THE RELUCTANT FUNDAMENTALIST CHAPTER 1

“The Reluctant Fundamentalist” is a novel written by Mohsin Hamid in 2007. The story is about a young Pakistani named Changez and his life, changings and reflections before and after the attack on the Twin Towers.

From the title we can immediately ask a question, “why a fundamentalist should be reluctant?”. In the following chapters we will find it out. The young Pakistani, in the end, returns to Pakistan and wants his country to get more powerful and technological. He doesn’t agree anymore with the America’s way to see the things but he neither agrees with the Muslims’ extreme way of thinking. He doesn’t agree with the literal interpretation of the Scriptures but he fights for Pakistan’s freedom and evolution.

This novel is dived into 12 chapters and each one of them has a specific function.

The author uses the dramatic monologue, a technique invented by Robert Browning during Victorian Age. Mohsini uses this technique for different reasons:

1. In this way he utters the entire book, Changez is the only one who speaks and tells the story from his point of view
2. He interacts with an interlocutor that we can’t see or hear but that we know is present. We know what he does or says only thanks to the clues that the speaker gives to us
3. The speaker reveals us his feelings and his ideas and his character.

This technique creates also a frame of mystery and tension, an atmosphere of suspense.

In this way we read the story from another point of view, we see the things through the eyes of a Pakistani and not from the American’s one. We have other information and we have to create an personal vision of what is happening, we are completely free to design Changez’ own explanations.

We can easily see that the speaker is a good observer and can see through the lines. He immediately deduces that the interlocutor is an American on a “mission”. He watches carefully his body language, his attitude and the way the American is carrying himself . This is a typical way to find out somebody’s nationality, the physical look, the skin, the clothes, haircut, the body shape… All the cultures are different and unique and Changez has experienced two of them, one the opposite of the other.

Changez uses also a formal language. English is not his mothertangue language but he uses word like “sir” “may I …” . We can deduce that the protagonist is taking some distances from the interlocutor but he wants to be polite.

The protagonist and the interlocutor are sitting in a bar in Lahore, Pakistan. Changez introduces his life in New York, at the Princeton’s University and at the “ Underwood Samson-Jim company”.

America represented for Changez a “dream come true”, the perfect life. The young Pakistani was very attracted by the American way of living and he describes him as a “lover of America”.