

*Transnational Intersectionality and Identity Disillusionment
in Mohsin Hamid's The Reluctant Fundamentalist (2007)*

التقاطع العابر للحدود وخيبة الهوية

في رواية المتعصب المتردد لمحسن حامد (2007)

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الملخص:

تتناول هذه المقالة آفاق التقاطع العابر للحدود الوطنية وعملية تحول الهوية في رواية " المتعصب المتردد (2007) " للكاتب محسن حامد. وتركز بشكل خاص على الكيفية التي تُشكّل بها النُخب السلطوية النيوليبرالية، في أعقاب أحداث 11 سبتمبر، تجارب الأفراد فيما يتعلق بالاندماج والمقاومة. وبلاستناد إلى أفكار آيوا أونغ وسيرما بيلج، تستكشف الدراسة كيف أن انتقال البطل من الاندماج إلى المقاومة المُسيّسة يعكس هشاشة التقاطع في السياق الأمريكي. وتجادل الورقة بأن موقف تشينجز المعارض يُجسّد الديناميكيات المتغيرة للتقاطع العابر للحدود، حيث يُعاد تعريف الهوية الشخصية باستمرار من خلال تقاطع العرق، والطبقة، والجنسية، والمنفعة الاقتصادية ضمن النظام العالمي النيوليبرالي للسلطة.

الكلمات المفتاحية:

وهم الهوية، النيوليبرالية، التقاطع العابر للحدود الوطنية.

Abstract:

This article examines the prospects of transnational intersectionality and the process of identity transformation in Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007). It particularly focuses on how neoliberal power structures in the aftermath of 9/11 shape individual experiences of inclusion and resistance. Relying on the insights of Aihwa Ong and Sirma Bilge, the study explores how the protagonist's journey from inclusion to politicized resistance reflects the fragility of American intersectionality. The paper argues that Changez's opposing stance illustrates the changing dynamics of transnational intersectionality, where personal identity is continually redefined by the intersection of race, class, nationality, and economic utility within the neoliberal global system of power.

Keywords:

Identity disillusionment, neoliberalism, transnational intersectionality.

1. INTRODUCTION:

The events of 9/11 catalyzed a new global vision that reshaped geopolitical as well as individual priorities. This event represents a turning point in international relations, security policy and global power dynamics. Yet, the paradigm shift imposed by 9/11 was so tremendous that it exceeded the global affairs of world politics and socioeconomic spheres. The colossal impact infiltrated the social dynamism of world nations and even the intricate process of identity formation. As the world ushered in this new era with uncertainty about the future ahead, the human race was forced into a raw reality of loss, trauma and disillusionment.

The shift gave rise to a significant body of literary works that responded to the events of 9/11 and the resulting psychological, cultural and sociopolitical consequences. Authors, from different parts of the world, explored the different responses to this tragedy and its effect on not only the collective mind, but also on the spectrum of personal relations. 9/11 literature often challenged dominant narratives to offer new perspectives on concepts such as global conflict, Islamophobia, and cultural dislocation. 9/11 literary voices were able to meticulously document one of the most devastating moments of modern history and, more importantly, engage in an ongoing debate around emotional responses and cultural consciousness.

Among these vibrant voices is Mohsin Hamid, a Pakistani author, known for his nuanced engagement with global themes such as identity, migration, globalization, and the clash between East and West. His writings frequently reflect political perspectives, conveyed through an innovative and engaging narrative style. Some of his most notable works include *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007), *Exit West* (2017) and *Moth Smoke* (2000).

The Reluctant Fundamentalist, published in 2007, is a story narrated by Changez, a young Pakistani man who once pursued the American Dream in the United States. He graduated from Ivy-league university, excelled at a prestigious job in New York firm and fell in love with an American woman named Erica. However, after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, his life takes a drastic turn. Changez becomes increasingly disillusioned with the United States and its treatment of Muslims, facing discrimination, prejudice and unsafety. He eventually returns to Pakistan, where he becomes a professor and embraces an anti-American stance. The novel is narrated as a conversation between Changez and an unnamed American stranger in a Lahore café, where Changez recounts his experiences. The novel leaves readers with an open ending, prompting them to evaluate Changez's identity transformation and the blurred lines between fundamentalism and resistance.

The Reluctant Fundamentalist offers a deep exploration of identity, belonging, and the impact of global events on individual lives. The story explores a character who is entangled in a web of cross-cultural dimensions, operating within a transnational process that connects his Pakistani origins with his American assimilated traits. Additionally, the novel examines how systems of oppression overlap within a single context of racism and ethnic prejudice. These interactive forces represent a framework of intersectionality that intersect to shape Changez's identity and behavior.

Changez operates in a complex framework of transnational intersectionality which considers how global power dynamics (namely migration, ethnicity and race) intersect to shape his experience and identity. To this effect, this paper investigates how the transnational experience of identity negotiation, shaped by intersecting cultural, political, and social forces, constructs a framework of resistance to dominant powers. To achieve this endeavor, this study first examines Changez's identity formation, constructed by a process of transnational flexibility and shifting between his home culture and his host culture. Second, it inspects the intersectional elements he is subjected to, which eventually create new systems of oppression that determine his cultural and economic value. Finally, the study explores how these transnational intersectionality dimensions amalgamate to form a resistant front to American foreign policies.

This study presumes that Changez navigates the shifting dynamics of his identity and experience, shaped by both American and Pakistani contexts. This fluidity in his identity formation contributes to a unique transnational experience wherein Changez initially negotiates his integration into the American society while preserving his ethnic distinctiveness and later constructs a more resilient and resistant stance to American dominating forces. The post 9/11 atmosphere imposed a new set of intersectional factors that shaped Changez's experience through racial profiling and ethnic prejudice. These forces were subsequently elevated to a transnational dimension, ultimately forcing Changez to adopt a more assertive stance as a fundamentalist.

2. Transnational Intersectionality

Intersectionality, a concept developed in the field of critical race theory, was first introduced by civil right activist Kimberlé Crenshaw in the late 1980s. This concept explores how a person's identity components (such as race, gender, class, ethnicity and others) interact to shape the individual's social position, economic status and overall personal experience. Intersectionality was first elaborated to analyze how race and gender intersect to determine the experiences of Black women in the context of law and racial discrimination, making the insights of intersectionality part of a feminist theoretical discipline.

Vivian May (2015) confirms that intersectionality is “a complex concept with growing impact across disciplines, policy formulations, and sites of political struggle” (May, p. 21). This concept extends to political, philosophical, and pedagogical structures, disrupting the conventional theories that consider issues of inequality, marginalization and power on a linear “single axis” mode of research, whereby the experience of a selected group with a cumulative formula of traits is generalized or universalized (May, p. 22). Intersectionality brings to light new forms of privileges and oppressions as engendered by several factors that constitute identity (race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, disability, and more). It highlights the importance of considering all aspects of a person's identity when discussing issues of discrimination and inequality.

The effects of intersectionality and how it shapes individual experiences could further be amplified to a cross-national dimension of transnationality. Aihwa Ong (1999) defines transnationality as the “condition of cultural interconnectedness and mobility across space – which has been intensified under late capitalism” (Ong, p. 4). Ong (1999) uses this term to refer to the cultural distinctiveness under “global processes” that form a multiplicity of conceptions of culture. As a sociocultural anthropologist, Ong (1999) explains that the term “transnational” first became popular in the late 1970s as global companies started to remodel their corporation strategies from the “vertical integration” of multiculturalism to the “horizontal dispersal” of transnationalism (Ong, p. 21).

In an increasingly universal pace of interconnectedness, the struggles of marginalized groups often transcend national boundaries as complex systems of power and inequality shape their experiences in completely different ways. Transnational intersectionality investigates how individual aspects (including race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, disability, and others) interact, on a global scale, with issues like global migration, economic globalization, and international human rights to shape individual experiences. These interactions foster layers of privileges or oppressions that vary according to individual properties and national affiliations.

Ong (1999) investigates the transnational aspect of cultural conception on a micro level. She considers, for instance, the multiple-passport holders as a contemporary sample that represent “the split between state-imposed identity and personal identity caused by political upheavals, migration, and changing global markets” (Ong, p. 2). This split allows the personalization of a tailored identity that accommodates to the shifting cultural and global dynamisms. Evidently, this fluidity in identity formation blurs the lines between international frontiers, social habits and attachment. Ong (1999) terms this process as Flexible citizenship to refer to the fluidity of subjects in opportunistically responding to changing political-economic conditions. These practices, she concludes, operate within intersectional and transnational structures of meaning about family, gender, nationality, class mobility, and social power (Ong, p. 6).

Ong's insights on transnationality offer new leads to explore the depictions of power structures and their effect on personal behavioral systems in Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. Hamid's novel explores the dynamics of global forces before and after 9/11 as well as the shifting intersectional and transnational aspects that redefined identity formation and cultural affiliation. Ong's definition of the constituent components of "trans" denotes a moving entity traversing lines and spaces, fostering new relations within and between individuals and nation-states (Ong, p. 4). Since Ong's understanding of transnationality refers to the "transversal, the transactional, the translational, and the transgressive aspects of contemporary behavior and imagination" (Ong, p. 4), it is well adapted to the study of Changez's character and behavioral patterns that are incited, enabled, and enforced by the changing logics of the American society (Ong, p. 4).

The novel opens with a peculiar intrusion from Changez "Do not be frightened by my beard: I am a lover of America" (Hamid, 2008, p. 1). The contradiction in his statement is explored in the tale he eloquently details to an American foreigner at a random café in Lahore. From these first instances, it is apparent that Changez is aware of the intersectional disadvantage that his cultural identifiers (in this case, his facial hair) impose on him. Moreover, his abrupt declaration is a clear testament on his habit of accommodating his "orientalist" features with a more subtle and friendly behavior, allowing him to smoothly initiate – and lead – the conversation, just as it once allowed him to integrate the fabric of American society.

3. Transnational Flexibility: Shifting between Home and Host Cultures

The novel's opening statement could be seen as the mantra of Changez's identity; transitioning from host to home culture to, using Ong's terms, achieve "strategies to accumulate capital and power" (Ong, p. 6). The definitions of "capital and power" could be interpreted in Changez's life as social prestige, corporate position, monetary gains, or even in this microcosmic instance, power over his auditor. Prior to the 9/11 events, Changez shifted between an "American lover" and a Pakistani partisan. Keeping these two worlds un-blended, he opportunistically repositioned his identity to maintain his social position, penetrate the academic and corporate world and secure his American Dream.

Changez integrates America through the vessel of academia, a full scholarship to prestigious Princeton University in New Jersey. Princeton is, for him, a "dream come true," a fully paid invitation to contribute to a society he is happy to join. Changez, in his quest for the social prestige this Ivy League college provides, manifests a particular instance of "elite mobility" which consists of regulating his practices to position himself in a new arena of high social stature. Moreover, to solidify his insertion into the American mold, Changez shifts his priorities to join the corporate world. He strategically employs his intellect, his analytical precisions, and even his mental and physical skills as a former football player, to distinguish himself

among his foreign peers and secure a position at Underwood Samson, a high paying valuation firm in New York. This career move cements his incursion into the American corporate power, securing firm ground for social esteem through elite mobility.

Changez manipulates his intersectional characteristics in order to create situations of advantages and social validation. His admission to his auditor about his family in Pakistan reveals a concealed truth about their decaying wealth and prestige. Changez analogizes their situation to that of the old European aristocracy in the nineteenth century, retaining social status and respect merely as a symbol while devoid of any substantial fortunes. However, Changez alters this reality: “At Princeton, I conducted myself in public like a young prince, generous and carefree. But I also, as quietly as I could, held down three on-campus jobs” (Hamid, p. 11). Convinced that the truth would bring him “shame,” he maintains an image that would contribute to his social prestige and create a new range of opportunities on the intersectional and even the transnational spectrum. The policies with which he adapts and formulates his behavior depict the flexibility of his definition of social relations, citizenship, and even, identity conception.

Changez’s fragile and disillusioned identity crisis provides him with the required flexibility to connect with Erica. Grief-stricken by the death of her boyfriend, Erica is mentally unstable, crippled by her memories and depression. Changez uses his mystical charm and manners to win her over as a partner. Though she is attracted by his foreign allure and politeness, she is unable to connect with him romantically. Erica represents the final puzzle, the Daisy to his Gatsby, that could complete Changez’s American dream; social prestige guaranteed by inaccurate pretenses, opportunities to climb the corporate ladder and an American partner that would seal this mold of perfect inclusion. Nonetheless, in the face of rejection, Changez refuses to surrender. In a moment of intimacy, he asks Erica to “pretend I’m him,” referring to her deceased boyfriend, Chris. Since this appears to be the only way to ease her pain and prompt emotional openness, Changez not only alters his identity as a means to achieve his goals, but fully appropriates the identity of a ghost. His notion of flexibility and identity alteration transcends to his most personal and intimate desires.

It is important to note that Changez is not portrayed as a malicious character with the intent to deceive in order to win social and personal approval. For instance, he is honest with his boss, Jim, about his family background and the foreign financial aid he receives. Similarly, he experiences immense guilt and shame after impersonating Chris, fearing he may have hurt Erica even more by doing so. Changez’s attempts at “flexible citizenship” — encompassing opportunistic maneuvers and identity alteration — neither guarantee nor negate his efforts at inclusion. In fact, Changez himself appears torn: on the one hand, he longs for recognition – by his colleagues for his intellectual and analytical abilities and by

Erica for his romantic sensibilities. On the other hand, he preserves and takes pride in his Pakistani culture. He chooses to live in New York partly because its infrastructure resembles that of Lahore, many cab drivers spoke Urdu, and his street includes Pakistani restaurants and South Asian associations. The spectrum of intersectional transnationality – which fosters either situations of privileges or oppression – remains static, while Changez remains flexible, free to “move” between aspects of his home and his host cultures. Evidently, this inner conflict begins to take new forms as external forces would impose new systems in the aftermath of 9/11.

4. Precarious Belonging: The Mirage of Inclusion

Ong (1999) offers a thorough analysis on the functions of neoliberal systems in relation to capitalist practices in the swirl of immigration demands and economic values. She focuses her attention on American neoliberalism and the changing foundations that are forming around other nations, particularly South Asian countries. Ong concludes that during the postmodern era, there is a new system of “graduated sovereignty” in place whereby citizens, based on the differentials of their intersectionality, are “subjected to different kinds of surveillance and in practice enjoy different sets of civil, political, and economic rights” (Ong, p. 213). This makes modern Western societies define their model of citizenship on the Foucauldian principle of *homo economicus*, making economic utility – and, by extension, political expediency – the essence of civil rights and protections.

Ong’s model extends beyond the realms of global productions and financial circuits. Since “graduated sovereignty” is determined by the economic value – which in turn fosters situations of privilege and oppression – it inevitably disrupts and transposes social outlines and cultural systems. In the context of economic and political disadvantages in America, intersectionality – particularly at the transnational level – exposes the fragility of America’s celebrated structure of inclusion. Instead, these situations prove that inclusion under neoliberal regimes is often precarious and conditional. This prospect of inclusion could easily be withdrawn if state interests shift, rendering the actions of “flexible citizenship” a mere illusion. Case in point, neoliberal inclusion does not guarantee full citizenship, nor does it encourage cultural acceptance since foreigners are often treated as disposable “entrepreneurial subjects.”

The conditional nature of inclusion within neoliberal societies is often exposed in moments of crisis. Parallel to the fall of the World Trade Centre on 9/11, Changez admits to the “destruction of my personal American dream.” The colossal event proved the fragility of the system of inclusion that Changez relied so feverishly on to integrate the American mold. This sudden change highlights new dispositions of transnational intersectionality where he is subjected to drastic measures as a Pakistani. His work trips are resumed by nightmarish experiences at airport security where he is interrogated relentlessly and made to strip off his clothes. Changez is immediately “othered” in a state of utter fear and distrust from foreigners. The

persona he perfected as a niche Pakistani who is willing to embrace the American mold crumbled under racialized, nationalized and conditional neoliberalism. Changez exited the “graduated sovereignty” system he worked tirelessly to join. His sense of belonging becomes precarious, and the mirage of inclusion dissipates as he is viewed as a constant danger.

In neoliberal societies, personal value is often measured through economic utility, making inclusion precarious and subject to withdrawal. Changez’s value – both as a “flexible” citizen and as an economic subject – decreases in the aftermath of 9/11. Much like his job consists of determining the financial vitality and economic value of firms, Changez is subject to the same scrutinizing process. His estrangement in society is accompanied by a systematic marginalization in the workplace. This alienation would later intensify as his political identity matures, attesting again to the reality of “graduated sovereignty” in America and the fragility of inclusion in the neoliberal system. Changez’s torment is increased by the complete disinterest of Erica and her emotional alienation from him.

Changez’s “global success story” of a foreigner facing financial and cultural difficulties yet still graduating from Princeton University with honors becomes an irrelevant, almost meaningless, prestige. The futility of his journey echoes Sirma Bilge’s insights on the dynamics of neoliberalism in academia and the superficiality of intersectionality and diversity in the academic-industrial complex (Bilge, 2013, p. 409). In her article “Intersectionality Undone: Saving Intersectionality from Feminist Intersectionality Studies,” she warns the depoliticization of intersectionality for the intellectual breed in society, fearing the creation of an apolitical and superficial inclusion where minorities are silenced into submission. Changez’s public reactions to 9/11 where he must feign the same “shock and anguish” as his colleagues reflect his willingness to submit to a neoliberal system of inclusion in which his critical talents are silenced. More importantly, concealing his real feelings about the attacks – right upon watching it on the news for the first time – and his political views and opinion about America’s reaction and policies in the aftermath reveals a shift in his identity that would later on be concretized in a total refusal of any form of neoliberal system of inclusion and a radical opposition to America.

5. Politicized Identity: The Resistant Fundamentalist

Ong (1999) points out that states usually resort to a full “reassertion” of control over their population, policies and interests, even within a neoliberal system of globalization. The states, operating under the neoliberal web, adopt selective practices that ensure the protection of their interests, including regulating policies, tightening security, regulating speech or religion and prioritizing citizens over immigrants. This ultimately fosters a system of intersectionality which favors or oppresses certain categories of people. In the face of these selective practices, Bilge (2013) advocates for the return to “grounded, politicized identity” to maintain a fair and just system of intersectionality. In a neoliberal framework, a solid voice should

be given to those who experience situations of oppression and resistance, allowing them to “ground” and affirm their identities. Bilge argues that identities should be politicized with a critical edge to ensure that people are not treated as abstract categories used for inclusions but are instead the advocates in the fight for justice.

Bilge pays particular attention to “politicized” identities within academia. She warns about the “domestication” of intersectionality in the academic sphere, rendering this concept mundane and devoid of any form of activism or resistance. According to her, intersectionality should not merely be a tool for inclusion but should also serve a high purpose of analyzing power structures, challenging structural inequality and supporting collective political struggle. Bilge emphasizes the importance of reconnecting intersectionality with its original vision of generating counter-hegemonic discourses. Her advocacy for active resistance is amplified when the spectrum deals with transnational intersectionality. The latter must generate transformative knowledge and commit to a politicized version of social and universal justice.

Changez’s initial reaction to 9/11 voices the criticism of his concealed identity and reveals his true cultural and political affiliations. Upon watching the broadcast of the attacks on the news, Changez’s first reaction was to “smile.” He was “remarkably pleased” and caught in the symbolism of foreigners visibly bringing America “to her knees” (Hamid, 2008, p. 73). This revealing instance is quickly suppressed by Changez who undertook great measures to hide his feelings and fake his concerns for his colleagues. Nonetheless, this reaction left him with a profound “sense of perplexity.” Despite being a “product of an American university,” this reaction is an expression of his real identity and a testament to an allegiance he has yet to admit.

As Changez is reluctant to face the reality of his vanishing dream, he remains in denial of how much the rubble of this coalition would reshape his life and character. The attacks usher the American society into a state of “wrath” where Pakistani cab drivers are beaten to “an inch of their lives” (Hamid, 2008, p. 94), mosques, shops and houses are raided by the FBI, Muslim men would suddenly disappear. Changez stays confident in his inclusion prospects, affirming to himself that these stories are often exaggerated by the press and that these cases are experienced, on a global scale, by the “helpless poor,” not by highly paid Princeton graduates. His trust in the neoliberal system of inclusion remains unwavering as he continues to feed his identity disillusionment and convince himself that his future in America is secure.

The political atmosphere is intensely charged in the months following 9/11 and Changez succumbs under this immense pressure. His uncertainties about America’s reaction to the attacks grow more radical and unsilenced. The tensions between India and Pakistan intensified after the Indian Parliament attack which made Changez fear for his family and his home country. His disdain for America starts to take shape as

the American government refuses to help Pakistan in case a war erupted. During a winter retreat in Pakistan, Changez experiences a major identity crisis. His first instances in Lahore are marked by the sense of being an “unsympathetic American” which deeply angered and confused him. By the end of his trip, however, Changez feels like a coward abandoning his family simply for a high paying job and a woman who refuses to love him back. He admits to the futility of his American dream and is, therefore, free from the disillusionment he previously dwelled in. His identity is no longer reluctant; it is now affirming and radicalized. Changez returns to America, not as an “American product” but as a proud Pakistani.

Upon his return to America, Changez’s vision transforms as his “blindness was coming off” (Hamid, 2008, p. 145), and his metamorphosis begins to take shape. He starts to foster the required awareness that would clear his confusion. He admits to himself that he lacks a “stable core,” not certain where he belongs, “in New York, in Lahore, in both, in neither” (Hamid, 2008, p. 148). With more introspection, Changez even admits that he was able to impersonate Chris because his “identity was so fragile” (Hamid, 2008, p. 148). With these struggles in mind, he becomes more critical of America, generating sharper political and historical criticism and growing more radically patriotic. Changez becomes more defiant in character, provoking the neoliberal state of inclusion and challenging the social structure he once dreamed to integrate.

The first instance of these daring actions is the alteration of his grooming habits. Changez chooses to keep his beard as a “form of protest... a symbol of my identity, or perhaps I sought to remind myself of the reality I had just left behind” (Hamid 2008, p. 130). This change does not reflect Changez’s religious commitments as a Muslim man; in fact, it is evident in the novel that he is not a practicing Muslim, nor does he abide by the Islamic religious code – his alcohol consumption and adulterous relationship with Erica attest to this detachment. Instead, his facial hair represents a bold statement – a symbol of resistance against American hypocrisy and injustice. It is an expression of his anger and his refusal to conform. His beard, as “insignificant” as it is as a hairstyle, weighs as a cultural signifier for a man with Changez’s physical complexions.

Personal identity often witnesses colossal shift when confronted with culturally oppressive systems of power. Changez is on the threshold of a major identity transformation, hinged by a one “catalyst” moment of self-realization. While on a business trip to Chile to value a book publishing company, Juan Bautista, the chief executing director, draws a striking comparison between modern professionals serving foreign powers and the historical “janissaries,” - Christian boys captured by the Ottomans and trained as soldiers in the Muslim army to wipe out their own civilization. The irony of this parallel and the reversed positions haunt Changez who feels “torn” in the role of a “modern-day janissary,” faithfully abiding by America’s own “assumptions” of “superiority” while erasing his own civilization until he would

have “nothing else to turn to.” This reflection determines his position and final decision to leave America and reclaim his identity on his own terms.

Radical changes in political awareness often surface when individuals confront the contradictions between personal ideals and the dominant narratives of power. Changez proudly exhibits his transnational identity that reinforces his resistance to American foreign policies. Without forethought, Changez abandons his mission in Chile, quits his high-paying corporate job, and leaves behind him the world he once aspired to join. His final days in New York were marked by emotional turmoil, intensified by the news of Erica’s suicide. His views on America’s theatrical politics become increasingly radical, and his feelings on the value of shared pain and humanity grow sharper. Government, media, and even the critical journalists propagated myth-based rhetoric which fuels his anger. This sense of alienation manifests in defiant acts, such as “flaunting” his beard in public as a provocation — a symbolic rejection of dominant norms. This assertive stance reflects his newly grounded and politicized identity shaped by his transnational experiences.

The return to Pakistan marks a turning point, solidifying a radical political identity in response to American foreign policies. Changez accepts his role as a radical fundamentalist. This anti-American stance manifests through protests, formal gatherings, and public declarations. In his new role as a university lecturer, he engages with politically minded students, encouraging them to voice their disapproval of US global dominance. He becomes their “mentor,” guiding their activism and supporting it with structured and intellectual resistance. His mediatized opposition — combined with the radicalization of a student allegedly plotting to assassinate an American official — may explain the ambiguous role of his American auditor and his potential mission to permanently silence him. Changez’s politicized identity and emerging radicalism, articulated through the vessel of academia, aligns with Bilge’s advocacy of grounded intersectionality. Drawing on his “ex-janissary” experience, he critiques the structures of American foreign policy, generating transnational transformative knowledge and counter-hegemonic discourse amid America’s war on terror.

6.CONCLUSION

Political and cultural upheavals often provoke deep alterations in personal identity, challenging one’s sense of belonging and allegiance. Changez experiences a profound crisis of identity disillusionment and transformation in the aftermath of 9/11. Prior to these tragic events, he negotiates a flexible identity that enables his inclusion in the American social fabric. His transnational flexibility allows him to move between his home and host cultures, fostering opportunities of privilege and success. In the aftermath of 9/11, however, the intersectional elements that once favored his inclusion become a source of discrimination and oppression. His sense of belonging grows precarious, and his identity is torn between his devotion to the American dream and a growing sense of injustice. These situations ultimately

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culminate in a fully radicalized identity, grounded in politicized resistance to American foreign policy. His shift toward fundamentalism begins reluctantly but eventually solidifies as his identity finds firm grounds. Changez remains a “lover of America,” standing peacefully against political hypocrisy. Yet the intersecting cultural, political, and social forces of his transnational experience shape a resolute identity that resists America’s dominant power with pride and conviction.

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