

**RESEARCH PAPER****A Deconstructive Analysis of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* by Mohsin Hamid****<sup>1</sup>Maryam Fatima, <sup>2</sup>Muhammad Naseem and <sup>3</sup>Dr. Muhammad Issa\***

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**\*Corresponding Author**      [muhhammad.issa@uobs.edu.pk](mailto:muhhammad.issa@uobs.edu.pk)**ABSTRACT**

This study aims to apply deconstruction theory, drawing from Jacques Derrida and Peter Barry's concepts, to analyze Mohsin Hamid's novel, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. The objective is to deepen comprehension of the novel's complexities by identifying paradoxes, contradictions, and ambiguous language. Through qualitative methods and purposeful sampling, data is collected from the novel, *Of Grammatology* by Derrida, and *Beginning Theory* by Barry. The analysis illuminates the internal conflicts of the protagonist, Changez, and his evolving relationship with post-9/11 America. It underscores the fragmented nature of meaning and emphasizes the role of readers in interpretation. Themes of identity, culture, and global events are explored, challenging readers to critically engage with the text. The study recommends continued critical analysis to unravel the inherent unreliability and dynamic nature of language, recognizing the multiplicity of interpretations within the text.

**Keywords:**      Ambiguity, Deconstruction, Dynamic, Fundamentalism, Paradoxes, Reluctant, Unreliability**Introduction**

*The Reluctant Fundamentalist* by Mohsin Hamid is a thought-provoking novel that can be analyzed through the lens of deconstruction theory. This research aims to analyze the novel through the perspectives of deconstruction presented by Jacques Derrida and Peter Barry

In general, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* by Mohsin Hamid is a book that makes people think deeply about different ideas and cultures. The author, born in Pakistan in 1971, comes from a privileged family. His famous novel published in 2007, talks about identity and cultural tensions after 9/11. It became very popular, even turning into a movie. Hamid's writing explores important topics like globalization and how the world is changing. He also writes articles for big newspapers like *The New York Times* and *The Guardian*, discussing issues in Pakistan and the Muslim world. Hamid's books are loved worldwide because they are powerful and help readers see the world in new and meaningful ways. He continues to write amazing stories that touch people's hearts and minds (Shamsie 2017).

The aim of this research is to analyze the text *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* through the application of deconstruction theory. Deconstruction by Jacques Derrida suggests that language is not a reliable tool of communication, but rather an ambiguous experience influenced by ideologies. According to deconstruction, language is dynamic, ambiguous, and unstable. It means that words do not have a fixed meaning, but instead have multiple meanings. Similarly, human beings have different beliefs due to encounters with different cultures, leading to fragmented identities. Therefore, literature is dynamic and language-

based, with meaning shaped by the reader. Interpretations are not definite, as texts hold multiple, conflicting meanings.

At the same time Bennington (1993) states that the philosophy of Derrida is not a language philosophy, on the other hand it includes a meaning beyond it, as according to him, the language needs a renovation in terms of meaning. Therefore it can be stated that Language and literature are always changing, not staying the same. They can be a bit confusing because words and stories don't have one clear meaning. Language and literature keep shifting, this makes them flexible and open to different interpretations. So, both language and literature are like rivers that never stop flowing, making them dynamic, a bit tricky to pin down, and always evolving. Language is dynamic and it changes over time as people use it. The words and the phrases that were popular a long time ago might not be used the same way today. This means that language is always evolving, like a living thing. Language and literature are ambiguous and have multiple meanings. Sometimes a word or a sentence can be understood in different ways depending on the context and the reader. This ambiguity can lead to open new directions of thinking about things. Language and literature are unstable as language changes over time, so do the meanings of words and the interpretations of literature. What a story or poem means to one person might not be the same for another person. This instability means that there's no one fixed way to understand or use language and literature.

Deconstruction theory involves uncovering hidden meanings in a text that contradict its surface meaning. As Balkin (1995) states that, deconstruction indeed aims to reveal the concealed and other implicit meanings, not to show up the meaningless of the text by separating it .It focuses on the sounds, original meanings, and figures of speech in words to reveal their significance in shaping overall meaning. Deconstructionists challenge the idea of a single interpretation, emphasizing the fragmented nature of the text. This process unfolds through three stages: verbal, textual, and linguistic. The verbal stage involves examining contradictions and paradoxes within the language to uncover hidden thoughts and meanings. The textual stage explores shifts and disruptions in the text that defy continuity, revealing contradictions and the absence of a fixed viewpoint. The linguistic stage highlights instances where language itself becomes problematic, questioning its reliability for effective communication. The aim is to reveal hidden meanings, challenge conventional oppositions, and expose the limitations of language.

By blending the ideas of Jacques Derrida and Peter Barry and using them to analyze *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, understand the book better and find its hidden meanings. The novel centers on the life of Changez, a young man from Pakistan who moves to the United States with dreams of achieving success in the world of finance. Initially, Changez thrives in his career and enjoys the perks of American life.

*The Reluctant Fundamentalist* is a complex story about a man named Changez. He goes to America to study and initially feels excited, but after 9/11, he faces discrimination because he's Muslim. This makes him question his identity and beliefs. The book challenges fixed ideas and uses unclear language, making readers think deeply. Changez starts questioning American society's values and his own cultural identity. The novel explores themes like cultural assimilation and prejudice's impact, urging readers to ponder on identity and societal pressures. Through deconstruction theory, which examines hidden meanings, the story's complexities are revealed, showing how global events shape our perspectives. Mohsin Hamid's writing makes readers rethink their ideas, making the book a thought-provoking read.

## Literature Review

This study aims to analyze a novel using the deconstruction perspectives of Jacques Derrida and Peter Barry. The main goal is to deconstruct the meaning of the narrative in the novel. While many critics (Morey 2011, Hartnell 2010 et al.) have explored this novel broadly in terms of deconstructive analysis. There remains a need to specifically explore it using Jacques Derrida's deconstruction theory and the distinct stages of deconstruction presented by Peter Barry.

Peter Morey (2011) examines Hamid's novel by exploring how it breaks down the divisive ideas of 'East' and 'West' or 'Us' and 'Them' (p. 138). He states that in the novel Hamid challenges the simplified categories of East and West and the divisive mindset of 'Us versus Them' often found in discussions about the 'war on terror.' The book encourages readers to think critically about what lies beyond these broad labels. It considers the complex realities of identity, culture, and the global impact of momentous events. It prompts us to move beyond stereotypes and develop a more nuanced understanding of the world.

Furthermore, Morey (2011) deconstructs the narrating ways of changes as deliberate acts of deception often intended to mislead the reader. According to Morey (2011) one could argue that in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, the book gives the impression of being polyphonic or having multiple voices, such as Erica, Jim, and Wainwright. However, all these voices are expressed through the perspective of the main character, Changez. Changez may not be a dependable narrator, and his storytelling serves his own political agenda and drives the story forward. In terms of reader's usual expectations and the enjoyment they derive from interpreting literature, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* can be seen as a novel that intentionally deceives or tricks the reader, like a hoax, as Morey (2011) stated: "The Reluctant Fundamentalist can be understood as the novel-as-hoax (p.139)."

According to Faisal Nazir (2019) deconstructive readings of this novel often disclose impossibility of such a smooth transition from literature into politics as the opening lines that protagonist is to be taken Ironically, that the speaker is, not, or at least, no longer, a lover of America, and yet love is extensively evoked in the novel. Similarly, the slipping and sliding of Changaz's discourse is not due simply to the cleverness of the writer, but due to contradictory desires like the use of 'Love' which seems of secondary and personal importance in the novel that make the narrative deconstructive in nature.

Similarly, Anna Hartnell (2010) describes the novel as the author "self-described love story about America (p.336)." He argues that Hamid's perspective is much more conflicted than simplistic rendering of American state power. Similarly, in the novel, a Pakistani narrator named Changez meets a silent American character. The book suggests that the American might be unfriendly and armed, while Changez, who seems peaceful, may have become involved in violent actions linked to jihad. According to him this creates rigidity and impression that make the reader question own views and how they identify with the characters. Hartnell (2010) states: "The Reluctant Fundamentalist stages an encounter between a Pakistani narrator, Changez, and an unidentified and wholly silent American addressee. The suggestion that the American might himself be armed and hostile while the ostensibly peaceable narrator may have turned to jihadi violence informs an atmosphere of mutual suspicion and impending violence, an atmosphere that challenges and implicates the reader's own processes of identification (p.337)." The book prompts readers to think deeply about their biases and assumptions, making the story more meaningful and thought-provoking.

At the same time Hartnell (2010) deconstructs the settings of the novel as, the story's immediate setting is Lahore, and the author highlights Pakistan's negative reputation as a "villain." The novel appreciates Lahore's cuisine, but also portrays it as violent and shadowy. This reinforces Orientalist stereotypes. As he states: "The novel deliberately filters

the city through Orientalist stereotypes, demonstrating its status as a menace in the imagination of the western reader (p.337).” It presents Lahore as a threat to the Western reader's imagination. In doing so, Hamid is deliberately challenging readers' preconceptions and biases about Pakistan and its culture. Hartnell's analysis of the novel is a stronger example of deconstructive reading than Morey's. Hartnell highlights a paradox within the narrative that remains unresolved by the novel's conclusion.

Considering the deconstruction perspectives, Shamim Akhtar (2021) deconstructed the identity of Changez. Through this character he represented the identity crises faced by the whole Muslim world in the west. The novel delves into the complexities of identity. It sheds light on the challenges faced by immigrant communities, particularly Muslim-Pakistani immigrants, in the aftermath of the 9/11 incident. The issue of identity crisis arises because of post-colonialism. Respectively, Tshering Tshomo et al. (2022) mentioned it as, “After the 9/11 attack in America, the identity of Pakistanis became more endangered than ever before. As the nation went through various political upsurges, people started to get marginalized on different grounds creating an atmosphere of distrust and scepticism. Hamid gives a metaphorical touch to his novel by associating Changez (the protagonist in the novel) with East and the silent American with West (p.28).”

Following the novel, protagonist shares his experiences of pursuing education and finding employment in the United States. As Akhter (2021) states; “He renders his services for Underwood Samson, a famous American firm and feels proud (p.344).” Initially, Changez is captivated by American lifestyle and culture, feeling proud to be the part of this country and believing his American dream has come true. However, following the tragic events of 9/11, the novel explores how Changez becomes a victim of racism, prejudice, and white contempt due to his non-white appearance. As Akhter mentioned “He observes such circumstances after 9/11 which takes him to the way of alteration of his identity (p.346).” These post-9/11 circumstances force Changez to undergo a transformative journey that alters his sense of identity. Akhter (2021) emphasized on how the identity of Changez is deconstructed due the influence of 9/11 incidents. Changez is a dynamic character; therefore, paradoxical identity is found in his character. He called himself lover of America but throughout the novel a kind of disappointment and hopelessness appears in his character towards America.

Moreover Akhter (2021) added that, despite his love for America and his earnest efforts to adopt American culture, but consistently he is treated as an outsider. He goes to great lengths to hide his identity and immerse himself in American customs. The protagonist emulates the discourse of Americans to adopt new identity. It is suggested that he willingly undergoes a transformation, discards his former identity, and embraces a new one. In his quest to become an American, he even starts drinking alcohol. Despite his efforts to conceal his constructed identity and assimilate into a new one, all his efforts crumble in the aftermath of the 9/11 events. Regardless of his love for America, he continues to be perceived as a stranger. He is treated as a non-American.

Contrastingly, Akhter (2021) described the deconstructing ideology of protagonist after 9/11 incident. After the 9/11 incident, he visits Pakistan to reunite with his family. During this time, he begins to contemplate his own identity. As a symbol of his distinctiveness and a form of protest, he grows a beard. However, upon returning to America with his beard, Changez faces intense discrimination from the white people. His colleagues at work whisper about him, questioning his trustworthiness as a Muslim and viewing him as a threat to their country. At the same time, Shazia Rajab (2022) portrays the Identity crises experienced by Changez as

“The identity crisis of Changez may be clearly observed when he returns to his own country Pakistan. His decision of returning to Pakistan is concerned with the sense of identity and it is not of the religious fundamentalism. He gets failure in residing and is

lacking any sense of belonging with American multicultural society. At this time, the strong feelings of alienation become the result of pushing him back to Pakistan (p.135).”

Similarly, as Akhter(2021) states “Changez expresses his love for America and speaks and behaves as Americans do...But situation is completely changed after the incident of 9/11.He faces biased attitude of Americans towards him and all non-native especially against Pakistani Muslims....He observes such circumstances that put his identity at stake (p.344).” According to him, the main character faces constant outsider treatment despite his love for America. However, following the 9/11 incident, his efforts to conceal his identity and embrace a new one proves futile as he is still seen as a non-American. This experience leads to the destruction of his ideology, highlighted by his growing beard and the discrimination he faces upon his return to America.

At the surface level of meaning of text, readers can be analyzed Changez as an antihero or a complex protagonist. While Shahzia Rajab (2022) deconstructs the protagonist as a tragic hero. According to her Changez can be analyzed as a modern tragic hero. From this perspective, he exhibits several qualities that align with Aristotle's concept of a tragic hero. According to Aristotle, tragic heroes are flawed individuals who commit, without evil intent, great wrongs or injuries that ultimately lead to their misfortune, often followed by tragic realization of the true nature of events that led to this destiny (Reeves, 1952). These elements contribute to Changez's identity crisis, his eventual downfall, and the loss of his love and social standing within the multicultural society of America.

According to reviews from various literary articles, Mohsin Hamid's novel *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* is considered the ideal literary work for critical analysis using deconstruction theory (Morey 2011, Hartnell 2010 et al.). After reviewing above research papers, it can be determined that various authors have examined *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* from different angles. For instance, Morey (2011) delved into the intricate aspects of identity, culture, and how major global events affect individuals. Meanwhile, Hartnell (2010) approached the analysis from Hamid's viewpoint. Akhter (2021) concentrated on the theme of identity crises, and Rajab (2022) categorized the novel by its genre. Tshomo (2022) focused on deconstructive analysis of the novel through the lens of Orientalism by Edward Said. All these researchers have deconstructed the text keeping the specific ideas such as identity, culture, and orientalism's perspectives using the single theorist. However, it is worth noting that this novel could benefit from further analysis, particularly when applying deconstruction theory presented by Jacque Derrida. In this research paper for the first time two ideas of Derrida and Peter Barry on deconstruction theory are blended to generally analyze the text comprehensively.

## **Material and Methods**

The research applied purely qualitative research paradigm. Mohsin Hamid's novel *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* was selected purposefully. The researchers read the text meticulously for many times and explored the possible meaning owing to instability, vagueness, flexibility and unreliability of language in the novel. For the purpose of analysis, Jacque Derrida and Peter Berries' theories on deconstructionism were blended together to use them as theoretical frame work.

## **Theoretical Framework**

This research paper aims to blend the two ideas on Deconstruction theory presented by Jacque Derrida and Peter Barry. Blending two ideas means taking different concepts and putting them together in a way that makes sense. It is like mixing ingredients to create a new recipe. This process helps to come up with new and clever solutions by using the best parts from each idea. By blending ideas, of Jacque Derrida and Peter Barry a new way can be found to analyze the text. It is all about using different ideas to create something new and useful

that makes the reader more critical. According to Lois Tyson (2023), Deconstruction “can improve our ability to think critically (p.249).” By closely examining, it sharpens our critical thinking skills, encouraging us to question information deeply and make informed judgments about the world.

Deconstruction is a philosophical movement and literary theory. It challenges traditional ideas about certainty, identity, and truth. Jacques Derrida is a French philosopher and pioneer of deconstruction. He suggests that words can only refer to other words, and it aims to show how statements about any text undermine their own meanings. Derrida (1997) stated “it attempts to make the not-seen accessible to sight.” (p. 163). According to Derrida who states that “there is nothing other than the text”, “the meaning changes in accordance with permanent conditions and the meaning does that by itself” (Bal, 2004).

Derrida (1997) introduces concepts like logocentrism, *différance*, and deconstruction to challenge traditional notions of language and meaning. He argues that writing possesses its own materiality and can convey meaning independently. Derrida emphasizes that writing is not a secondary reflection of speech but an integral part of language itself. He introduces the concept of *différance*, which plays a central role in his analysis. *Différance* refers to the process by which meaning is deferred or delayed. It suggests that words gain their significance through their relation to other words, rather than having an inherent and fixed meaning. Language is constantly in flux, with signifiers pointing to other signifiers in an endless chain of deferral. He believes that language is not as straightforward as we think it is. Instead, it is a flexible and uncertain system that carries a lot of different meanings and influences. It possesses the ability to influence our thoughts and convictions subtly, often without our conscious awareness. It can be said that Derrida is hereby separating the meaning, not the word, via the deconstruction. (Kurt, 2010)

According to Lois Tyson (2023), deconstruction states that, language portrays human experiences. As language is ambiguous and unstable and that’s why human experiences are ambiguous and unstable. The image of a stable identity is produced in collusion with culture, but culture itself is unstable and contaminated. Therefore, a stable identity is impossible, as identity implies oneness, but people are fragmented and have multiple identities. People have several conflicting beliefs, desires, and intentions so, the fact is that people do not have a stable identity but have multiple experiences, ideas, and beliefs.

Similarly, literature is not static and stable as it is composed of language. The meaning of text is created by the reader. The reader constructs meaning while reading. Meaning is generated through the interaction of language using language. The meaning that is formed is not fixed and conclusive; no interpretation has the ultimate authority. Literary works contain multiple, intertwined meanings that are often contradictory and continuously interact with one another and with us. Understandings of a particular text are influenced by ideological readings, which are shaped by the cultural norms, principles, and convictions of a society (Norris 2002).

Deconstruction, as explained by Peter Barry in *Beginning Theory*, involves uncovering hidden meanings in a text that contradict its surface message. Deconstructionists focus on the sounds, original meanings, and figures of speech in words to reveal their significance in shaping overall meaning. They challenge the notion of a single interpretation, emphasizing the fragmented nature of the text. Deconstruction unfolds through three stages: verbal, textual, and linguistic. In the verbal stage, contradictions and paradoxes within the language are examined, exposing hidden thoughts and meanings. The textual stage explores shifts and disruptions in the text that defy continuity, revealing contradictions and the absence of a fixed viewpoint. The linguistic stage highlights instances where language itself becomes problematic, questioning its reliability for effective communication. Ultimately, to reveal hidden meanings, challenge conventional oppositions, and expose the limitations of language. The outcomes by blending two ideas are following;

## **Breaking boundaries of fixed meaning**

The ideas presented by Derrida and Barry share several similarities when it comes to their perspectives on language, meaning, and interpretation. Firstly, both Derrida and Barry challenge the notion of a fixed and stable meaning tied to language. Derrida's concept of logocentrism questions the idea that there is one clear and definitive meaning associated with a word. Similarly, Barry emphasizes the fragmented nature of meaning and interpretation, suggesting that texts can have multiple contradictory meanings beneath their surface. Both perspectives undermine the idea of language as a reliable and fixed tool for communication, instead highlighting its ambiguity and instability.

## **Contradiction in meaning**

Secondly, both Derrida and Barry emphasize the importance of examining the surface aspects of language to reveal hidden meanings and contradictions. Derrida's deconstruction approach involves analyzing the relationships between words and how they undermine their own meanings. Barry's textual stage of deconstruction involves looking for shifts and breaks in a text that disrupts its continuity, exposing contradictions and an absence of a fixed viewpoint. In both cases, close attention is given to the language used and its impact on the overall meaning of a text.

Furthermore, both acknowledge the role of interpretation in shaping meaning. Derrida argues that interpretations are influenced by ideological readings shaped by cultural norms, while Barry highlights that meaning is constructed by the reader during the process of reading. Both perspectives recognize that interpretations are not definitive and can vary depending on individual perspectives and cultural influences.

## **Significance of Reader**

Both ideas focus on the reader's role in meaning-making. Derrida and Barry both emphasize the active role of the reader in constructing meaning. Derrida argues that meaning is generated through the interaction of language using language, and interpretations are shaped by the reader's ideological readings. Barry highlights that deconstruction involves intense analysis by the reader to uncover hidden meanings and expand the possibilities of interpretation. Both perspectives challenge the notion of a fixed and authoritative meaning, placing significance on the reader's engagement and interpretation of the text.

Both Derrida and Barry emphasize the instability and ambiguity of meaning. Derrida's concept of *différance* illustrates how meaning is deferred or delayed, and words gain significance through their relation to other words. Barry's exploration of shifts and disruptions in a text reveals the absence of a fixed and unified viewpoint, further highlighting the instability of meaning. Both perspectives challenge the idea of a singular, fixed meaning, and instead acknowledge the multiplicity and fluidity of meanings that can emerge in interpretation.

Concluding, the ideas presented by Derrida and Barry converge in their questioning of fixed meanings, their emphasis on the surface aspects of language, and their recognition of the interpretive nature of meaning. They both challenge traditional notions of language, meaning, and interpretation, promoting a more nuanced understanding of language's ambiguity, the fragmented nature of texts, and the multiplicity of meanings that can emerge from interpretation. Derrida and Barry share similarities in their emphasis on language, critique of binary oppositions, focus on the reader's role in meaning-making, and recognition of the instability of meaning. Their ideas converge in challenging traditional notions of language, meaning, and interpretation, and offer a more complex and nuanced understanding of these concepts.

## Results and Discussion

This research looks into at how the thoughts of Jacque Derrida and Peter Barry can be combined to analyze *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* by Mohsin Hamid. In addition, these ideas, which are part of deconstruction theory, help us understand the book's deeper meanings. Deconstruction theory is a way of analyzing literary works that challenges traditional interpretations and seeks to uncover multiple meanings within a text. By examining *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* through this lens, we can unravel the complex layers of the story and delve into the underlying themes.

### Breaking boundaries of fixed meaning

The first point that is similar between these two ideas is the challenge to the fixed meaning. In the novel, Changez's narrative is open to interpretation, and his true intentions and motivations are not explicitly revealed. Changez's words and actions can be understood in multiple ways, highlighting the instability of meaning. For example, when Changez discusses his experiences in America, he says to the American listener: "And my experience is substantial: I spent four and a half years in your country (p.03)." In this quote, Changez's experiences are significant. His life story in the novel can be divided into two parts: the first part is about his life before the 9/11 incident, and the second part is about his life after it. Before 9/11, he admired America and the American dream. His dreams came true when he got the opportunity to study in the US and secure a prestigious job at Underwood Samson. However, everything changed after the tragic events of 9/11. His dreams were shattered, and he faced bias, prejudice, and discrimination because he was a Muslim. So, when we think about the meaning of this quote from Changez, it is hard to say if he is talking about his experiences before 9/11 or if he is emphasizing the importance of realizing his identity crisis after that event.

At the same time when Changez calls himself as, "I am a lover of America (p.01)." it is unclear if he genuinely likes America or if he is pretending. His true feelings about America are ambiguous. This uncertainty arises because when he heard the news about the Twin Towers collapsing in New York, he felt a sense of pleasure. As he himself states, "And then I smiled....my initial reaction was to be remarkably pleased (p.83)." furthermore, he expresses his emotion as, "Someone had so visibly brought America to her knee (p.83)." However, his emotions shifted when he spoke to American, as he expressed differently,

I was not at war with America. Far from it I was the product of an American university; I was earning a lucrative American salary; I was infatuated with an American woman. So why did part of me desire to see American harmed? (p.84).

These quotes suggest that it is unclear whether Changez genuinely loves America or if he is just pretending. The meaning (signified) of his love for America in the statement is not definite; it shows a dual and contradictory idea. It is also possible to see Changez as a lover of America because his beloved Erica is from this country. Despite losing her in America, he still loves her, as he asserted; "I had returned to Pakistan, but my inhabitation of your country had not entirely ceased. I remained emotionally entwined with Erica...I lost something of myself to her that I was unable to relocate in the city of my birth (p.195)."

At the same time these statements show the hope and the disappointment simultaneously that he had from America. In the beginning of his life journey, Changez is indeed fond of America. He admires the country's opportunities and falls in love with the American lifestyle. For instance, he describes his first impressions of America as a place of dreams and wonders, saying, "This is a dream come true" (page 03). However, after 9/11 incident, Changez's feelings toward America change. He faces discrimination and experiences a growing disconnect with the American society. This causes him to reevaluate



his affection for the country. For example, after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, Changez's perception of America shifts dramatically. He feels targeted and treated differently because of his Pakistani background, leading to a sense of alienation. As a result, his love for America becomes more uncertain and complicated. This uncertainty leaves readers with various interpretations of Changez's relationship with America.

In the novel Hamid challenges fixed meaning by using an uncertain narrator, Changez. As we read the book, Changez's feelings about the West keep changing. At the beginning, he likes and respects American culture and the American Dream. He loves his job at Underwood Samson and admires Erica, an American woman. But as the story goes on, he starts to feel differently. He becomes more critical of American foreign policy and questions his own job in the corporate world. This uncertainty makes it hard for readers to have a fixed understanding of Changez's perspective.

Similarly, the meaning of "love" is also not fixed throughout the novel. Changez's love for Erica is influenced by his desire to fit into American culture and live the American Dream. He sees her as a symbol of everything he wants in his new life in the United States. But as their relationship goes on, Changez realizes that his love for Erica is also connected to feeling superior and wanting something exotic, which reflects his own struggle with identity and belonging.

Changez becomes disappointed and disillusioned with the ignorance and stereotyping of his country and culture by some Americans. He witnesses prejudice attitudes towards Pakistanis and feels offended by these remarks, which shake his initial admiration for the country. "We were, after all, sitting in the midst of a people with whom we shared not only a history but also, at least to some extent, our physical appearance. Yet these affinities did not free me from an awareness of my ethnicity to the contrary, they were the very basis of it" (p.63). In this passage Changez reflects on his sense of being an outsider despite sharing some commonalities with the people around him. He describes sitting among a group of people with whom he shares a history and, to some extent, physical appearance, likely referring to his fellow Americans. However, instead of feeling a sense of belonging or acceptance, he remains acutely aware of his Pakistani ethnicity, which forms the core of his identity. This shows the complexity of Changez's identity and the struggle he faces with cultural belonging. While he acknowledges some similarities with those around him, his ethnicity remains an inherent part of his self-awareness. It suggests that despite living in America and sharing certain connections with its people, he still feels marked by his Pakistani background, causing him to feel like an outsider in some contexts.

Barry's textual stage of deconstruction focuses on shifts and breaks in a text that disrupts its continuity and exposes contradictions. In *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, we can observe such shifts and breaks through Changez's narrative. For instance, there are instances where Changez praises America and its opportunities, but then suddenly shifts his tone and expresses resentment and disappointment. These shifts and breaks disrupt the smooth flow of the story and reveal the conflicting emotions and perspectives within Changez's character.

Similarly in novel, there is a significant shift in Changez's narrative when he describes his encounter with Erica. Initially, he presents their relationship as idyllic, but then he mentions the crack that appeared, disrupting their connection. This shift exposes the underlying tensions and contradictions in their relationship.

### **Contradiction in meaning**

The title of the novel *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* contains paradoxes and contradictory meanings. For instance, "Reluctant" means hesitant or unwilling to do something. And "Fundamentalist" refers to a person who strongly adheres to the basic

principles or beliefs of a particular ideology or religion. The title *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* presents paradoxes and contradictions because it combines two opposing ideas. "Reluctant" suggests a lack of enthusiasm or unwillingness, while "Fundamentalist" implies strong adherence and conviction to a set of beliefs. These two words seem to contradict each other, as someone who is reluctant may not fully embrace or fervently support a specific ideology.

In the context of the novel, the protagonist, Changez, embodies these contradictory meanings. At the beginning of the story, he appears eager to embrace the American Dream. He assimilates into American society, working in the corporate world with ambition and enthusiasm. As the words of Changez express his feelings, "Princeton inspired in me the feeling that my life was a film in which I was the star, and everything was possible (p. 03).

However, as the story progresses, he becomes disillusioned with American values and foreign policies. That makes him hesitant and unwilling to continue his previous way of life, as mentioned in novel, "students like me were given visas and scholarship...In return we were expected to contribute our talents...we were happy to do so. I certainly was at least at first" (p. 05). This part shows that the Changez feelings changed over time and his attitude shifted as he was happy at first and that happiness did not last. The title *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* captures this internal conflict within Changez, where he grapples with his growing disillusionment while still holding on to some of his core beliefs. The paradoxical nature of the title reflects the complexities and contradictions that arise as Changez's identity and perspective shift throughout the novel.

By paying close attention to the language used in the novel it can be possible to uncover deeper meanings and contradictions. Changez's words and the way he presents himself reveal his complex relationship with America and the challenges he faces in reconciling his Pakistani background with his experiences in the United States. Changez describes his initial fascination with the American Dream, saying, "This is a dream come true" (p.03). However, later in the novel, he expresses his disillusionment, stating, "I knew from my experience as Pakistani—of alternating periods of American aid and sanctions—that finance was a primary means by which the American empire exercised its power (p.177)". He realized that the financial power of the American empire, which he had once admired, was also a tool for control. This shift in his perspective reflects a contradiction; his initial fascination with America clashed with his growing awareness of its complex and sometimes exploitative global influence.

Throughout the novel, Changez uses words that seemingly praise America's values and opportunities. For example, he talks about the meritocracy and equal opportunity that drew him to the United States. However, he subtly undermines these meanings by revealing instances of discrimination, power, and cultural alienation he experiences, suggesting a contradiction between the ideals and reality.

### **Significance of Reader**

Similarly, both ideas emphasize the role of readers in constructing the meaning from text. The novel acknowledges the active role of the reader in constructing meaning. As readers engage with Changez's story, they bring their own perspectives and biases to the interpretation. For instance, the novel is presented as a monologue addressed to an unnamed American listener. The novel is narrated by Changez, and his storytelling leaves room for different interpretations. Readers must piece together their experiences and feelings to understand their true intentions. For example, when Changez describes his encounters with the American stranger, When he says, "I am lover of America"(page 01), the readers must decide if his words are genuine hospitality or carry underlying warning.

Changez's perspective may not always be reliable. He might withhold information or provide biased accounts. This challenges readers to critically analyze his narration and question his motives. As Changez narrates his relationship with Erica, readers need to decipher the complexities of his emotions and recognize the gaps in his storytelling. Similarly, the novel's backdrop of the 9/11 attacks and its impact on Muslim identity adds layers of meaning to the story. Readers are asked to understand how political and cultural tensions affect Changez's life and how big events can shape personal identities.

Respectively, Erica's character is not clear, leaving readers to figure out her emotions and actions. Her grief over Chris's death and emotional distance makes it hard to grasp her feelings for Changez. It makes readers wonder about their relationship. Since Changez narrates his experiences with Erica, readers must keep in mind his biases. This allows readers to form their own opinions about Erica's true feelings.

In the novel, Derrida and Barry's ideas can be applied to the examination of language and its hidden meanings and contradictions. Derrida's deconstruction approach involves looking at how words relate to each other and how they can contradict their own meanings. For example, in the novel, the protagonist, Changez, often uses language that seems to support his American identity, but at the same time, he subtly undermines it by revealing his disillusionment and criticism of American values. This contradiction highlights the complexities of his character and his struggle with his own identity.

Another instance occurs when Changez reflects on his experience working at Underwood Samson. He describes the excitement and satisfaction he initially feels, but later reveals his growing discontent as he becomes more aware of the company's discrimination and their impact on his identity. As the words of Jim makes it clear; "I did not think twice when it came to firing you. In fact, I wish I'd done it a month ago (p.181)." Jim's heartless words highlight this struggle of Changez to reevaluate his identity and sense of belonging in a discriminatory environment.

These examples demonstrate the close attention given to language in the novel to reveal hidden meanings and contradictions. They illustrate how Derrida's deconstruction and Barry's textual stage of deconstruction can be applied to analyze the text and explore the complexities of Changez's character and his evolving perspective.

It is discovered that by applying deconstruction theory on the text *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, multiple interpretations of a single text is possible. As the above analysis attracts the reader's attention to analyze the story via different angles. This research looks at how the ideas of Jacques Derrida and Peter Barry can help to understand the text. Deconstruction theory challenges traditional interpretations and finds multiple meanings in the text. Changez's way of storytelling leaves room for reader to analyze it using different interpretations. As in the novel the protagonist Changez praises the American Values but his narratives shifts after facing Discrimination and cultural alienation. That reveals a contradictions, tensions and ambiguities in his expression as well as in the whole text.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, by applying deconstruction theory to *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* by Mohsin Hamid, we gain a deeper understanding of the complexities and contradictions in the novel. The title itself, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* reflects the internal conflict within the protagonist, Changez, as he grapples with opposing beliefs. The story challenges fixed meanings and invite multiple interpretations, and Changez's evolving relationship with America showcases the uncertainties and complexities he faces. Deconstruction theory helps us analyze the shifts and breaks in Changez's narrative, revealing conflicting emotions and perspectives. The use of ambiguous language adds layers of uncertainty to the characters' experiences, emphasizing the fragmented nature of meaning. Readers play an

important role in constructing meaning and must critically analyze the narrator's motives and biases. The novel explores the impact of political and cultural tensions on relationships, particularly after the 9/11 attacks. Love and belonging are portrayed as complex and unstable, influenced by external factors and the characters' struggles with their identities. By combining Jacques Derrida and Peter Barry's ideas, we uncover hidden meanings and contradictions within the novel's language. Changez's expressions of his American identity reveal criticisms and disillusionment. The application of deconstruction theory allows for a deeper exploration of the novel's themes, including identity, culture, and the impact of global events. *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* challenges preconceived notions, encourages critical analysis, and prompts readers to contemplate the complexities of the human experience in a post-9/11 world.

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