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Exploring Spatio-Temporal And Psycho-Ideological Narrative Dimensions in Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*

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ABSTRACT

This research deals with the investigation of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, a work written by a renowned modern writer Mohsin Hamid. The text is explored through the lens of Uspensky-Fowler's model. According to this model, four narrative dimensions can be analyzed within a text. These are spatial, temporal, ideological and psychological narrative perspectives. Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* has garnered a global appreciation owing to the representation of pre and post 9/11 realities. It examines the influences of Changez's journey from Lahore, an emblem of cultural significance, to New York representing the world overpowered by the incidents of 9/11. It also explores the intricacies of his evolving beliefs pertaining to these post 9/11 scenarios. This cultural transition portrays Changez's internal struggles and examines the effects of ideological perspectives in shaping his identity. Throughout, Changez seems struggling to reconcile with his Pakistani roots amid changing sociopolitical atmosphere in the West. This juggling with identity formation is demonstrated by the juxtaposition of different geographical and temporal landscapes. This further elaborates Changez's inner turmoil driven by psychological conflicts representing his shifting beliefs and values. The juxtaposition of these dimensions determines the way in which perception of time and location are influenced by these narrative choices. The ideologies and psychological perspectives of Changez driven by the influence of different locales, investigation of temporal dynamics, criticism on prevalent social ideologies and power structures and investigation of protagonist's inner world are also analyzed. This elaborated analysis supports that the themes of identity formation, clash of cultural ideologies and the chaos of global politics in pre and post 9/11 world forms the basic skeleton of the text. The utility of Uspensky-Fowler's model gives us insightful depictions of the embedded narrative choices that regulate the textual interpretations.

Key words: Narrative Analysis, Spatial Dimension, Temporal Dimension, Ideological Dimension, Psychological Dimension, Identity Formation, Cultural Dislocation, Pre And Post 9/11, Narrative Choices, Societal Norms, Power Structures, Inner Turmoil, Global Politics.

Introduction:

Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007) is a novel written in post-colonial context that explores the themes of identity crisis, psychological conflicts, ideological shifts resulting from incidents of 9/11. *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, written in 2007,



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was nominated for Man Booker Prize and has been adapted to film. The context of the novel revolves around the incidents of 9/11 attacks and its impacts on the main character, Changez. The novel opens as a monologue in a café in Lahore where Changez narrates his experiences that are marked by his earlier ambitious life to later disillusioned life.

The overwhelming sense of progress in American land marks the beginning of Changez's journey. He moves to United States considering it a land of possibilities and gateway to success. He becomes a successful financial analyst in a top valuation firm after reaching academic heights at Princeton University in New York. However, incidents of 9/11 change his life significantly. With the passage of time, he develops a heightened feeling of frustration in the land he once admired. The discrepancies and conflicting moral values of the corporate American society make him feel his achievements as superficial and meaningless. This sense of unsatisfying success is enhanced by the nationalist and suspicious reaction of U.S. towards the Muslim community after 9/11 attacks. This sociopolitical turmoil also marks significant influences on personal life of Changez which is depicted in his connections with Erica, that also portrays his coping struggles. Erica was an American woman striving to come to terms with her past love. Erica's inability to let go of her past reflects Changez's inefficiency to harmonize his Muslim and Pakistani identity with his American life. Eventually, Changez decides to leave United States and return to Pakistan, where he becomes a university lecturer and a vocal critic of U.S. foreign policy.

Using Uspensky-Fowler's four way model of point of view, the meanings are understood with reference to four major dimensions. These are spatial, temporal, ideological, and psychological narratives. The novel portrays Changez's thinking patterns and emotions in his one sided conversation with the unknown American. Hamid uses this monologue narrative technique to demonstrate the impact of spatio-temporal and ideo-psychological narrative dimensions on the life of Changez. This shift of spaces during different time intervals brought a significant change in his identity formation regulating his ideologies and beliefs and subsequently transforming him from a devotee of American values to an unaccommodating individual who can no longer stick to the very ideals and makes his final return to his eastern roots and culture.

Objectives Of Study

This study aims to explore the impact of different geographical locations on development of protagonist's identity and ideology. It also analyzes the transformation of Changez as he experiences multiple incidents during different intervals of time across different geographical locations. The research also aims to study the ideological dimension of narrative structure focusing on shifting beliefs and values in pre and post 9/11 world. It provides an in-depth exploration of monologue narrative to study protagonist's internal conflicts and emotional journey. Above all it studies the application of Uspensky-Fowler's four way model of point of view on a contemporary text to show its relevance and utility in analyzing modern literary texts.

Research Questions

The text has been explored and investigated to answer the following questions.

How is narrative perspective in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* significant in portraying spatio-temporal ideologies?

How does the psychological thematic analysis reveal the emotional journey of the protagonist, Changez?

How do narrative choices reveal the ideological tensions in Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*?



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Literature Review

The *Reluctant Fundamentalist* by Mohsin Hamid explores in great detail the complicated and dynamic relationship that developed between the United States and the Muslim world in the wake of the September 11 attacks. It highlights themes of nostalgia, alienation, and distrust through Changez's experiences. Changez, a Pakistani immigrant who first succeeds as a financial analyst in New York before progressively losing faith in his American life, is the protagonist of the story. The protagonist's journey between Lahore and New York symbolizes the prevailing tensions between East and West and the strong influence they cast on individual lives in shaping identities and ideologies.

Aldalala presents a deeper analysis of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* through a post-colonial lens, focusing on these geographical tensions between the Muslim and American world. Aldalala highlights how these international events create tensions and shape identities, particularly for individuals like Changez, who navigates the complex interplay of assimilation and alienation. Aldalala provides valuable insight into the macro-level political and social tensions; however, it leaves a gap in examining how these tensions unfold within the spatio-temporal framework of the narrative and how they are psychologically and ideologically internalized by Changez.

Personal relationships presented by Mohsin Hamid in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* serve as a lens to demonstrate the way larger geopolitical rivalries shape them, especially in the post-9/11 environment. The protagonist, Changez, navigates his personal relationships as Islamophobia and shifting East-West dynamics intensify. The interaction exposes the extent to which personal experiences have been profoundly affected by the tension around the world. Woltmann (2018) argues that *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* makes great use of Changez's personal relationships as a representation of larger conflicts in the world, especially in the post-9/11 era. Woltmann emphasizes the symbolic importance of the relationship between Changez and Erica and his life in the U.S., which serve as metaphors of the East-West cultural schism and ideological conflict that define this period. Woltmann analyzes the way in which the personal dimension is the manifestation of larger geopolitical conflicts, making individual relations symbolic in terms of national and world ideological shifts.

Yet, the theme of conveying these ideas has not been exhaustively covered by Woltmann. Where Woltmann focuses on the thematic similarities between individual and international battles, the conducted study penetrates into the mechanisms Hamid uses to create these parallels. This includes resources such as time, space, and Changez's internal psychological process in the investigation of how alterations in time and space, as well as Changez's changing ideological awareness, add to the comprehension of these broader conflicts.

Munos (2012) and Khan (2021) consider the way *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* demonstrates the changing nature of the relationship between America and its Muslim 'others' in the post-9/11 period. Munos emphasizes that the way Changez was first impressed by the American corporate environment and lifestyle is a larger depiction of the strong desire in immigrants to achieve success in the West. After the attacks, however, Changez experiences a great identity crisis, which is a microcosm of the overall disillusionment that was felt by a large number of Muslims in America at this period. This change supports the idea of the changing attitudes towards Muslim identity in American society, especially the role of the outside world in triggering inner struggles about identification and belonging. This work, through the study of the spatial shift between America and Pakistan and the fluidity of time, reveals the feeling of dislocation and change in Changez's worldview. It also explores the psychological implications of



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the circumstances that Changez undergoes, exposing how his internal conflict and ideological changes are closely knit in the narrative of the novel.

Khan (2021) expands on this theme by discussing how Muslims have been negatively reacted to in the U.S. society after 9/11. It is possible to argue that the novel is a product of the alienation and ‘othering’ of Muslim individuals. Khan speaks of how Changez’s experiences sum up the antagonism between assimilation and cultural identity, with a focus on the psychological and emotional distress that arises due to the crisis of identity amid shifting geopolitical events. The two studies are valuable clues about the personality of Changez and the socio-political reality of the story, yet they mainly dwell on thematic analysis and its implication for the identity crisis that Changez experiences without a greater analysis of the narrative techniques so skillfully utilized by Hamid to present these complexities. The current gap has been addressed by this research, which discusses the spatio-temporal and psycho-ideological dimensions that lead to the transformation of Changez. By examining the interaction of the personal and political aspects via narrative structures, this study brings out the ways the novel not only criticizes society’s attitudes towards Muslims in a post-9/11 scenario but also shows the complex psychological mechanisms of identity formation.

Munos (2012) explores this issue of how the identity crisis caused by 9/11 events reveals deeper racial subjugation and tensions, evident in Changez’s relations with white Americans in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. He claims that Changez had first accepted the American corporate culture, depicting the fascination of his American dream. But this image starts to fall apart after the 9/11 events as Changez realizes his own existence as a racialized being and faces sky-high boundaries to his acceptance in American society. Munos stresses that the novel captures the melancholic overtones of Changez’s relationships, especially emphasizing the way in which his interactions with white Americans represent a larger story of racial othering, exclusion, and the emotional toll of maneuvering through an environment that beckons him and excludes him at the same time.

Bordas (2017) analyzes *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* in terms of performative subalternity, positionality, and the issues of acculturation of Muslim immigrants in post-9/11 America. According to Bordas, Changez’s identity is determined by his status as a subaltern character who has to find his way in a society which is becoming more and more unfriendly to Muslims. The principle of performative subalternity is important in the comprehension of Changez’s efforts to adapt to the American corporate culture and at the same time struggle with his cultural identity. Bordas notes that Changez’s performative acts—his adaptation to American society and success in the corporate world—are diminished by his racial and cultural backgrounds. This positioning, particularly in the post-9/11 period, made him no longer considered part of the American “We” but rather as an outsider. The work of Bordas illuminates the performative nature of Changez’s identity and his shifting positionality as a representative of the greater socio-political conflicts between the West and the Muslim world. Nevertheless, the emphasis is put on Changez’s performative acts and his social positioning without an elaborated examination of the narrative techniques Hamid uses to portray such dynamics. This research addresses this gap by analyzing the spatio-temporal and psycho-ideological dimensions that underpin Changez’s journey, focusing on how Hamid uses spatial contrasts, such as Changez’s movement between America and Pakistan, and temporal shifts to highlight the fluidity and instability of his positionality. Additionally, this work also examines the psychological depth of Changez’s narrative, showing how his internal struggle is not just a result of external societal pressures but also intricately connected to



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the broader geopolitical landscape.

Rajab's (2022) analysis of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* explores the monologue narrative technique used by Mohsin Hamid to highlight the complexities of identity and cultural tensions in a post-9/11 context. Rajab stresses the fact that this structure enables Changez to express his interpersonal struggles and a sense of belonging that is constantly shifting, which brings out his dual identity of being both an achieving immigrant and a non-assimilated 'other'. Contrasting worldviews are presented in the story via Changez and the unnamed American stranger, shedding light on self-disillusionment and the greater cultural misconceptions. However, Rajab is primarily more concerned with the thematic implications, disregarding the dynamics of space and time. This research fills this gap by analyzing the effect of the interaction between time and space in the story that enhances the depiction of Changez's transformation, identity, nostalgia, and alienation. By connecting narrative structure to broader themes of multiculturalism, it enriches Rajab's insights, illustrating that understanding identity in the novel requires consideration of both psychological and spatio-temporal dimensions.

Almeida (1987) dwells upon the temporal organization of narratives by offering such concepts as the "narrative now-point" and the "narrative-line," which are useful to describe the chronology of events and their interaction in a text. He stresses the fact that the "narrative now-point" is a pivotal moment, concentrating the impression of time in the mind of the reader, and the "narration-line" of the story provides integrity by connecting events together. Although the analysis by Almeida has a foundational character, it is more concerned with technological elements of the sequencing of time and less concerned with the psychological and ideological consequences of time manipulation. This research fills this gap through the application of Almeida's concepts to *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* by Mohsin Hamid, showing how the critical moments in the story are indicative of the shifting psychological condition of Changez's intra-state and interstate conflicts. This work, by pointing out the non-linear nature of the narrative, unveils the temporal disjunction as a reflection of Changez's inner fragmentation and enhances it by relating temporal organization to character development and ideological expression. It is a multidimensional method that strengthens the comprehension of narrative strategies in post-9/11 literature, demonstrating how temporal manipulation is a planned resource to discuss the topics of identity, nostalgia, and cultural dissonance.

Narrative analysis was pioneered by Bobrow and Collins (1975), who changed the focus of the analysis from classical cognitive psychology to a holistic perception of mental processes and personal experiences reflected in the narratives. They stressed that narratives are cognitive systems by which people structure experiences, construct understanding of the world, and develop identities. Their study involved the focus on narrative coherence in understanding memory, thought, and decision-making. Nevertheless, they failed to interrogate the ideological and psychological reinforcements of narrative time and space or their interconnection with socio-political contexts. This study fills this gap by examining the spatio-temporal and psycho-ideological aspects that are presented in Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. It shows how the ideological conflicts and psychological processes regarding post-9/11 identity are revealed through narrative techniques like temporal shifts and spatial displacements. This study demonstrates how narrative structures work to shape the reader's understanding of time and space to represent internal conditions and external ideological conflict, which adds to the knowledge base of narrative analysis by integrating the complicated interplay of ideology, psychology, and spatio-temporal constructs, emphasizing the evolving position of narratives in a politically polarized world.



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Luke (1989) presents the idea of the open and closed texts in order to examine the way narrative structures have an impact on the interpretations of readers and project ideological messages. Closed texts guide the readers to certain interpretations, strengthening mainstream ideologies, but open texts are those which are open to various interpretations. He insists on the power of narrative form and organization in the formulation of ideological involvement. Luke analyzes binary classification and does not actually delve into the way spatio-temporal and psychological dimensions intersect with ideology. The gap is filled by looking at the way narrative techniques serve as an example of the complex ideological space that the protagonist, Changez, traverses, demonstrating how the text functions as an open invitation to ask questions about post-9/11 dynamics, as well as a closed description of a certain ideological path. This piece of work broadens the study, incorporating spatio-temporal movements and psychological aspects, showing how stories may constrain and liberate the reader's access to ideology, eventually giving a picture of the interaction between the narrative forms and the ideological approach to modern literature.

The ideological dimension of the plot, especially in Soliman's (2022) analysis of *The Coast of Utopia* by Tom Stoppard using Labov's narrative model and discourse analysis by Fairclough, emphasizes the importance of micro-structural aspects such as narrative style. Interactions between characters and these structural aspects present certain ideological positions. The work by Soliman is in agreement with Luke's notions of open and closed texts through the manifestation of the dynamic interrelation between form and meaning in narratives. This study, entitled *Exploring Spatio-Temporal and Psycho-Ideological Narrative Dimensions in Hamid's The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, is based on this discourse, using similar narrative theories and examining how various landscapes are used to indicate the identity crises of the protagonist Changez in a post-9/11 setting. This work underscores the importance of the spatio-temporal and psycho-ideological dimension in the expression of complex ideological problems and how the narrative structures negotiate and challenge dominant ideologies, especially concerning communities like the Muslim Other in modern society.

Research Methodology

This study uses Uspensky-Fowler's four-way model of point of view as the primary tool for the analysis of the text of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. This model investigates the way spatial, temporal, ideological, and psychological narrative dimensions help in the progression of themes and the construction of meanings within a specific text. The analysis of the spatial dimension determines the influence of Lahore, New York, and Princeton on Changez's identity and the way these areas change his ideology and worldview. The temporal dimension uses different techniques, such as flashbacks, to depict a shift between Changez's past and present, determining his psychological and ideological transformation. The ideological dimension studies the evolving ideologies resulting from the 9/11 incidents and Changez's subsequent experiences in the corporate world of America. The psychological dimension delves into the exploration of Changez's psychological conflicts and the way his emotional journey is portrayed through the monologue narrative technique.

Analysis and Discussion:

The research explores *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* through Uspensky-Fowler's four-way model of point of view, analyzing how the spatial, temporal, psychological, and ideological narrative dimensions shape the protagonist, Changez. The novel, set against the backdrop of post-9/11 tensions, presents a fragmented and introspective narrative that



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examines Changez's transformation from an ambitious immigrant in America to a disillusioned critic of Western imperialism. His shifting identity is deeply tied to his movement between Lahore, New York, and Princeton, as well as the ideological ruptures he experiences over time. These dimensions do not function in isolation but instead work together to depict Changez's inner conflicts and the external forces shaping his worldview. The novel's non-linear monologue structure further enhances its exploration of identity, alienation, and ideological disillusionment.

The spatial dimension in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* is a crucial narrative element that mirrors Changez's evolving identity, ideological transformation, and psychological conflict. Space in the novel is not merely a physical backdrop but an active agent shaping Changez's experiences and self-perception. Through his movement between Lahore, New York, Princeton, and the corporate world of Underwood Samson, Mohsin Hamid constructs a complex spatial fabric that reflects the tensions between tradition and modernity, belonging and alienation, power and marginalization. Changez's journey across these spaces is symbolic of his internal struggle, as each location influences his ideological and psychological state.

Lahore, Changez's hometown, is presented as a space of cultural richness, familial bonds, and emotional grounding. It represents his roots, a place that embodies history, identity, and continuity. Changez describes it as, "a city of gardens, an elaborate and crowded garden of stone and concrete, with monuments to various gods," evoking a sense of nostalgia and belonging. Lahore's sensory vibrancy—its sounds, smells, and social warmth—contrasts with the impersonal and mechanized world of New York. However, Lahore is not just a space of refuge; It is also where Changez undergoes introspection and ideological reformation. The café where he narrates his story becomes a liminal space, serving as both a physical and psychological threshold where he negotiates his past and present. He describes the café as "an island of calm amidst the stormy sea of suspicion and distrust," highlighting its role as a space of confrontation and reflection. This setting is where Changez, having returned from America, reclaims his cultural and ideological identity, using it as a platform to critique Western imperialism and articulate his newfound worldview.

In stark contrast, New York initially represents ambition, modernity, and the realization of the American Dream. Changez is mesmerized by the city's grandeur: "a marvel, the streets full of life and ambition, the skyline towering, a symbol of America's success and my own aspirations." The towering skyscrapers and relentless energy of the city symbolize his early optimism and belief in meritocracy. Princeton, as an extension of this Western ideal, provides him with access to an elite intellectual sphere, reinforcing his belief in the promise of success through hard work. Yet, despite his initial admiration, Changez soon perceives the undercurrents of exclusion and elitism in these spaces. Princeton, though intellectually stimulating, is also alienating: "a fortress of intellectual exclusivity, where my outsider status was constantly reinforced." The metaphor of a fortress suggests the rigid social and racial boundaries that mark his experience, foreshadowing his later disillusionment.

As Changez transitions into the corporate world of Underwood Samson, space takes on a new dimension—one of power and dehumanization. The company's offices, with their glass walls and minimalist décor, epitomize capitalist efficiency but also emotional detachment. Changez, initially eager to assimilate into this world, begins to feel its hollowness: "The city's skyscrapers loomed over me like silent sentinels, their glass facades reflecting a world that felt increasingly distant and indifferent." The reflective glass, a recurring motif, symbolizes Changez's growing self-awareness and the



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realization that he is an outsider within this space. His increasing discomfort is exacerbated by post-9/11 surveillance and Islamophobia, as the city that once welcomed him now views him with suspicion. The transformation of New York from a space of possibility to a site of exclusion underscores the novel's critique of Western attitudes toward immigrants, particularly those from Muslim backgrounds.

The novel's spatial hierarchy further reinforces these themes of belonging and alienation. The corporate world of Underwood Samson, the intellectual elitism of Princeton, and the bustling competitiveness of New York exist in opposition to the warmth and familiarity of Lahore. This hierarchy is not just geographical but also ideological, reflecting global power structures where Western spaces dominate and Eastern spaces are perceived as peripheral. However, Changez's journey disrupts this hierarchy. His movement from the periphery (Lahore) to the center (New York) and back again challenges the notion that success and belonging are defined by Western validation. Instead, by returning to Lahore, he reclaims his agency, rejecting the capitalist and imperialist ideals imposed by the Western world.

Spatial transitions in the novel also serve as markers of Changez's ideological transformation. When he first arrives in New York, he embraces its fast-paced energy, believing that he can carve out a successful future for himself. However, as geo-political tensions rise and he experiences racial discrimination, his perception of space shifts. The streets that once symbolized ambition now represent hostility; the corporate office that once promised success now signifies exploitation. His eventual departure from America and return to Lahore signify a complete ideological reversal. The café in Lahore, where he recounts his story, becomes the ultimate space of self-assertion, where he fully embraces his Pakistani identity and critiques American imperialism.

The interplay of open and enclosed spaces further reinforces Changez's evolving worldview. Open spaces, such as the streets of Lahore and New York, initially symbolize freedom and possibility. However, post-9/11, these spaces become sites of surveillance and suspicion, as Changez realizes that his presence in public is viewed through a lens of fear and prejudice. Enclosed spaces, such as the offices of Underwood Samson and Princeton's elite circles, represent confinement, restriction, and the imposition of structured identities. The café, while physically enclosed, functions as an open space in a metaphorical sense—an intellectual arena where Changez challenges dominant narratives and asserts his own.

The temporal dimension in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* plays a pivotal role in structuring Changez's journey, mirroring his shifting consciousness and ideological transformation. Hamid employs a non-linear narrative, frequent flashbacks, and temporal disjunctions to reflect the protagonist's evolving perspective on identity, belonging, and disillusionment. The novel's dramatic monologue format allows Changez to weave together past and present, engaging the reader in an ongoing process of reinterpretation. By manipulating time, Hamid not only deepens Changez's psychological complexity but also reinforces the themes of nostalgia, alienation, and ideological conflict.

The novel unfolds in two parallel temporal planes—the present moment in the Lahore café, where Changez narrates his story to an American listener, and the recollected past, which spans his experiences in Princeton, New York, and post-9/11 America. This dual structure serves to highlight the contrast between who Changez was and who he has become. His past self is characterized by ambition, optimism, and an embrace of Western ideals, while his present self is disillusioned, reflective, and critical of the very system he once admired. The constant oscillation between past and present creates a layered temporal experience, compelling the reader to view Changez's transformation as an



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ongoing process rather than a singular moment of change.

The use of flashbacks is central to the novel's exploration of Changez's ideological and emotional evolution. These flashbacks often emerge in response to present stimuli in the café, suggesting that Changez is not simply recounting a linear past but actively reshaping his memories through the lens of his current ideological stance. For instance, when he recalls his arrival in America, he describes New York as, "a marvel, the streets full of life and ambition, the skyline towering, a symbol of America's success and my own aspirations." This moment captures his early optimism and the allure of the American Dream. However, as the narrative progresses, his recollections become more disillusioned, culminating in the realization that New York's success is built on exclusion and corporate exploitation. He later reflects, "Looking back, the triumphs of my time in New York felt hollow, overshadowed by the disillusionment I now face." This shift in perspective underscores the temporal fluidity of memory, where past experiences are continuously reinterpreted in light of present ideologies.

The 9/11 attacks serve as a critical temporal rupture in the novel, marking a before-and-after moment that reconfigures Changez's worldview. Prior to 9/11, he is fully immersed in American corporate culture, excelling at Underwood Samson and embracing the capitalist ethos. However, the attacks destabilize his sense of belonging, making him acutely aware of his racial and cultural identity. His unsettling reaction—smiling upon seeing the Twin Towers collapse—is a moment of temporal and psychological dissonance. He later reflects on this reaction, recognizing it as a subconscious realization that America's global dominance was not invincible. He states, "My sense of time and belonging, as well as my place in the world, changed in an instant." This temporal rupture is significant because it marks the beginning of his ideological break from America, even though his outward transformation unfolds gradually.

Temporal boundaries and hierarchies in the novel also shape Changez's experiences. In the world of Underwood Samson, time is structured around productivity, efficiency, and financial success. Changez is trained to evaluate companies based on their economic potential, embodying the Western corporate mentality where time is commodified. He recalls, "At Underwood Samson, time was measured in metrics of success, and I felt I was moving swiftly upward." However, as he grows disillusioned, his perception of time shifts from one of linear progress to one of stagnation and cyclical reflection. He begins to view his corporate achievements as meaningless, realizing that the metrics of success imposed by capitalism are devoid of emotional and cultural significance.

The novel also employs temporal symbolism to reinforce Changez's psychological and ideological state. His relationship with Erica, for instance, is deeply tied to time and memory. Erica is trapped in the past, unable to move on from the death of her former lover, Chris. Her inability to let go mirrors Changez's own struggle to reconcile his past and present identities. He states, "Erica existed in a time that was no longer mine, her mind wandering into the past even when I was right beside her." This temporal disconnect between Changez and Erica symbolizes the broader disjunction between his initial aspirations and his evolving disillusionment. Just as Erica is unable to live in the present, Changez finds himself increasingly distanced from the Western ideals he once embraced.

Changez's return to Lahore marks another significant temporal transition, signaling his complete ideological departure from Western capitalism. Unlike in New York, where time is structured around ambition and productivity, Lahore represents a slower, more introspective sense of time. He notes, "Going back to Lahore felt like going into a different era, where my past ambitions seemed far off and irrelevant." This shift in



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temporal perception underscores his final rejection of the Western ideals that once defined him. Lahore, as a space, allows him to reconnect with his cultural roots, and its temporal rhythms reflect his new priorities—reflection, critique, and activism rather than relentless progress.

The café setting in Lahore serves as a temporal anchor, bridging past and present while also reinforcing the novel's suspenseful, ambiguous structure. The entire novel takes place within the span of one evening, yet within this brief time frame, Changez recounts years of his life, collapsing temporal boundaries and making the reader question the reliability of his narration. The ambiguity surrounding the unnamed American listener further complicates the novel's temporality—while Changez's past unfolds through his storytelling, the tension in the present builds as the conversation progresses toward an uncertain conclusion. The novel's ending, which leaves the reader unsure of whether the American is a threat or whether Changez himself poses a danger, disrupts traditional narrative closure, keeping the temporal experience of the reader open-ended and unresolved.

The psychological dimension in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* is central to Changez's transformation, illustrating his internal conflicts, emotional turmoil, and shifting self-perception as he navigates different cultural, ideological, and personal spaces. Mohsin Hamid uses Changez's introspective monologue to expose his fragmented sense of identity, shaped by his ambitions, disillusionments, and growing awareness of the power structures around him. The novel explores how psychological distress, alienation, and identity crises are deeply intertwined with external geopolitical realities, particularly in the post-9/11 world, where Changez becomes increasingly aware of his marginalization.

At the heart of Changez's psychological journey is cognitive dissonance, a mental conflict that arises from his struggle to reconcile his Pakistani heritage with his Western aspirations. When he first arrives in America, he embraces the country's ideals, believing that hard work and intelligence will allow him to integrate into the elite social and corporate circles. Princeton and Underwood Samson offer him the illusion of belonging, reinforcing his belief that he is "no different from my peers, a successful individual among other successful individuals." However, as he begins to recognize the implicit hierarchies and racial prejudices that define his interactions, his sense of security starts to unravel. His growing realization that he is perceived as an outsider leads to a crisis of identity, forcing him to question whether his success is genuine or merely conditional upon his ability to suppress his cultural background.

This psychological tension is most evident in Changez's reaction to the 9/11 attacks. Instead of feeling fear or solidarity with his American peers, he experiences an unexpected moment of satisfaction upon seeing the Twin Towers collapse. This reaction is not an indication of malice but rather a subconscious expression of his own suppressed resentment and alienation. He later reflects, "I smiled, not because I was happy at the death and destruction, but because I saw the arrogance of America humbled for the first time." This moment is a turning point in his psychological state, marking the beginning of his disillusionment with the American Dream. The fact that he himself is disturbed by his reaction demonstrates the depth of his internal conflict—his mind is caught between two worlds, neither of which he can fully claim as his own.

Changez's psychological instability is further compounded by his relationship with Erica, which serves as a metaphor for his unfulfilled desire to integrate into American society. Erica, haunted by the death of her former lover, Chris, is unable to fully engage with the present, living instead in a nostalgic attachment to the past. Changez, desperate for acceptance, tries to fill the void left by Chris, hoping that if Erica can love him, it will



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validate his place in America. However, just as Erica is unable to move on from Chris, America too remains fixated on its past, especially in the wake of 9/11, seeing individuals like Changez not as individuals but as representatives of a collective foreign “Other.” Erica’s psychological struggles parallel Changez’s own—both are caught between past and present, between memory and reality, unable to bridge the gap between who they are and who they wish to be. Her gradual withdrawal and eventual disappearance symbolize Changez’s final psychological detachment from America, as he realizes that no amount of assimilation can make him truly belong.

Hamid also portrays psychological alienation through Changez’s shifting self-awareness and paranoia. As he grows more critical of American foreign policies and its treatment of Muslims, he begins to perceive hostility in everyday interactions. What were once friendly exchanges now seem laced with suspicion. He observes, “I felt the weight of being watched, the eyes of the people on the subway, the scrutiny of the airport officials.” His sense of paranoia intensifies as he starts questioning whether he is truly safe in America. The psychological burden of being the ‘Other’ is not just an abstract concept but a lived reality that affects his mental well-being. His growing unease is mirrored in the novel’s framing device—his conversation with the unnamed American in the Lahore café—which is filled with underlying tension. Changez himself appears uncertain about the American’s intentions, oscillating between hospitality and suspicion. The ambiguous nature of their interaction reflects Changez’s own mental state—he is no longer certain of his place in the world, nor can he trust the motives of those around him. The novel also explores psychological displacement through Changez’s shifting perception of home and belonging. Initially, he views Lahore as a place of nostalgia, something distant yet comforting. However, as his disillusionment with America grows, Lahore becomes more than just a memory—it transforms into a site of ideological and emotional refuge. When he finally returns, he describes the city in deeply personal and reflective terms: “Going back to Lahore felt like stepping into a world where I was no longer split between two selves.” This moment signifies his psychological reconciliation—he no longer feels the need to prove himself to America or to fit into its expectations. Instead, he embraces his Pakistani identity fully, rejecting the notion that success must be defined by Western standards. His return to Lahore is not just a physical movement but a psychological resolution, as he finally accepts who he is without the need for external validation.

Hamid’s use of the monologue format enhances the psychological depth of the novel, allowing Changez to reconstruct his identity through storytelling. The act of narrating his experiences to the American listener becomes a form of self-exploration, a way for him to process his past and solidify his ideological stance. However, the narrative remains deliberately ambiguous—does Changez fully believe in his own version of events, or is he still searching for certainty? The lack of clear resolution mirrors the psychological complexity of identity formation, suggesting that Changez, like many individuals caught between cultures, may never achieve complete closure.

In conclusion, the psychological dimension of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* is integral to understanding Changez’s transformation. His cognitive dissonance, emotional alienation, and shifting sense of identity illustrate the profound impact of geopolitical and cultural tensions on individual psychology. Through his experiences in America, his relationship with Erica, and his ultimate return to Lahore, Changez undergoes a deep psychological journey from ambition to alienation, from uncertainty to ideological clarity. Hamid’s use of introspection, paranoia, and fragmented memory structures further enriches this dimension, making the novel not just a political critique but also a



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deeply personal exploration of identity and self-perception.

The ideological dimension in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* is central to Changez's transformation, shaping his worldview as he navigates the complexities of Western capitalism, post-9/11 racialization, and neocolonial power structures. Mohsin Hamid crafts Changez's ideological journey as a process of disillusionment, beginning with his initial embrace of American ideals, followed by his gradual realization of systemic exploitation, and culminating in his ultimate rejection of Western hegemony. Through Changez's shifting perspectives, the novel critiques the global imbalance of power, the contradictions of neoliberal capitalism, and the ways in which national and cultural identities are constructed in opposition to one another.

At the outset, Changez is an ardent believer in American exceptionalism and capitalist meritocracy. His admission to Princeton and subsequent job at Underwood Samson reinforce his faith in the promise of upward mobility through hard work. He views America as a land of limitless opportunity, stating, "I was confident in my abilities, and I believed that success was the natural outcome of determination and effort." His role at Underwood Samson, where he evaluates companies based on their financial potential, further immerses him in the logic of neoliberal capitalism, where efficiency, profit, and competition are the driving forces of success. At this stage, he fully aligns himself with American corporate ideology, measuring his worth through economic productivity and professional status.

However, as Changez gains a deeper understanding of the mechanisms of global capitalism, he begins to recognize its exploitative nature, particularly in relation to the Global South. His trip to Valparaíso, Chile, serves as a major ideological turning point. There, he meets Juan-Bautista, a local publisher who warns him about the historical role of janissaries—young men taken from their homelands and trained to serve imperial forces. This comparison unsettles Changez, forcing him to question whether he, too, has become a tool of Western economic domination. He reflects, "I was a servant of an empire that had little concern for the people it ruled." This moment of ideological awakening marks the beginning of his critical engagement with neocolonialism, as he starts to see his work not as a symbol of success but as a form of complicity in a system that perpetuates global inequalities.

The post-9/11 political climate further accelerates Changez's ideological rupture with the West. Following the attacks, he witnesses a widespread shift in American attitudes, particularly towards Muslims and immigrants. The racial profiling, Islamophobia, and surveillance measures introduced in the wake of 9/11 reveal to him that America's openness and inclusivity are conditional. He becomes increasingly aware that, despite his professional achievements, he is still viewed through a lens of suspicion and Otherness. His realization that his identity is not defined by his merit but by geopolitical narratives leads to a deep ideological disillusionment. He notes, "I felt the weight of being watched, the eyes of the people on the subway, the scrutiny of the airport officials." This shift in his perception underscores the fragility of immigrant belonging in the West, where citizenship and inclusion are contingent upon political circumstances.

Changez's relationship with Erica serves as a symbolic extension of his ideological struggle. Erica, deeply attached to her past and unable to move on from the death of her former lover, Chris, represents America's nostalgia for its perceived golden age. Just as Erica clings to Chris, America remains fixated on its past identity as the dominant global power, refusing to acknowledge shifting global dynamics. Changez, in his attempt to replace Chris, mirrors his broader effort to integrate into American society, only to realize that he is fundamentally incompatible with its ideological framework. His



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eventual rejection by Erica parallels his growing estrangement from America itself, reinforcing the theme that assimilation is an illusion for those who do not fit into the dominant racial and cultural narrative.

By the time Changez returns to Lahore, his ideological transformation is complete. No longer seeking validation from Western capitalism, he embraces a counter-hegemonic identity, choosing to engage in political discourse rather than corporate success. His decision to become a university professor reflects his rejection of materialist ambitions in favor of intellectual and ideological resistance. He states, “I no longer measured success in financial terms; my concerns were with justice, dignity, and the autonomy of my people.” His return to Pakistan is not merely a geographic relocation but a symbolic act of resistance, signifying his full alignment with a postcolonial critique of Western dominance.

The novel’s framing device—the conversation between Changez and the unnamed American in the Lahore café—reinforces the ideological stakes of the narrative. The ambiguity of the American’s role, whether he is simply a listener or a covert operative, mirrors the broader ideological tensions between the East and the West. Throughout their interaction, Changez articulates his critique of U.S. foreign policy, interventionism, and the consequences of American military aggression, positioning himself as an intellectual dissenter against Western imperialism. The novel’s open-ended conclusion leaves room for multiple interpretations, suggesting that Changez’s ideological shift may have radical implications, or that he may remain a critical observer rather than an active participant in political resistance.

Ultimately, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* presents Changez’s ideological transformation as a deeply personal yet profoundly political journey. His trajectory from a believer in the American Dream to a critic of Western hegemony reflects the broader realities of global power dynamics, racial politics, and postcolonial resistance. Hamid challenges dominant narratives of globalization and progress, exposing the contradictions within capitalism, nationalism, and cultural assimilation. By framing Changez’s ideological evolution through the lens of personal experience, the novel humanizes political critique, making it not just a theoretical discussion but an intimate exploration of identity, power, and belonging in an increasingly divided world.

Conclusion:

This research emphasizes the interplay of spatial, temporal, ideological, and psychological dimensions in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. It argues that these four narrative aspects shape Changez’s evolving identity and ideological transformation, portraying how geographical locations, historical events, and personal experiences influence his worldview, while temporal shifts between past and present reinforce the fragmentation of identity in a post-9/11 world.

Furthermore, the research also explores how Changez’s psychological journey is shaped by both personal aspirations and broader geopolitical forces. By applying Uspensky-Fowler’s Four-Way Model of Point of View, the research provides understanding of how narrative techniques shape the novel’s themes. The monologue format, unreliable narration, and shifting temporal perspectives create a layered narrative that mirrors Changez’s fragmented self-perception. Ultimately, the study argues that Hamid’s novel serves as a powerful commentary on postcolonial identity, globalization, and the psychological impact of sociopolitical conflicts. This research not only deepens the understanding of Hamid’s novel but also provides a framework for future studies on narrative complexity in postcolonial literature.



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