

Freudian Dynamics and Self-Perception in Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*

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Abstract

This paper attempts to analyze the psychological views of Changez, protagonist of Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. Changez lives through immense persecution as well as psychological upheaval from the event of 9/11 as a Pakistani who finds a job as a consultant with an American based company in the United States. His persecution and isolation in the United States bring him to an emotional standstill, as memories, thoughts, and feelings significantly affect his actions and views. The analysis is centered upon how the protagonist commits a number of Freudian slips which reveal the protagonist's hidden conflicts and repressed feelings. It is worth noting that almost all parts of Changez's life experiences bear striking resemblance to Mohsin Hamid himself.

Keywords: Freudian Slip, Protagonist, Psychology and hidden thoughts.

The Truth about Dream comes True

Changez is a young Pakistani who wanted to study abroad. Raised in a country where intellectual opportunities are scarce, he thought big, and hustled to be admitted to one of the nation's most elite universities the Princeton University. His hard work had made this

possible. As the protagonist, Changez acts as the author's spokesperson. In line with Freudian view of literature, the writer reveals his/her own inner world, wishes and ambitions through the protagonist of their work. Changez's desire to study abroad and work for a prestigious firm is the author's dream. This is a "slip" of the unconscious mind, which can be seen in Changez himself and is emblematic of the haunting thoughts and the unfulfilled ambitions that are harbored within the author's mind.

Changez went to the US studied there and as he dreamt he got a job in US based company with handsome salary. An NRI fact that would make it really hard for him to get admission to Princeton University as the whole procedure stank of discrimination, and this had been his unconscious mind for years. The selection process was very essential and highly complex for the NRI students. At that time Changez did not respond to it, and it was in his unconscious mind. After graduation he was hired by Underwood Samson, where his aspirations to achieve independence are in question. As his conscious mind was sure of his plans for future Changez would have the future plans, but his desires which were his unconscious mind left unfulfilled.

Freud's article *Creative Writers and Daydreaming* elaborates on how a writer begins to write from unfulfilled wishes and daydreams of a child, proposing that writers articulate their unconscious wishes via their work. It is Emerson's argument, and it is a lens through which we can so easily view Hamid's novel, as many of his protagonist's dreams and desires are budding, unarticulated longings of the author himself. In this way the story can be interpreted as a manifestation of Freud's theory most notably, the "Freudian slip" whereby the unconscious reveals itself through creative expression. The story of the novel's characters and plotlines are those submerged thoughts of the author's, making the use of Freud's theory applicable and visible in Hamid's text.

A writer of fiction is serious about his fantasies, whereas a child who fantasizes is a playful fantasy without any purpose. Through his writing the author projects his emotions – emotions that are often stripped of meaning through real life. Changez has a vision of a life in America that will make him self-sufficient and gratified. On the surface it looks like his dream to study and work abroad has come true but still it is embedded in his subconscious as aspirations. The gap between expectation and reality leads to repression, he is never able to find the pleasure he originally sought.

While the writer is feeling crushed by the process of selection, the issue of withdrawing or protesting naturally presents itself. Freud explained that adults are reluctant to make their fantasies public because they are afraid of what they would be exposed to, and what they could be subjected to in terms of judgment. Mohid, who is discriminated against during the process of admission, holds back his emotions and moves on without protest. His muteness is meant to convey yet more shame and a want to fit in as a norm rather than a deviant more repressed emotion.

Freud insists that adults are always on the pursuit of living out their fantasies if not explicitly, then implicitly or suggestively. In addition, he makes a distinction between fantasies by gender: men have usually two types an ambitious one and a sexual one. This binary is mirrored in Changez whose desire for a calm and self-reliant life echoes the of ambition, a fantasy unaccomplished in his actual life. In Changez, then, the writer not only expresses his own repressed aspirations but also his deepest feelings as a man and his visions as a creative artist.

Yearning for Erica's Embrace

Freud divides male fantasies into two basic types: ambitious ones and ones concerned with sex. This dichotomy is distilled in Changez himself. His desire for Erica, a Princeton

student, is the erotic aspect of his mind. Changez is madly in love with Erica, and she is emotionally unavailable to him. Traumatically affected by the death of her childhood lover, Chris, Erica is trapped in her grief and craves emotional relief. Though she desires friendship, Changez's need for her is more erotic than empathetic. Changez's love turns slowly into a suppressed need for physical and emotional closeness. His desire is growing at the beach, where Erica's look makes him losing control of himself. This segment reveals the tension between his conscious restraint and the unconscious impulses Freud believes drive human beings. Subsequently, during an intimate moment, Changez's repressed desires triumph over his sense of right and wrong he tries to satisfy his sexual craving despite Erica's hesitation. Her passive submission highlights her, while his speaks to the supremacy of the id, the primal element of the psyche which Freud ties to animalistic desire.

Lessons Learned from the 9/11 Tragedy

Changez was himself a thriving employee in the United States, where his career blossomed quickly and without apparent end. He was highly successful financially and well thought of by his employers. And there was a good reason he was so crucial for us; he was the smartest guy in financial analysis. Within a couple of years, he was managing several large jobs. He grew professionally and was well regarded within the company.

It was his particular achievement to build on and sustain this unparalleled success in the face of such challenges. The tragedy changed not only the nation's political and social environment, but also the lives of Muslims living in the United States. Distrust, prejudice, and animosity against Muslims became common, culminating in the transformation of the United States into a more and more anti-Muslim space. Despite his abilities and achievements, Changez was an outsider, isolated and unwelcomed. Ultimately, he was compelled to quit his position and go back home.

In Lahore, Changez took up employment as a university lecturer, and he poured his efforts into shaping young minds both intellectually and morally. His time in America was an experience that significantly influenced his view of the world. Now a hardened critic of globalization and professional ambition, he was beginning to question the morality of working for multinational companies that care more about making money than they do, about people. He came to realize that all he had contributed his years of service, his loyalty, his dreams to had done was to deepen and strengthen some other, foreign country, leaving him, meanwhile, geographically adrift and spiritually disillusioned.

Crossing Paths: The Protagonist and the Stranger

The protagonist is confused and just wanted to share those thought with amongst them who are round about him. So, he found a stranger and he care began to speak into him. As soon as he began to talk to him, he. Taken all his misgivings about how he had labored in the foreign concern and how they had driven them out. And he was talking about all these things residing in the unconscious minds of the authors. This becomes as well apparent through the figure of Changez. Psychoanalyst Freud had rightly emphatically pointed out in explanation. It was universally conceded that all writers derive comfort. When he lets go of his mind. With a work of art, that's what the novelist has just done.

Final Reflections and Insights

The novel is full of incidents which it is easy to interpret in a way that supports a Freudian analysis of the mind. Changez's emotional and mental states are strongly aligned with Freud's idea of repression and unfulfilled desire. His feeling for Erica reveals his latent erotic desire and his dream of leading a separate existence in America expresses a dream of success which is still just that: an unrealised dream. These unfulfilled impulses, says Freud, become "staleated" within the unconscious and may cause turmoil in the mind and even in

the body. Here, the novel itself may be interpreted as a kind of creative catharsis. As Freud has pointed out, writers can sublimate their repressed feelings and desires in the form of artistic works. The novelist, through Changez, re-fashion his own repressed desires into a narrative *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* is a powerful example of Freudian psychoanalysis in literature.

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