same readers is the fact that Changez is a variant spelling of Genghis" (2009). Hamid confirms this stating, "Many America reviewers said it meant 'changes.' But it's the Urdu name for Genghis, the Mongol conqueror who attacked the Muslim world. And with this name Changez can't really be a religious fundamentalist" (qtd. Kennedy, 2018). In the twelfth century, Genghis Khan invaded and destroyed the most successful Muslim empires in history. This intimates that Changez plays a role in harming Muslim countries, such as his home Pakistan, through his American identity. Involvement in the American financial sect bear semblance to one who partakes in the destruction of Muslim sovereignties.

Juan Bautista directly compares Changez's employment at an American finance company to janissaries who fought for the Ottoman empire against their own civilizations. Inferring Changez's work at Underwood Samson is at the detriment of his home country and those similarly situated on the world stage. This reiterates Waterman's point that "Changez is still very much in touch with his origins" because he immigrated to America after growing up in Pakistan for eighteen years. This beckons the perpetual question of how Changez identifies, as Pakistani or American? In his role in corporate

America acting as a janissary, how unwavering is his alliance? Juan Bautista's comparison caused Changez to undergo "a deep bout of introspection. I spent that night considering what I had become" (Hamid, 2007). This introspection was a pivotal moment in how Changez continued to understand his identity—vowing "to about me with an ex-janissary's gaze" (Hamid, 2007). Changez vows to no longer participate in the American capitalist structures harming the larger global stage, including his home.

The postmodern tropes and hyperreality utilized in Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* recognizes the event's semiotic saturation. Allegories create a self-reflexive interpretation of how semiotics played a role in American misconception and nostalgia post-9/11. *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*'s use of allegory functions to subvert normalized understandings and viewpoints of the event, perpetuated by American media, through a non-Western narrator's confrontation of the Western readers' preconceptions. Therefore, there is a conscious subversion of the postmodern trope to highlight how the spectacle tainted Americans understanding of 9/11.

Chapter 2

The Reluctant Fundamentalist is a frame story. Framing the main plot is Changez's discussion with an ambiguous American character at a café in Lahore. Changez recounts his time as an undergraduate at Princeton and a young professional in New York, which makes up the main storyline. The exact identity of the American is never revealed, but Changez perpetually hints he is a CIA agent pairing an equally dynamic and suspenseful frame plot with the main plotline. Told in the second person, the ambiguous American Changez addresses as "you," dually addresses an assumed American/Western reader. This narrative structure is derivative of Albert Camus' *The Fall* second-person narration by the protagonist Jean-Baptiste (similar to Hamid's Juan Bautista). Hamid read Camus during his last year at college and was fascinated by its stylistic choice of addressing the reader as "you." Describing *The Fall* Hamid states, it "changed how I thought books could work. I was amazed by the potential of the 'you', of how much space it could open up in fiction" (2013). Matching Camus' narration, Hamid's frame story reads like a confessional monologue. The metafictional structure and "potential of the 'you'" implicates numerous postmodern techniques including fragmentation, rejection of grand narratives, intertextuality and nonlinearity.

Metafiction, a common trope of postmodern literature "comments on and investigates its own status as fiction as well as questioning our ideas of the relation between fiction, reality and truth," according to prominent postmodern thinker, Linda Hutcheon (Malpas, 2005). These postmodern techniques also work to complicate the authorial voice and dispel myths of the West's superiority in relation to the East.

Disentangling the concept of 'foreigner' as non-Western is continued through animal imagery and predator/prey metaphors. The novel discusses the binary of the West and the East through the relationship of America and Pakistan;

> Since Pakistan's emergence as a nation in 1947, the United States has demonstrated its interest in this nation only during moments of crisis that affected U.S. relations abroad: Pakistan's nuclear proliferation, its relations with the Taliban and Al Qaeda, and military skirmishes over Kashmir. (Chiu, 2014)

America's brutish actions on the world stage continue in the post-9/11 era of the novel—one of the main contributions to Changez's demystification with America. Throughout the dialogue between Changez and the American in the frame story the history of America's role in predominately Muslim countries, such as Pakistan is interrogated.

Hamid's work adds to discussion of the West and the East as the Other founded by Samuel Huntington in *Clash of Civilizations* and Edward Said's *Orientalism*. Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations* discusses how "Islam is represented as the West's main other and is 'seen as a source of nuclear proliferation, terrorism, and, in Europe, unwanted migrants'" (qtd. Ahmed). Edward Said's *Orientalism* discusses how "Islam has always been regarded as belonging to the non-West or Orient, and hence has been looked at 'as if it were one monolithic thing, and then with a very special hostility and fear'" (qtd. Ahmed). In other words, Huntington and Said's work both maintain how Islam has been constructed and defined as non-West. In opposition to the West, the East has been defined with "hostility," "terrorism" alongside other negative stereotypes. Hamid

confirms his postmodern melding of binaries in attempt to negate these stereotypes stating, “In my writing, I have tried to advocate the blurring of boundaries: not just between civilizations or people of different ‘groups,’ but also between writer and reader. Co-creation has been central to my fiction, the notion that a novel is made jointly by a writer and a reader” (2016). Blurring different identities as well as author and reader occur through hyperreal tactics. Hamid’s blurring is completed through the role of allegory, discussed in Chapter 1, functioning through the Western reader’s ability to reconstruct a West/East binary. According to Medovi, “The story of how the narratee responds to the narrator's story thus takes the form of a bi-national allegory, personifying an America confronted with an opportunity to grasp for the first time the actual nature of its relationship to Pakistan” (2011). The second person narration, a second form of allegory, works against harmful binaries between America and Pakistan. The reader’s direct address through the second person allows for a direct relationship and “opportunity” to recreate perceptions of America’s relationship with Pakistan.

Second person

Within the frame story, Changez’s narration perpetually subverts the meaning of foreigner. To be foreign is not to be non-Western. Instead, it is blurred to be in a constant state of change. This intent mirrors the postcolonial scholarship of Said, who spearheaded scholarship surrounding the West’s construction of ‘the East’ as the Other. The othering sense of a foreigner is dismantled by Hamid. This first occurs through Changez’s initial identification of the American in Lahore. It is not “by the color of your skin; we have a

range of complexions in this country, and yours occurs often among the people of our northwest frontier" (Hamid, 2007). It is not the American's clothes that "a European tourist could as easily have purchased" or his "short-cropped" hair and "expansive chest" because "sportsmen and soldiers of all nationalities tend to look alike" (Hamid, 2007). It is his "bearing" that allows Changez to identify him as American (Hamid, 2007). There is a clear attempt to illustrate unexpected resemblances between multiple identities and ethnicities; proving the East is not essentially non-Western. The American's skin tone, suit, physical build are all characteristics of various identities, not just an American's. Hamid plays with what the assumed Western reader sees as American identity traits. For instance, America is not an exclusively white nation. However, when a Western or American reader reads that Changez did not assume the American's identity from "the color of your skin," it is assumed the American is white—because American identity has historically and problematically been conceived through a white lens. The ambiguity in Hamid's language allows the reader to project their associations with American identity into the text. Hamid does not confirm that the American is white, it is the reader who surmises this, playing a role in the construction of the text. Hamid explains the purposeful ambiguity of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* stating, "The novel is not supposed to have a correct answer. It's a mirror. It really is just a conversation, and different people will read it in different ways" (2007). Because second person narration is used throughout the novel, the reader is an active participant in the understanding of the novel that creates various interpretation of what occurs. This allows the language to reflect the reader's preconceptions and biases. Thus, the reader is confronted and challenged by the second

person narration. Hamid ambiguity works to challenge the reader to rethink why they may perceive Americanness as whiteness. Erica's manuscript mirrors Hamid's ideas about his own fiction. When Erica decides to send her manuscript out for publication, she shares her excitement with Changez. Erica describes the project as short; "It leaves space for your thoughts to echo" (Hamid, 2007). This directly mirrors Hamid's intent for his novel to act a mirror, allowing the reader's thoughts to equally take part in the novel's narrative. The insertion of the author's intent of the novel, within the novel creates an increased hyperaware commentary on itself as a representational device—a common postmodern trope.

The structure of the frame story and second person narration of the novel mirrors after Albert Camus' *The Fall*. The novel's first line is Changez introducing himself to the American in Lahore: "Excuse me, sir, but may I be of assistance? Ah, I see I have alarmed you. Do not be frightened by my beard: I am a lover of America" (Hamid, 2007). By introducing himself to the American in the café Changez is simultaneously introducing himself to assumed American readers. Changez speaks dually to the fictional character in the novel and the real reader—a hyperreal blurring between character and reader. The American frightened by Changez's beard uncovers the American's (reader and character) innate biases against Pakistanis with beards due to stereotyping post-9/11. Hamid explains, "The American is acting as if the Pakistani man is a Muslim fundamentalist because of how he looks — he has a beard" (Solomon, 2007). The preconceived notions of an American, who after 9/11 is trained to be wary of a Middle Eastern man with a beard, is challenged through the voice of Changez who directly

speaks to readers saying, “don’t be frightened” and that a Middle Eastern man can have a beard and still be a “lover of America” (Hamid, 2007). It is oxymoronic that Changez must assuage the American character and reader by noting he is “a lover of America” prior to delving into a monologue about his demystification with America. The subject of Changez’s beard is perpetually repeated throughout the story’s arc. Changez is hyperaware of the contentions his beard causes; “Perhaps you have drawn certain conclusions from my appearance, my lustrous beard” (Hamid, 2007). It is comical for Changez to call his beard lustrous, knowing it likely disarms the American. However, this subverts the common American associations with an Islamic man’s beard as a symbol of danger or othering that is likely read in to the novel.

Moreover, the American in the novel does not gain a voice in the novel. The reader must interpret what he says based on what Changez repeats or replies. The dialogue is entirely one sided. The narration of the novel is fully Changez’s who is given a voice to speak to an American audience, likely unfamiliar with Lahore. The novel’s beginning is a clear mirroring of Albert Camus’ *The Fall*, which also invokes a second person narration that flows similarly to Hamid, showing postmodernity’s stylistic, rather than chronological, definition. Camus’ use of the ‘you’ as Hamid’s “guide” is seen in the introduction of *The Fall* (Hamid, 2013). Jean-Baptiste Clamence introduces himself to a stranger in a bar:

> May I, monsieur, offer my services without running the risk of intruding? I fear you may not be able to make yourself understood by the worthy ape who presides

> over the fate of this establishment. In fact, he speaks nothing but Dutch. Unless you authorize me to plead your case, he will not guess that you want gin. (1957)

Clamence's introduction to the stranger in the bar has the same tone as Changez. The stranger has no voice. Clamence is imparting wisdom the stranger does not have in the same way Changez tells the American about Pakistani norms such as various skin colors and American dress available in the city. The ability for Hamid to quote Camus' novel speaks to various postmodern topics discussed throughout this thesis. First, this quotation notes the circularity of postmodernity. To be postmodern is not to be confined within a specific time period, but instead is to fit a specific set of stylistic characteristics. Hamid's quoting Camus also highlights larger postmodern themes of circularity that reshape history and narratives. Hamid's work is a circular postmodern addition to history and narrative of 9/11. 9/11 does not have one grand narrative that holds absolute truth. Instead, history and narratives function nonlinearly with constant ability to be returned to. Using Camus' second person narration allows the reader to be an active participant in the nonlinear focus of history. The reader works alongside the author to reimagine and recreate a 9/11 narrative during each unique reading of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*.

The reader's role in the creation of the text is further seen throughout the various intimations that the American is on a mission to confront, harm or kill Changez. The American's "short cropped" hair, "expansive chest" and appearing like a sportsman or soldier intimated his role in the military or other government agency. The ambiguity of the American's intents and identity is also seen in the various hints he is bearing arms. At the very beginning of the pair's conversation Changez states, "You seem worried. Do not

be; this burly fellow is merely our waiter, and there is no need to reach under your jacket, I assume to grasp your wallet, as we will pay him later, when we are done" (Hamid, 2007). The American's worry that causes him to reach under his jacket is presumed to be him reaching for a gun or weapon. Changez factitiously notes he is reaching for his wallet. This dually creates a trusting tone from Changez, who appear not to fear or detect danger from the American (unlike the American's fear and worry of Changez). Throughout the conversation in the frame story, the American's hand is intimated to be holding his gun: "You stand there with your hand in your jacket. I assure you: no one will attempt to steal your wallet" (2007). Changez's never notes that the American may be reaching for the gun, it is only the summation of context and interpretation, as a reader that surmises this. The role of the American functions to expose the reader's guarded nature in reading the novel about a Pakistani immigrant returned home to be an activist against American interests. The biases ingrained in a Western or American reader that all Muslims appearing men with beards are dangerous creates suspicion that Changez is a radical fundamentalist, despite his appearing frank and confessional in his dialogue with the American. Hamid's intent for the novel to be a mirror also comes with a certain level of questioning the American audiences and critics understanding of what occurs in the novel. Hamid notes, "I often hear it said, at readings or talks ranging from Lahore to Louisiana, that the *Reluctant Fundamentalist* is about a man who becomes an Islamic fundamentalist" noting how many Americans read the novel. "I'm not sure what the term means, exactly, but I have a reasonable idea about the sentences and paragraphs that are actually present in the book" (Hamid, 2013). Hamid sarcastically shows a disconnect

between what is being read into the novel—that Changez was a reluctant fundamentalist—versus what is actually written. There is little to infer that Changez is a reluctant fundamentalist, yet based on racist rhetoric and stereotypes American's hold there is a connection between Changez saying he is Muslim or from Pakistan and being a reluctant fundamentalist.

The American's intent to kill Changez is further read towards the end of the novel when Changez ushers the American to try the dessert. Foreshadowing the end of the novel, Changez asks the American to try a bite, "After all one reads that the soldiers of your country are sent to battle with chocolate in their rations, so the prospect of sugaring your tongue before undertaking even the bloodiest of tasks cannot be entirely alien to you" (Hamid, 2007). In other words, Changez seems to be suggesting that because American soldiers eat chocolate before fighting, chocolate and dessert cannot be unfamiliar to the American he sits with. This also intimates that while they are eating dessert now, it would not be unforeseeable for the American to commit "even the bloodiest of tasks" afterwards (Hamid, 2007). The nonchalance Changez uses to intimate his own death is speculative. The reader understands Changez to be too astute to be oblivious to an American CIA agent perpetually reaching for his gun. This creates a skepticism from readers in Changez's narration. Can the reader trust Changez to say who he really is and give an apt account of his time in America and Lahore if he seems to be lying about his inability to notice that the American man he is having dinner with plotting to kill him? The ease and casual tone Changez undertake in his stream-of-consciousness narrative makes the reader question the intents and 'real' identities of both Changez and

the American. The ambiguity makes it impossible to know what their true intents are, playing to the role of the reader as creator.

To end the last line of the novel, Changez watches the American reach into his pocket; “I detect a glint of metal. I trust it is from the holder of your business cards” (Hamid, 2007). What happens next is uncertain “Whether harm will come to either or both of the men the reader cannot know” (Koppisch, 2018). The ambiguity of the novel forces readers’ participation in understanding what is occurring. Do they believe that the glint of medal is a business card holder or a gun? The ambiguity of the novel seems less purposeful in the reader’s role in understanding and interpreting fully what happened, but rather understanding themselves through their interpretation. As the reader, it seems up to you whether you pull out a business card or a gun on Changez after nearly 200 pages of putting yourself in his shoes and hearing his story. Hamid purposely does not create a single true storyline, but blurs the lines between truth and fiction as well as reader, author and character.

Dismantling the East/West binary and the concept of the foreigner

The use of animal diction and metaphors creates dismantles preconceived notions of the West, the East and the foreigner. Changez compares’ the American’s uneasiness of being in an unfamiliar location to “the behavior of an animal that has ventured too far from its lair and is now, in unfamiliar surroundings, uncertain whether it is predator or prey!” (Hamid, 2007). The animal, not in its home territory is uncertain of its status of power. The role and identity of an animal as predator or prey is constantly changing

based on an animal's environment. Noting the American's wariness of his power in Pakistan, Changez suggests he "relinquish your foreigner's sense of being watched" (Hamid, 2007). The American, symbolic of a hegemonic power—often preying on other's countries for its own benefit, becomes uncertain of its status as "predator or prey" when he is in Lahore. This ability to one's role as predatory and prey to be circumstantial based on one's location questions a fixed definition of foreigner or 'the Other'. Instead of the East being defined as other than the West, (as Said discusses), the American is othered in Pakistan. Locating the frame story in Lahore, when the main storyline occurs in New York, creates a blurring of who is the foreigner when complicating traditional notions of the East as the non-West. The American identifies as the foreigner in Lahore and Changez, as Pakistani identifies as a foreigner in the United States. For instance, immediately after 9/11 Changez tells his coworker his isn't worried: "Pakistan has pledged its support to the United States, the Taliban's threats of retaliation were meaningless, my family would be just fine" (Hamid, 2007). However, Changez intentionally ignores chatter that "Pakistani cabdrivers were being beaten […] the FBI was raiding mosques […] Muslim men were disappearing, perhaps into shadowy detention centers for questioning or worse" (Hamid, 2007). It is clear that in the Unites States, the Pakistani community was prey to United States horrific discriminatory reactions post-9/11.

During dinner, Changez and the American's waiter also resembles prey to United States' "war on terror" post-9/11 that had immense effects in countries like Pakistan and its neighbors. The waiter is dismissive to the American, causing Changez to explain, "His

tribe merely spans both sides of our border with neighboring Afghanistan, and has suffered during offensives conducted by your countrymen" (Hamid, 2007). The American 'war on terror' had real, tangible harm for numerous people. However, for an American it is hard to conceptualize this impact. The American's confrontation of someone directly impacted by American offensives post 9/11 makes this impact more tangible as well as emphasizing American's historical predatory tendencies. Changez notes how it might be odd for an American to conceptualize the impact an attack or war might have on society:

> It will be perhaps odd for you—coming, as you do, from a country that has not fought a war on its soil in living memory, the rare sneak attack or terrorist outrage excepted—to imagine residing within commuting distant of a million or so hostile troops who could, at any moment, attempt a full scale invasion. (Hamid, 2007)

Changez's highlights the reality for many non-American countries to know recent effects of war in its own country. Americans lack of knowledge of what this might mean, but frequent involvement in wars across the globe speak to the roles of predator and prey Hamid seeks to highlight.

The predator/prey metaphor is continued later in the novel when Changez notes the American "jump[s] as though you were a mouse suddenly under the shadow of hawk" (Hamid, 2007). The hawk, commonly symbolic of America's military prowess, instead preys on the American character when he is in Lahore. The American is the mouse, symbolic of the weaker, preyed on, animal. America's traditional role and association as the hawk and predator on the world stage is subverted through this animal metaphor. The

American understands what it feels like to be prey to a hawkish figure. Changez continues to describe the American through animal similes: “Ah, I see that you have detected a scent. Nothing escapes you; your senses are as acute as those of a fox in the wild” (Hamid, 2007). The American’s constant comparison to animals creates an uncommon form of othering the Western individual. It is the citizens of Pakistan and other predominately Muslim countries who face animalistic othering. As Said and Huntington note, the East has been defined in negation to the United States—violent and dangerous. These animalistic descriptors confine the East and allow the West to execute violence. Changez’s language others the American as weak under a hawkish presence as well as animalistic and violent, blurring our perceived differences between East and West. Subverting the common narrative to expose commonly unrecognized voices and experiences allows for a more comprehensive understanding of 9/11. This more comprehensive understanding is a derivative of postmodern blurring between notions of prey and predator; what is true and false? how do we create these distinctions in a semiotic saturated society? are all questions quoting hyperreality.

Subverting notions of American superiority continues through the prey/predator metaphor, when Changez explains Pakistani culinary norms to the American. While sitting at dinner, Changez tells the American,

> Not one of these worthy restauranteurs would consider placing a western dish on his menu. No, we are surrounded instead by the kebab of mutton, the tikka of chicken, the stewed foot of goat, the spiced brain of sheep! These, sir are *predatory* delicacies. (2007)

No western dishes are served. Only "*predatory"* food, native to Pakistan is served. Predator and prey diction continues when Changez explains the common practice of eating food with one's hands in Pakistan. Unlike Changez's initial description of food as predatory, Changez describes their meal as prey: "There is great satisfaction to be had in touching one's prey […] I see you need no further convincing; your fingers are tearing the flesh of that kebab with considerable determination" (Hamid, 2007). The desire to be the predator is evident when Changez's description of their meal as prey engenders the American to "need no further convincing" to eat his food with his hands. Pakistan's norms of being predators who eat meals of their "prey" with their hands cements the intent of the animal imagery and predator/prey metaphor to dispel the common binary of America/the West as predator and the East or the Other as prey. However, Pakistan is portrayed as a predator and the American is put in the position of the Other, the prey.

The blurring of notions of East and West is seen in the arbitrary notion of 'foreigner' constantly in flux throughout the novel's multifarious descriptions of what is "foreign." For example, on a business trip to the Philippines Changez is in a taxi with a colleague. Changez "looked at him—at his fair hair and light eyes and, most of all oblivious minutiae of our work—and thought you are so *foreign.* I felt in that moment much closer to the Filipino driver than to him" (Hamid, 2007). In the Philippines, it is Changez's white colleague who appears as "foreign." Changez identifies more with his non-American, non-white Filipino driver than his white American colleague who he is with and knows personally. However, when Changez is in New York it is his identity and experiences that appear as "foreign." Erica invites Changez to a picnic in Central Park,

noting “This must feel very foreign to you” (Hamid, 2007). However, Changez notes that does not in fact feel foreign to him. Growing up in Pakistan, Changez is perceived as the foreigner in America. The idea that ‘foreigner’ is a static label is dispelled through Changez’s idea that the American is the foreigner when he is in the Philippines and Erica’s perception that American picnics must feel foreign to Changez.

Furthering the subversion of foreign, the similarities between Lahore and New York are emphasized. While drinking tea, Changez tells the American the square they are in is closed off to vehicles during nighttime. In Lahore “it is the man with four wheels who is forced to dismount and become part of the crowd” (Hamid, 2007). The American assumedly comments on the similarity to New York, known for its slow traffic, because Changez states, “Like Manhattan? Yes, precisely! And that was one of the reasons why for me moving to New York felt—so unexpectedly—like coming home” (2007). Pakistan’s cities resemblance to New York is likely surprising for American readers who perceive New York as unique to any other city in the world. However, Changez notices enough resemblance to make New York feel “like coming home” (2007). Moreover, the semblance between Lahore and New York is also noted when Changez is in Erica’s apartment. Changez feels at home in part because the “prestigious apartment in the Upper East Side, was, in American terms the socioeconomic equivalent of a spacious bedroom in the prestigious house in Guldberg, such as the one in which I had grown up” (2007). Changez directly compares the Upper East Side to where he grew up in Guldberg, both affluent areas of their respective cities. Retrospectively noting his initial comfort and ease with his elite lifestyle in New York, Changez states, “I see there was a certain symmetry

to the situation: I felt I was entering in New York the very same social class that my family was falling out in Lahore" (Hamid, 2007). Changez's familiarity with privilege and inclusions to elite social classes is interchangeable between Pakistan and America; both nations have social classes that privileges a select few over others. This does not change between national divides. The ability to note the similarities between the Unites States and Pakistan blurs the distinctions between American readers preconceived notions of the West and the East.

Changez continues to note similarities between Pakistan and American throughout his dialogue with the American. In addition to larger themes of home and familiarity, Changez describes similar national sentiments. When Changez is in American, he notes others appreciation for his proper and formal way of speaking reasoning that "like Pakistan, America is, after all, a former English colony, and it stands to reason, therefore, that an Anglicized accent may in your country continue to be associated with wealth and power, just as it is in mine" (Hamid, 2007). The minute detail of appreciating an English accent is used by Hamid to note similarities between America and Pakistan. Moreover, this complicates the idea that America is the ultimate colonizer. Because of America's imperialization and colonization across the globe, it is often not perceived as an English colony. This is also due to America's writing its own history, which highlights its revolutionary strengths rather than a previous identification as an English colony. Changez's note that Pakistan and the United States are both former English colonies binds the countries' histories, allowing for an uncommon perception of similar history. The similarity in Pakistan and Unites States is also seen in culinary taste,

according to Changez, who states, “I have always felt your country to be rather similar to mine in the intensity of its national desire for sweetness” (Hamid, 2007). Both history and a “desire for sweetness” bear semblance between Pakistan and the United States. Comparing history and food trends allows for readers to bridge commonalities between the countries that are usually posed as direct opposites—the West and East. Instead, Changez notes numerous similarities between the countries commonly known through binaries allowing for a subversion of the East as the Other of the West.

Nostalgia is also used to portray the similarities between Lahore and America. As previously noted, Erica’s nostalgia-related demise is symbolic of America’s post-9/11 nostalgic demise. However, Erica and America are not the only entities succumbing to the dangers of nostalgia. When Changez is first hired by Underwood Samson, he notes his “poor boy’s sense of *longing*” because “*nostalgia*” for previous wealth was his family’s “crack cocaine” and his “childhood was littered with the consequences of their addiction” (Hamid, 2007). The translational harm of nostalgia occurring on the individual (Erica), familial (Changez) and national (America) illustrates the transcendence of boundaries and difference. To utilize hyperreality and blur boundaries is, for Hamid an acknowledge of our similarities and our mutual downfalls as humans. In acknowledging the similarities between the West and the East, Hamid dispels harmful binaries through the portrayal of hyperreality.

Complicating the binary that supports the West as superior to the East, Changez notes times in history when the East proved more powerful than the West. For instance, Changez directly addresses the narrator stating:

> Four thousand years ago, we the people of the Indus River basin, had cities that were laid out on grids and boasted underground sewers while the ancestors of those who would invade and colonize America were illiterate barbarians. Now our cities were largely unplanned unsanitary affairs, and America had universities with individual endowments greater than our national budget for education. (Hamid, 2007)

The role of power flips from Pakistan to America. At first Pakistan exhibits the most innovative and advanced society, while the ancestors of America's colonizers "were illiterate barbarians" (Hamid, 2007). Contemporarily, it is America with the immense power and Pakistan who struggles. The mirroring between both national entities creates a comparison that dispels a monolithic definition of the West as powerful and superior and the East as rudimentary or dangerous. Instead, this description provides a dynamic understanding of history as well as a description of Pakistan, and the East that is not othered as not the West. Instead, the East is celebrated for its rich and unique history, disparate from its definition as opposite of the West. Complicating the monolithic understanding of the East is also seen when Changez states, "We built the Royal Mosque and the Shalimar Gardens in this city […] we did these things when your country was still a collection of thirteen small colonies, gnawing away at the edge of a continent" (Hamid, 2007). Again, the binary of power associated with the West and struggle associated with the East is subverted to show a complex history and understanding of both entities. Moreover, Changez as a Pakistani is creating a history that is not defined by the West that perpetuates stereotypes of superiority to remain in power. Instead, Changez

amplifies a nonlinear postmodern ability to return to the past, to correct and dispel grand narratives.

The postmodern rejection of grand narratives is highlighted when Changez challenges the American's conception of history. The inaccuracy of grand narrative are addressed when Changez states, "I am, after all, telling you a history, and in history, as I suspect you—an American—will agree, it is the thrust of one's narrative that counts, not the accuracy of one's details" (Hamid, 2007). Changez makes a point of America's conviction that creates reality and 'truth,' rather than an apt representation of what occurred in history. Postmodernists reject notions of grand narrative that define single narratives and truths. Baudrillard's notion of hyperreality promotes the skepticism of one single truth. The American media post-9/11 is the main representation of grand narratives Changez rejects in the novel. The ability of the media to create dominate understandings and conceptions of the world is an immense responsibility that can never amount to complete unbiased coverage. The media failed post-9/11 not to contribute to stereotypes and misconception of predominately Muslim countries; as Said maintains, "the dominant, western-based global media and government experts tend to reproduce damaging verbal and visual images of the Muslim world in order to justify western economic and foreign policies towards Iran, Iraq, Palestine, Pakistan or Afghanistan" (Morton, 2013). Baudrillard made note of news coverage during the Gulf War as "a promotional campaign for Western values and might" (Malpas, 2005). A role in the media's harm, according to Baudrillard, is "the competition between the different media companies to acquire most quickly the most spectacular pictures and stories, and the ubiquity of

advertising in all of the coverage, he argues, turn the war into a commodity" (Malpas, 2005). This is similar to the reaction Changez has about the American media's coverage during 9/11. Changez suggests the dangers of the media in creating the Western worlds' perception of the East; "We were not the crazed and destitute radicals you see on your television channels but rather saints and poets and—yes—conquering kings" (Hamid, 2007).

Conclusion

In summation, my thesis is a direct response to the question of postmodern literature's existence and role post-9/11. I argue that postmodernity did not die as it was expected to. *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* is proof of postmodernity's use and contemporary celebration. Post-9/11 fiction, such as *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* predominately uses postmodern tropes in order to understand the event and its meaning and impact on the world stage. *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* was published six years after 9/11. This confirms the use of postmodernity in contemporary fiction's focus on the event. My thesis grapples with exactly how postmodern literary techniques function in post-9/11 and postcolonial fiction. Specifically, Hamid's use of hyperreality creates blurring between individual characters and national entities, author and reader, and the East and West that allows for postcolonial dialogues to be amplified. This transition of the postmodern to work in conjunction with the amplification of minority and disenfranchised voices negates critics of postmodern texts unproductive nihilism that only seems to say: nothing is real. I find the opposite to be true in Hamid's work. Hamid astutely notes the ability of the text to note our imperfect perceptions of truth and reality in a semiotic-saturated world, that privileges and promotes Western, American hegemonic ideas that are not based in truth and reality. The postmodern promotion of skepticism and questioning of ultimate truths and narratives allows for postcolonial subversions of colonial texts and truths.

The use of allegories discloses numerous postmodern tropes in the novel. The allegories of Underwood Samson, Erica and Changez manipulate the reader to understand

9/11 and its political impact through the simultaneous understanding of Changez, Erica and Underwood Samson. Underwood Samson mirrors American capitalism's continuation of violent, imperialistic acts. Erica is symbolic of Am-Erica's nostalgia post-9/11. Changez depicts postmodern themes of an unstable, *change*-ing identity. Changez is Urdu for Genghis, revealing that like Genghis Khan, who fought to destroy Muslim empires, Changez's work in the United States financial industry makes him a participant in America's exploitation and abuse of Muslim-dominated countries. Imbuing the symbolic into the fictional characters' personas questions notions of how we understand the real and the imaginary. Underwood Samson, Erica and Changez all add to an understanding of how America's government and population reacted post-9/11. However, Underwood Samson, Erica and Changez are fictional entities and the American government and population are real. Hyperreal blurring of the literary 'real' and 'fiction' allegorical entities hints at semiotics' role in constructing our society. Literature, alongside media and image, play a role in constructing our society. The imaginary creates the real. This does not support postmodernists, like Baudrillard, who note there are no distinction between true and false. Instead, I aim to note that yes, Americans' reactions of 9/11 were real and characters like Erica are imaginary. However, Erica has the ability to manipulate readers' real experiences to be more critical to American patriotism or global affairs. These real readers' abilities to understand reality through the imaginary makes it impossible to separate the two entities entirely.

The hyperreal blurring of true, false, real and imaginary work to also dispel distinctions between author and reader, East and West. The frame story creates a

narrative structure, derivative of Albert Camus' *The Fall*, that hears Changez directly address an American he recounts his story to. This recounting is metafiction. Hamid self-consciously notes the author's role of speaking to an assumed American audience throughout the novel. The technique creates an almost direct conversation between Changez and the reader. All readers are not all male, military trained, agents on a mission. All Western readers' have ingrained preconceptions of the non-West. Through second person narration Hamid plays with these preconceptions. Using the second person, it is true when Changez notes "you," as an American understand how the world works through a particular lens. The American spends dinner with Changez to hear his story that unravels American understanding and preconceived notions ingrained in them from birth. Changez challenges preconceived American notions through dismantling the fixed concept of foreigner as non-West and showing numerous unexpected similarities between America and Pakistan.

My hope is that this thesis prompts further discussion of postmodernity's role in contemporary and postcolonial fiction. My argument on postmodern tropes used in 9/11 fiction and emphasizing postcolonial issues founds further questions about the evolution of postmodern literature. Prior to Hamid, how has postcolonial and postmodern literature interacted before? Is Hamid spearheading postcolonial conversations through postmodernism or do we see postmodernism and postcolonialism interacting in texts such as Camus'? Specifically, I wonder the extent to which postcolonial and postmodern literature has been in conversation with one another prior to post-9/11 fiction? Does Janet

Wilson's discussion of post-postmodernism relate to an evolution of postmodernism that Hamid takes part in?

One area of postmodernity I was unable to cover, but I think this thesis serves as a solid foundation for, is the role of the author in postmodern texts and author as narrator. Scholar Jenn Brandt found notions of hyperreality at play in the 9/11 novel *Windows on the World* by Frédéric Beigbeder. Autofiction is employed by Beigbeder, who incorporates a character named after himself, with similar identity traits and experiences. Brandt discusses Beigbeder's role as author and his insertion in to the text as a character stating,

> He exploits stereotype through his double narrative in order to expose popular cultural and global rhetoric, and uses autofiction to transcend these tropes. Beigbeder as author continues this rhetorical strategy through his narration of himself as a metaphor for France. (2015)

Through the representation of the narrator in the novel as a character there is a dual function of reality and fiction, literary fiction and non-fiction, novel and memoir. Like Beigbeder, Hamid's experiences are similar to Changez's. Hamid grew up in both Lahore and America, studied at Princeton and worked as a management consultant at McKinsey & Company. Changez also grew up in Lahore and America, studied at Princeton and worked a prestigious financial company. How does authorial reality function in fictional characters' narration? Specifically, in postmodern and postcolonial texts? There is exploration to be had between the relationship of autofiction and metafiction.

An additional area of interest that I was unable to include in the project, but that I am still interested in exploring includes Hamid's other novels in relation to the topics of this thesis. The author's other novels, such as *Moth Smoke* and *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia* all are written after 2000, making them a great case study for the role of postmodernism and postcolonialism interacting in contemporary literature. Janet Wilson notes that all three novels focus "on the impact of changing post-imperial US politics, economics and educational opportunity upon the transnational youth of Pakistan" (2017). With protagonists centered in U.S. and Pakistan transnational politics, each novel is extremely relevant to one another. Additionally, Wilson states, "Hamid has described his second novel, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007), set in New York and Lahore, as the mirror image of *Moth Smoke*, in which the USA is restricted to the narrative periphery" (2017). This begs the question how *Moth Smoke* and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* are in conversation with each other? What can we learn from comparing the two? Is the mirroring between the two novels a performance of postmodernity?

The meta-performance of postmodernity can also be explored in the novel's adaptation to a movie and it cover designs. The novel's immense focus on semiotics makes me curious how this focus was converted for the screen? Does the movie adaptation allow for a further questioning of fiction/reality and hyperreality or does it refocus the novel? Furthermore, how does the lack of ambiguity from a movie, which has a visibly white American talking with Changez affect viewers' interpretation of the story? The publishing decisions behind the novel also spark questions for me. The most common cover for the book is a young man kneeling under an arc that hints to Arabic

architecture or an image from the film adaptation. The less common cover seen has images of the Pakistani flag. The imagined audience of the novel can likely be interpreted from further knowledge on the number of covers printed in each design and if there were any geological factors to where each cover was disseminated.

I am also interested in the continued conversation surrounding the implications of race and gender in the novel. How are racialized characters besides Changez presented and interpreted? For instance, how does race impact Changez's relationship with Wainwright the only other person of color in Underwood Samson's incoming class of employees. Underwood Samson's Executive Vice President Jim sees himself in Changez for their mutual "hunger" and lower class economic background. However, Jim is American and white. How is race at play when Jim tells Changez, "We came from places that were wasting away […] They try to resist change. Power comes from *becoming* change" (Hamid, 2007). How does race complicate Jim and Changez's relationship? Furthermore, how do we understand the novel's use of "you" for a non-American or a non-white reader? How does the racial identity of the reader alter the reading of the novel? Moreover, I think it is imperative to continue the investigation of gender at play in the novel as well as 9/11 fiction. Anker notes, "Many 9/11 novels marginalize their female characters, whether by disempowering them or sidelining their perspectives entirely" (2011). What does the trend male-dominated narrators in 9/11 fiction tell us about this specific literary niche? Are there gender stereotypes at play in Erica's portrayal in the novel— understanding her through Changez's male gaze and her psychological

demise. How does America's parallel to a female character as well as a finance company create stereotypical gendered depictions of the country?

Lastly, during this project I was also unable to fully discuss Erica's manuscript mirroring Hamid's ideas about his own fiction and theorist Maurice Blanchot's postmodern idea on the impossibility of death. I think there is apt parallels to Blanchot in the ambiguity of Erica's death and Erica's mom passing along of her manuscript to Changez after her disappearance (Blanchot, 2015). This begs the question of how literature creates an impossibility of death? And how the impossibility of death works in postmodern literature? The ambiguity of death is also seen at the end of the novel when it is left open ended whether or not the American is attempting to kill Changez? Is Hamid evoking Blanchot when no characters explicitly die in the novel? If yes, how does the impossibility of death interact with event of 9/11 that cause very explicit and real deaths of almost 3,000 New Yorkers?

These stated questions show an immense opportunity for academic conversations revolving around postmodern tropes' connecting to contemporary, postmodern, and postcolonial fiction.

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