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CLASS TEST CORRECTION

The Reluctant Fundamentalist is a novel written by a Pakistani author named Moshin Hamid. The structure of the novel is composed by the title and twelve chapters. Right from the title the reader can notice that it isn’t written in the common way: it presents an oxymoron. The adjective “reluctant” refers to an unwilling person while the noun “fundamentalist” describes a person that show strict adherence to core principle of any subject or discipline. So there is a contrast between the two words that makes the readers understand the nature of the protagonist.

The first chapter is the most important chapter because it makes clear many aspects of the novel. First of all it has the function to present the protagonist of the storyline. Going on reading the reader understands that the novelist uses the first-person narrator that in this case coincides with Changez, the protagonist of the story. From the first paragraph the novel apparently seems to be a dialogue with a listener that never seems to answer. This narrative strategy is called dramatic monologue. The novelist uses the strategy to highlight Changez’s point of view about America and Americans. In the first chapter the narrator illustrates the setting: the plot is set in Old Anarkali, a district of Lahore, Pakistan. Changez tells his experience of living and work in America to an American stranger with an Eastern point of view. So there are two stories: the first tells why Changez become an Islamic fundamentalist, the second reports the interaction between Changez and his listener.

In the second chapter Changez introduces a new character named Erica with whom he feels in love. Erica is an American girl from New York. Immediately the narrator starts to compare the differences of their point of view and of their life style. The way he talks about Erica makes clear that she will be an important character during the narration.

The third chapter has the function to introduce Changez In American society. He becomes an economic fundamentalist at the underwood Samson. He reports his feelings and emotions that make him feel immediately a “new Yorker”. It seems to be comfortable inside our society. He realizes his “American dream” and he seems to forgive his Pakistani origins.

In the fourth chapter Changez meets Erica for the second time at her house and talks with her father: “you guys has many problems with fundamentalism” father said. Changez highlights the mentality of American people, strictly founded on nationalism and patriotism. He makes the reader understand that “not all pakistans are terrorist”. He criticized the narrow minds of Americans, full of stereotypes and prejudices.

Chapter five is the chapter of “Change”: the World Trade Center collapsed while Changez was in the Philippines. Changez “smiled” in front of this terrible event because it isn’t able to identify himself as a victim; he is aware of the symbolism the event has on the States but this renewed his sense of pride in his Muslims roots. He isn’t aware that this event would change the opinion of an entire country about Pakistans.

Chapter six and seven emphasize Changez’s feeling of “foreigner’s sense”. American’s patriotism grows; Muslims were persecuted, mosques collapsed and people reinforced their prejudices. Changez perceives this tension. Also the behavior of Erica/America changes. Changez that was on the point to change his identity now strongly defend Pakistan, his homeland.

The eighth chapter has the function to show the change of Changez’s attitudes: he feels a sense of “nostalgia” for the past: he wants to go back to the time when Erica loved him and when America accepted his roots. While prejudices grows also the nostalgia for Pakistan grows.

Chapter nine reports the problem of the beard. It symbolized the change of Changez’s point of view about America. He defenced Pakistan.

The last chapters present the difficulties that Changez encounters when he works and in his everyday life. He returns home, Erica disappear so decided to abandon his American dream because he feels changed. He doesn’t accept this change so he tries to reinforce his culture becoming an Islam fundamentalist.

To tell the story the narrator choose the dramatic monologue used in Robert Browning’s poems. In my opinion this narrative strategy is correct because it allows the narrator to evidence only the Eastern poit of view of America. There are pro end cons about this strategy: the pro is that the reader has a sort of intimate relationship with the narrator: we have the feeling that he is speaking to us. The cons is that he adopts only one point of view so the narrator results unreliable. However it gives you the opportunity to interpret his words of mediation between him and his listener and gives you the opportunity to know the American society and culture with different eyes.