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**Reimagining Reluctance: The South-Asian Diaspora and Global ‘Homing’ in Mira Nair’s
*The Reluctant Fundamentalist***

Shuhita Bhattacharjee

In this chapter, I examine Mira Nair’s 2013 film, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (Nair, Pilcher, Boghani, et al. 2013), as an adaptation of and in relation to Mohsin Hamid’s 2007 novel by the same title—a post-9/11 novel written from a non-western perspective that Nair, as a South Asian female filmmaker rooted in the very turbulence the text describes, turns into a film in a post-2011 world. I will argue that Nair, located within the South-Asian diaspora, and therefore part of the community most affected by situations of global violence and most invested in the questions raised by Hamid, adopts a less contentious and more geopolitically strategic position than the novel—advocating global peace, suggesting the moral relativity of agents on *both* sides of this conflict (East and West, South-Asian / Muslim and American), and emphasizing the need for them to connect in order to recuperate the possibility of a global ‘home’ for the diasporic inhabitant of fractured spaces.

Nair films the novel in the aftermath of the killing of Osama bin Laden around which time the world was erupting with terrorist attacks, including those against India in 2008 and 2011, and tells a somewhat different tale. As the photo diary on this book-film transition, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist: From Book to Film* (henceforth referred to as *From Book to Film*), notes—it is the “coming-of-age story of a young man who strives to find himself” over a decade—a personal tale that is embossed over another turbulent geopolitical trajectory—that “between 9/11 and the killing of Osama Bin Laden” (2011) during which decade the “young man grows up” (Nair 2013, 88, vii).¹ In retelling this story, however, Nair creatively intervenes, more

invested—as a South-Asian diasporic filmmaker would more likely be—in bridging gaps, remedying misunderstandings, and recuperating a sense of a global ‘home’ that transcends borders instead of longing for a remote and regional place of origin as ‘home’ and upholding a partisan agenda. The aim is not to perform a biographical reading of the film, but to engage in a historically and geopolitically informed reading of Nair’s creative reworkings that likely draw on her sensibilities as a South Asian diasporic woman characterized by a set of understandable experiences, anxieties, and yearnings. I will show how, while the text is marked by an essential ambiguity, and enters into a much more philosophical introspection on the meaning of ‘fundamentals,’ the film makes a more contemporarily relevant point about the ‘war on terror’ and responds to contemporary urgencies by prioritizing the offering of a moral solution to it—a solution that brings with it the promise of a comforting global ‘home’ for the wandering migrant. In Nair’s cinematic rendering, avoiding any moral ambiguity, both sides are in fact endowed with justificatory moral impulses for their actions. This creative decision to underplay the hostility between the two sides, as well as the moral reprehensibility of each (and especially of the West) is designed to further the possibility of global peace. Additionally, the film also elides the more uncomfortable and open questions one encounters in the novel surrounding human proclivities towards intolerance, cruelty, and violence—attempting to re-channel the deeply philosophical motivations of the novel into a more practical geopolitical one.

Hamid’s novel tells an intriguing tale of foggy moralities in the first person where Changez, a Pakistani university professor, speaks in a monologue to an unidentified and silent American interlocutor at a Lahore café about his own American dream and his resulting success on Wall Street, followed by his complete disenchantment with this heartless commercialism and a subsequent return to Pakistan. Changez talks to the American of being at the top of his class at

Princeton, of being hired by Jim (the boss at Underwood Samson, a top-ranking valuation firm on Wall Street) amidst cut-throat competition between the very brightest, of being close friends with Wainwright, of falling hopelessly in what was essentially a doomed love with Erica, of being among the most valued and successful at his company, of being identified as the cultural and class 'other' by Jim (who himself was an outsider to the privileged that he had contended with and won against), of then encountering doubts and realizing his misplaced loyalties, of heartbreakingly learning that he was furthering American (Western) neo-colonialism against the interests of his own nation while Pakistan continued to be in the throes of poverty and war (with India), and of finally returning home to Pakistan to teach in a university. The novel ends in an atmosphere of indistinct fear, lingering doubt, and impending violence without a clear sense of the moral allegiances or hidden motivations of either party—speaker or listener.ⁱⁱ

Mira Nair converts this plot into a fast-paced thriller that begins with the kidnap of Anse Rainier, an American professor at Lahore University. Shortly after this the American rescue operation begins, and Robert Lincoln (Bobby), a journalist who we later learn is also a CIA asset, visits Changez (a Pakistani professor who teaches at Lahore University) at Pak Tea House with the ostensible purpose of interviewing him. However, Changez, while narrating the same story as in the novel, shows his awareness of Bobby's real purpose. As the teeming student crowd gathered around the Pak Tea House threatens to erupt in a violent frenzy when the Pakistani police and American CIA prepare to attack in an attempt to find Rainier, Changez and Bobby try to trust each other in the interest of ensuring a nonviolent end to this inflammable situation. Changez in the film, who it is clear by now is a peace-loving professor with no dubious terrorist connections, tries to help Bobby find Rainier when Bobby sincerely appeals to him for help and tries convincing him by citing the future of his students. However, cultural suspicions

get in the way and Bobby suspects Changez of betrayal towards him and complicity with the kidnappers when he receives the mistaken information that Rainier has already been killed by the kidnappers. Bobby tries to threaten Changez and leave, shocking Changez who was still genuinely committed to a peaceful resolution. This gives way to turbulent outbursts in the mob and as Bobby is rescued by the CIA in a speeding car, he watches Changez's favourite student, Sameer, get killed by the forces, and after communicating with the other CIA officers in the vehicle finally realizes the unfortunate miscommunication and the fatal cultural distrust that had caused the breakdown of his pact with Changez—something that signals the larger defeat of the very possibility of cross-cultural alliance. The film ends with a hopeful note, however, with both protagonists internally lamenting this breakdown of trust and Changez speaking soulfully of the possibility of peace at Sameer's funeral.

The ultimate aim of both the novel and the film in one sense is to expose the shaky grounds on which the 'war against terror' and allegations against 'fundamentalism' rest, and to blur the lines between global heroes and villains. Both the novel and the film (drawing from the novel) show Underwood Samson initially to be an unproblematic meritocracy where employees are exhorted to "Focus on the fundamentals" (Hamid 2007, 98)—a phrase meant to implicitly remind them as much of the company's business basics as of the American ethic of commercial ruthlessness. To this world of apparent justice (where a racial-outsider like Changez and a class-outsider like Jim are provided equal opportunity to succeed), is contrasted the global spectre of 'Islamic fundamentalism' that is represented through uncomfortably familiar rhetoric. Both the novel and the film, however, are alive with an ironic undercurrent from the very start so that amidst the general atmosphere of unpredictability, suspense, distrust, and fear, one is unable to clearly align Changez with Islamic fundamentalismⁱⁱⁱ or unproblematically condemn this religio-

political force as the source of all evil. Instead, the reader/viewer realizes through Changez's monologue that the commercial fundamentalism which is embodied by America's inhumane, unthinking, and arrogant pursuit of profit beyond all other values and concerns is no different from the religious fundamentalism that is so universally singled out as the germ of all global crises. Mira Nair writes of how she used Underwood Samson "to explore the concept of economic fundamentalism alongside that of political fundamentalism" (Nair 2013, 57).^{iv} The illusion of a just and democratic meritocracy surrounding America falls through as the nation begins to show its prejudicial teeth in the aftermath of 9/11—in the novel ("even at Underwood Samson I could not entirely escape the growing importance of *tribe*") and even more graphically in the film (through humiliating strip-searches and interrogations) (Hamid 2007, 117). Changez realizes that he is a "modern-day janissary" awakened by the quiet reflection of the man at the helm of the last company he goes to evaluate on behalf of Underwood Samson (Juan-Bautista at the head of a publishing company in Chile in the novel and Nazmi Kemal at Basak Yayimci Publishing in Istanbul in the film) (Hamid 2007, 152). This moment is dramatized poignantly in the film through the song, "Mori Araj Suno" ("Hear me out, O Lord," composed by Faiz Ahmed Faiz, and translated in the Photo Diary) where he appeals to his Lord who promised him kingship of the entire world, saying to the Lord that he does not want this, what he needs instead is "a grain of respect," and then ends by saying to the Lord: "If this pact displeases You/ Then let me go find another God" (Nair 2013, 154).

What makes Nair the most creative, sensitive, and invested conduit for the cinematic rendering of the novel is her personal history of divided belongings between Pakistan and India on the one hand with her father's house being in Lahore, and India and America on the other with her professional life charted mostly in USA.^v Hamid himself considers this a crucial factor

in the way they bonded over the collaborative homework on the film project and in the way this led to the successful cinematic output. Speaking of the centrality of diasporic sensitivity in the composing of this novel and in the making of the film, he writes: “Mira profoundly and intuitively understood my novel, so I was confident about her being at the helm of affairs” (Nair 2013, 23). He further explains how he “really clicked with her as a person” because she is “someone who comes from South Asia and has spent many years [there]” but “has lived abroad for almost half her life” just like him (Nair 2013, 23). Charles Gant concurs in his essay when he explains how the novel’s “themes of assimilation and alienation” in the story caught between Wall Street and Lahore “resonated . . . with Nair, who was born in India, educated at Delhi and Harvard Universities and resides in New York” (Gant 2013, 18). This diasporic hybridity of identity—something that Hamid calls a “mongrel” identity—becomes the definitive biographical and creative grounding for novelistic composition, engaged filmmaking, and intuitive acting with respect to *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (Singh 2012a, 149).^{vi} Nair herself suggests that the diasporic experience of being split between India and America makes her more sensitive at registering the vibrations of violence, contingencies of loyalties, and fractures within identities—fragilities likely to make her a committed advocate for global understanding. She delineates her divided identities, firstly between India and Pakistan, when she explains how her father grew up in Lahore before 1947, and how even she “[a]s a child of modern India” was “raised like a Lahori”—“speaking Urdu, quoting the poems of Faiz Ahmed Faiz, listening to the ghazals of Iqbal Bano and Noor Jehan,”—yet knowing that “there was a wall” between India and Pakistan “that could never be crossed” (Nair 2013, xi). And then, she explains the second facet of her split allegiance—that between India and America—which unites her, she says, with Hamid: “I came from India to America when I was nineteen and, like Mohsin, have lived more

than half my life outside the subcontinent” (Nair 2013, xii). Summing up the relationship between her fractured diasporic existence on the cleavage of different nation-states and her creative vocation she says: “I believe I may have been put on this earth to tell stories of living between worlds” (Nair 2013, xi). She explains the reason she related to Hamid’s novels and his protagonist’s feelings of alienness and his search for ‘home,’ showing the reader how she is organically connected to the diasporic sensibility at the heart of the novel (embodied both by its author and by its protagonist):

In the bones of Mohsin’s tale, I saw a dialogue between one side and the other. And it is this dialogue that embodies my own life story . . . Unwittingly, my films, my work and life came to be about the seesaw between these worlds [of India and America between which my life was split], in which I felt both an insider and an outsider. And like many of us who live hybrid lives, I railed against the line that was drawn a decade ago when Bush coined the ‘axis of evil’ and built a wall of myopia between one way of life and another.

(Nair 2013, xii)

The idea of alienness across split geographical locations and the yearning for a ‘home’/‘homeland’ beyond borders are not only characteristic of Nair’s own diasporic reality but are also foundational to the scholarly theorization of the diaspora. Alison Blunt examines the idea of ‘home’ or ‘domicile’ in the context of the Anglo-Indian diaspora, studying the “geographies of home” that she observes are articulated “on scales from the domestic to the diasporic” and experienced as a “space of belonging and alienation” (Blunt 2005, 2). Even a cursory look at critics who examine South Asian diasporic works—such as that of Mohsin Hamid, or by extension into the realm of cinema, Mira Nair—reveals the same preoccupation

with the idea of 'home.' Lisa Lau distinguishes 'diasporic South Asian writers' (those of South-Asian origin who write from the West, such as Hamid, or by extension, Nair) from the 'home South Asian authors' (those of South-Asian origin who write from within South Asia), and notes that the work of diasporic South Asian women authors is characterized by a 'double-consciousness' (resulting from the South-Asian 'home' of their imagination/memory and the alien West in which they are situated), and by authorial notions of identity that are intimately connected with "concepts of *home* and place, as the space of return and of consolidation of the Self, enabled by the encounter not with the other, but with one's own" (Lau 2005, 252; emphasis added). Maxey concurs about the focus on the idea of 'home' in the work of South Asian diasporic works, observing how it is used to "raise provocative questions about changing societies and the place of ethnic South Asians within them" and how also serves as an "important synecdoche for wider social and national concerns" (Maxey 2006, 29). In landmark works of scholarship more generally about diasporic narratives, figures like Homi Bhaba, Frantz Fanon, Paul Gilroy, James Clifford, and Stuart Hall have emphasized the need to surrender essentialist notions of the 'home' based on ideas of purity. Vijay Agnew notes for instance the need to challenge earlier templates of diaspora narratives with "their fixed notion of home," where "the homeland is perceived nostalgically as an 'authentic' space of belonging" and the place of settlement as "somehow 'inauthentic' and undesirable" (Agnew 2005, 195). Avtar Brah understands the idea of 'home' in the diasporic context in non-"essentialist" terms, seeing the diaspora as a process of "historical displacements" that bring into play a "multi-locationality within and across territorial, cultural and psychic boundaries"—so that the "diasporian subjectivity" while not "rootless" is still characterized by a "multi-placedness of home" (Brah 1996, 197). Offering a critique of "discourses of fixed origins," Brah speaks of how the diasporic

condition is characterized by “a homing desire” which is “not the same as the desire for a ‘homeland.’” This home that is marked by longing and multi-locationality is what lies at the heart of Nair’s cinematic construction of a global and “multi-locational” home and expresses what is implicitly her own diasporic experience of alienness across fractured geographies and her own “homing desire” in a time of violent cultural clashes and displacements (Brah 1996, 197). In fact, Nair confesses in an interview that post 9/11 “so much has changed in New York that it does not give you that *homely feeling* which it did before” and that she had made this movie for her son who was turning twenty-one and was “looking for a *place to call home*” (NEWS18, “*Reluctant Fundamentalist* is for my son: Mira Nair”).^{vii} Not only does this make evident Nair’s intensely personal search and longing for a ‘home,’ it also makes clear her attention to a similar ‘homing desire’ experienced by her son, understandably soaked in his South-Asian diasporic inheritance and the contemporary transnational currents. Nair’s deep and pertinent search for ‘home,’ both at a personal and a cinematic level, in the displaced and violent post-9/11 world, echoes therefore the migrant’s desire to “feel at home” in the host country that Gabriel Scheffer recognizes as typical to the diasporic condition (Scheffer 2003, 7). The self-conscious intentionality at the heart of Nair’s cinematic construction of a ‘home’ is thus a matter not just of politically-aware intellectual intervention, designed to achieve a more harmonious world order, but also of personal emotion and innermost longings. The many aspects of this ‘homing desire,’ including the intellectual and the affective, become clearer if we look closely at Chandra Mohanty’s 1993 essay called “Defining Genealogies: Feminist Reflections on Being South Asian in North America.” In the essay, Mohanty asks what ‘home’—“crucial to immigrants and migrants”—really is, whether it is “a geographical space, a historical space, an emotional sensory space” (Mohanty 1993, 352). Transatlantic South Asian authors in particular, deconstruct the

very idea of home in a linguistic and philosophical sense, locating it not merely in the geographical or the ancestral (Maxey 2006). Focusing on such a possible creative redefinition of 'home,' Mohanty concludes that in diasporic experience, "[p]olitical solidarity and a sense of family could be melded together imaginatively to create *a strategic space* I could call 'home'" (1993, 352; emphasis added). It is precisely this intelligent and *strategic* construction of a sense of a global 'home'—an "ethno-global vision" of home—that we see in Nair's cinematic recreation of Hamid's story of diasporic alienness, designed to cater both to geopolitical and personal ends (Agnew 2005, 147).

From Novel to Film: Cinematic Reworkings

I will study in detail the series of creative alterations to the novel that Mira Nair makes, transforming in many ways the inherent motivations behind the text. Let me begin by noting the way Nair insightfully develops the thematic impulses of the text to highlight the centrality of the diasporic experience of the migrant, Changez, but to also crucially show Bobby to be a migrant himself—thus universalizing the diasporic condition with its search for a home. Nair's *Changez* beautifully intuits the lost in-betweenness of diasporic existence that he imagines Bobby must be experiencing—similar to what he himself had tragically experienced during his American life away from home—a story he narrates with great pathos and drama. He imagines for Bobby, and accurately as the film suggests, what a displaced diasporic life might feel like in its rootlessness, confusion of loyalties, and absence of love. He says to Bobby:

I see a man with hash under his fingernails who likely smokes it alone. I see the odd white man who lives in the old quarter and only ventures out to buy local fruit and local

girls. He's been here so long his own blood family have forgotten him, and there's nobody here to replace them.

Changez narrates this reality—uncannily similar to his own experience of loneliness in a state of split existence—addressing Bobby in the Pak Tea House in the current moment. But it is filmed interestingly where Changez's narrative actually appears as a voice-over or off-camera commentary and the visual shows Bobby pensively pacing around in Lahore, implicitly living out the life that Changez is describing. Nair reimagines what it means to be in this state—the globally suspect state of being a migrant in the diasporic space^{viii}—and the truths it makes you realize such as the multi-locationality, fluidity, unreliability, and necessity of homes. As Changez says to Bobby at the end of these lines, expressing the shared truth that diasporic experientiality brings, trying to save him suffering and alienation: “I'm telling you something that it took me a long time to realize. Some truths take their time.” In Nair's film, lurching in the diasporic state all-too-familiar for her, both the central characters are able to share a deeper “global imaginary”—i.e. the palpable realization of conflict and the urgent necessity for mutual understanding—and are therefore able to resolve to move beyond mutual cultural suspicion (Darda 2014, 108). It is precisely this shared diasporic experientiality between the two primary characters, grounded in the South-Asian diasporic life of the filmmaker herself, that brings them together in the film in their desperate clawing at peace, and in their hopeful longings for a ‘home’—however shifting and multi-locational—across the globe no matter where diasporic travels take them.

Moreover, Nair, with her split loyalties between India and Pakistan on the one hand, and India and USA on the other, dilutes the vituperative rhetoric surrounding India that peppers the novel. Changez in the novel attacks what he portrays as India's militant political stance as “the

more belligerent” one between the two neighbours, and lambasts the diplomatic and military support provided to India by USA which he notes allowed India to act “with America’s connivance” (Hamid 2007, 143, 148). The text shows the existing acidulous relationship between the two neighbours when the narrator says that after “armed men had assaulted the Indian Parliament” in 2008, “[o]pinion was divided as to whether” these men had anything to do with Pakistan” while “there was unanimity in the belief that India would do all it could to harm us, and that despite the assistance we had given America in Afghanistan, America would not fight at our side” (Hamid 2007, 121, 126-7). Pakistan is portrayed by Changez as the weaker neighbour (“vulnerab[le] to intimidation”), treated unfairly and forced to reside “within commuting distance of a million or so hostile [Indian] troops who could, at any moment, attempt a full-scale invasion” (Hamid 2007, 128, 127). Being of South-Asian origin herself, Nair, on the other hand, fuses a more united/collaborative South-Asian identity in the face of the American ‘other.’ Her film registers the Pakistan-India tensions only contextually at the time of Bina’s (Changez’s sister) wedding. It shows her lament the fact that her wedding required planning for war contingencies (“bomb shelter contingency plan”) and the narrator informs us further that around this time the partying became more “raucous” and the food more “delicious” as the war-related anxieties mounted. Referring only offhandedly to this India-Pakistan animosity, Nair instead sharpens the US-Global South binary, foregrounding the American cultural and political arrogance in the face of South Asian humility and creativity.^{ix} Thus, the film strategically shifts the location of Changez’s second Underwood Samson assignment from Chile to Istanbul. This choice is explained in one way by the cinematographer, Declan Quinn, who says that “Istanbul was a beautiful city to set the publisher scene—a real blend of European and Muslim culture in an ancient city” (Nair 2013, 95). But I would argue that Nair goes beyond this attempt at

showcasing the shared inheritance of the East and the West. The shift allows her to suggest a larger alliance of most overtly the Muslim world (Pakistan, Afghanistan, the Middle East)^x and in the larger sense the global south, where India, Pakistan, and the middle east among others forge a common front opposed to the American cultural sovereignty worldwide). Thus in the film, *Changez*, after declaring that his own father is a Pakistani (Urdu) poet, addresses Nezma Kamal—who supervises the publishing firm in Istanbul and publishes as we see later books of Turkish poetry as well—using a significant personal pronoun in the plural (“our”) to signify a shared politico-cultural community: “[Y]ou are a keeper of our culture in this part of the world.” And to this cultural frontier is opposed the globally dominant Western alliance led and represented by USA, and *Changez* celebrates its spectacular 9/11-downfall, speaking to Robert Lincoln (Bobby) with great relish about his “pleasure” at the sight of “arrogance brought low.” At this level then, Nair’s film becomes a commentary on America’s putative cultural imperialism, and as the work of a South-Asian diasporic filmmaker it seems to promise a larger South-Asian (or Global South) alliance in the face of this behemoth.

But, on the whole, Nair’s film adopts a much more *strategic* position in order to “strategic”-ally sculpt a ‘home’ across the diaspora, echoing Mohanty’s idea of the diasporic ‘home’ as a “strategic space” (Mohanty 1993, 352). As a South-Asian diasporic woman, caught not only personally but structurally in this space marked by fractured allegiances and persistent alienness, and by a yearning for ‘home’ and belonging, Nair’s creative intervention is designed to carve a ‘home’ that is global and not partisan, based on a pan-hemispherical understanding and trust. Being a diasporic South-Asian and additionally a woman, and belonging therefore to communities that are perhaps most affected (emotionally and practically) in situations of global crises, and intensely aware of what is at stake for South-Asia in the (Indo-Pak) infighting

encouraged by Western/American intervention, Nair moves instead in the direction of global peace, suggesting wisely the presence of benign agents on both sides (East and West, South-Asian / Muslim and American) and emphasizing the need for them to connect. Nair's most critical reworking, therefore, lies in the area of the moral commentary that it offers, significantly altering the inflection of Hamid's text. For generic requirements, as well as in answer to contemporary urgencies, the film essentially makes the same larger point as the text—problematizing the Western interpretation of 'terrorism' and 'fundamentalism'—but through a clearly resolved picture of chosen loyalties and political standpoints. As I will proceed to show in my reading that follows, there is no confusion of moralities. The west is not villainized in the least but almost valorised, and both sides are in fact endowed with justificatory moral impulses. While the novel ends with unresolved tensions, mutual suspicion, and unclear allegiances, the film shows the disastrous result of such cultural distrust and provides a geopolitical solution towards establishing peace and recuperating a global 'home' for the diasporic wanderer—addressing the most immediate realm of pragmatic and emotional anxieties for a South Asian woman caught in the creative and yet violent cross-currents of a warring post-9/11 diasporic space.

The novel dwells in an intense and recurrent atmosphere of suspicion and conspiracy with no clear heroes or villains, both at an individual level (neither the Pakistani speaker nor the American interlocutor are openly vilified) and in a collective sense (neither Pakistan/the Global South nor America emerge as devious). As Hamid explains, the preoccupation of the novel's mystifying form as well as its content is with "the tension which comes from a sense of mutual suspicion between America and the Muslim world" (Yaqin 2008, 46). But despite this obvious binary, there are no clear indications of authorial moral endorsement in favour of either side. As

Claudia Perner notes, referring also to Alastair Sooke's essay, the "predatory imagery which peppers the passages in which the narrator directly addresses his American listener keeps the reader wondering who will in the end turn out to be the hunter and who will find himself to be prey" (Perner 2011, 29; referring to Sooke, "*The Reluctant Fundamentalist*"). The form of the dramatic monologue that the novel adopts fuels the atmosphere of suspicion and conspiracy further by revealing very little of the unsaid thoughts of the speaker and none at all of the interlocutor (that are unfiltered by the speaker).^{xi} The text is marked by an essential ambiguity and is significantly structured as a dramatic monologue—a genre that is by its very nature covert (unrevealing of all perspectives) and that mystifies the extent to which the silent interlocutor agrees with the speaker. Charles Gant quotes the producer, Lydia Dean Pilcher, who observes: "The novel reads like a psychological thriller. It has the Hitchcockian quality of the ticking bomb; the intrigue of the situation that makes you keep turning the pages to see what's going to happen" (Gant 2013, 18). Through these tense meshes of the novel—thriller-like in its texture and potentially suggestive in its empty spaces/silences—we are tactfully alerted to the inherent villainy and potential violence of both the Pakistani speaker and his American listener.

At a basic level both the text and the film highlight the exploitative, predatory, commercial, and rapacious nature of the American marketplace (that includes the American academia and the American workplace)—Changez in the novel uses the prostitudinal metaphor to emphasize the crass commercialism of the American academia ("Princeton raised her skirt for the corporate recruiters who came onto campus and . . . showed them some skin . . . I was a perfect breast . . .—tan, succulent, seemingly defiant of gravity") and Changez in the film speaks of the militaristic ruthlessness of American commerce (displayed by the "Navy Seals of financing" at Underwood Samson) (Hamid 2007, 4-5). The text, however, is unique in the

emphasis it lays on the suggestively sly and threatening nature of the American interlocutor. In the absence of an overt moral motivation for his menacing presence in Lahore, the American figure in the novel acquires an ethically suspect bearing even for the reader. This man in the novel is (arguably) less than forthright or noble, pretending to be a common civilian when Changez strongly suggests and clearly intuits that he is an armyman or a spy (a possible CIA agent) on a covert mission. His fidgety and cautious demeanour that Changez refers to (texting instead of calling back a contact, reaching under his jacket for what he says is a wallet but which Changez is sure is a gun, and displaying nervous and invasive predator-prey behaviour) arouses the reader's moral suspicions repeatedly (Hamid 2007, 2, 30, 5, 31). Even more shockingly, defying typical readerly expectations, this Western figure that looms visibly uninvited and ominous on the Lahore skyline is shown to be implicitly lascivious, such as when Changez suggests that, not unlike the typical simultaneous representation of Islamic conservatism and prurience, the American also lecherously ogles women (with an "intensity of . . . gaze" and gets "distracted") and one particular student from the nearby National College of Arts "ca[tches] [his] eye" (Hamid 2007, 16, 22).

The novel also portrays Changez, the Pakistani speaker, as equally unpredictable and potentially violent. There is a consistent emphasis on the Pakistani relish of visceral desires, however violent to humane taste or cultural propriety they may be. Thus, Changez declares the "inordinate pride" that the Pakistanis have in their food, calls the spread in the restaurants surrounding them a "purely carnivorous feast" that is "delectable" and that "harks back to an era before man's knowledge of cholesterol made him fearful of his prey" (Hamid 2007, 101). Unashamed of this proud predatoriness, and confident that "[t]here is great satisfaction to be had in touching one's prey" (Hamid 2007, 123), Changez explains with great satisfaction that the

restaurants around were untainted by the presence of a “western dish” on their menus. He declares to his American interlocutor:

These, sir, are predatory delicacies, delicacies imbued with a hint of luxury, of wanton abandon. Not for us the vegetarian recipes one finds across the border to the east, nor the sanitized, sterilized, processed meats so common in your homeland! Here we are not squeamish when it comes to facing the consequences of our desire. (Hamid 2007, 101)

And Changez is able to draw together the Eastern (Pakistani) and Western (American, represented by his companion) sensibilities, showing how the American has followed his advice to touch his prey because his “fingers are tearing the flesh of [the] kebab” (Hamid 2007, 123). He is able to show moreover, that despite the politically correct rhetoric of humanitarianism and libertarianism, the Americans are inherently given to the same decadent and ruthless pursuit of pleasures and instincts. Thus, speaking in a different context (of sexual desire), Changez points to how “savor[ing] the denial of gratification” is the “most un-American of pleasures” (Hamid 2007, 69). Changez explains how these are basic human instincts and tendencies, showing for instance how humanity in general is able to experience the finesse of women’s delicate perfume and the carnivorous feast that surrounds them simultaneously. Changez says: “It is remarkable indeed how we human beings are capable of delighting in the mating call of a flower while we are surrounded by the charred carcasses of our fellow animals—but then we are remarkable creatures” (Hamid 2007, 78). Therefore, Changez, through his apparently unrelated comments on human approaches to food, is effectively able to indicate how questionable the claims to morality are that are to be seen on both sides (the east and the west). He shows that the American is no superior, only a hypocrite, in not following through to the full implication of his desire,

something that the Pakistani is not scared of doing (“Here we are not squeamish when it comes to facing the consequences of our desire”) (Hamid 2007, 101).^{xii}

Besides obfuscating the moral positionality of both sides, the novel continues to baffle us with many uncomfortable questions that it leaves interestingly unanswered—the question of the unavoidable temptation one feels towards violence against the arrogant enemy and the ultimate limits of one’s tolerance when confronted with intolerance—questions that drive us to entertain the possibility for human weakness and cruelty. We see tense moments in the novel when Changez relishes the televised sight of the twin towers crashing (which I will discuss later in detail), or when at several points he seems to threaten his American listener with violence in return for what he perceives to be a covert preparation for attack, or when he stands undeterred on the precipice of physical violence after being accosted in the parking lot with a racial slur in the 9/11 aftermath (yelling back and grabbing the “tire iron” from his car, letting “the cold metal of its shaft . . . [rest] hungrily” in his hands, and “for a few murderous seconds” feeling “fully capable of wielding it with sufficient violence to shatter the bones of his skull”) (Hamid 2007, 118).

Nair’s film performs certain dramatic alterations. It changes the entire context, adding urgency, pace,^{xiii} and a moral overtone to the situation by grounding the plot in the kidnapping of Anse Rainier. Charles Gant quotes producer, Lydia Dean Pilcher, who says, “We concocted different directions in terms of what the urgent situation was that was causing the conversation to be tense” (Gant 2013, 18). The sub-plot they finally constructed allows Bobby (Robert Lincoln), the “journalist and CIA asset,” the moral (and emotional since he says Rainier was his “friend”) motivation that justifies his and America’s lurking (and clearly invasive and unwelcome)

presence among the largely peace-loving student community that populates the Pak Tea House (Gant 2013, 18). William Wheeler, one of the three screenwriters, explains that the writing team decided that while the film will also shift between two timeframes, present-day Lahore and the American/Western experience in the past, in the film, unlike in the novel, “the present-day story would be a fully fleshed out espionage story with a beginning, a middle and an end” (Nair 2013, 22). Wheeler explains that this “required the invention of several new elements: the kidnapping of Anse Rainier, the presence of an American intelligence unit in Lahore and, most importantly, the character of Bobby Lincoln—the cinematic equivalent of the unnamed American in Mohsin’s novel” (Nair 2013, 22). Charles Gant writes that “[t]he biggest conundrum of all” was to decide “how to represent the unnamed American stranger” and therefore, screenplay writers “Boghani and Hamid fleshed out [this] character” and gave him an unquestionably ethical framework in that he comes to Changez believing that he “can help locate a kidnapped American whose life is in imminent peril” (Gant 2013, 18). This aspect of his character is further expanded later in the film when Changez asks him how he went from writing so passionately against American intervention in the region to spying on behalf of the American CIA. This is when Bobby narrates the case of Ahmad Shah Massoud in Takhar province of Afghanistan whom he had interviewed and supported because, despite the fact that “he had blood on his hands,” Bobby thought that through Massoud’s social work and his opposition to the Taliban “he stood for something, meant something to people” (“opening schools for girls, talking about democracy, resisting the Taliban”). But he got killed two days before 9/11 by the 9/11 attackers through the use of “a bomb in a video camera,” a shocking fate that made Bobby reverse his position and acknowledge the need for American intervention in the region in order to preserve global peace (not just for the continued existence of the West but also of the East). Simultaneously, Nair’s film also gives

Changez an indubitable moral grounding. The film makes Changez explicitly disavow his own involvement or that of his students in any kind of home-bred Pakistani fundamentalism, altering the texture and tone of the text crucially and positing the alternative narrative of a righteous, peace-loving, and noble Pakistan. Screenwriter William Wheeler remarks on how these changes were made and with what intention:

Giving Bobby just and reasonable arguments for the US presence in Pakistan while at the same time maintaining the power of Changez's critique of that presence—in addition to his experience in Underwood Samson and the United States overall—would, we hoped, allow members of the audience to engage with the material through their own individual perspectives (Nair 2013, 22).

Besides the pragmatic concern of ensuring that all constituencies of the audience gets to relate to the film, there was, of course, the other significant need to further the prospect of global harmony and the possibility of cross-cultural communication and 'homing' by depicting a picture of moral goodness on both sides wanting (yet failing) to enter a peaceful dialogue.

In a decided move towards neutrality and conciliation, Nair's film also ignores some of the most mordant critiques of American politico-cultural predominance that Hamid offers. These harsher passages include the one where Changez is infuriated by the callous and arrogant privilege exercised by the Western friends he is vacationing with in Greece (who behave discourteously with their subordinates twice their age or overspend unthinkingly) by "wondering . . . what quirk of human history" allowed them to be "in a position . . . [so they could] conduct themselves in the world as though they were its ruling class" (Hamid 2007, 21). He also speaks resentfully of this injustice of history when he compares the "vast disparity" between New York

and Pakistani cities and the economies of the two countries: “Four thousand years ago, we, the people of the Indus River basin, had cities that were laid out on grids and boasted underground sewers, while the ancestors of those who would invade and colonize America were illiterate barbarians” (Hamid 2007, 34). Nair’s team’s creative decision to temper the hostility between the two sides, and underplay the moral reprehensibility of both (and especially of the west) is designed to further dialogue and peace. This urgency of facilitating international cohesion, crucial I would imagine to a diasporic author who is most affected by and acutely sensitive to the gaping rifts between international borders, makes the philosophical uncertainty of the novel untenable and undesirable. It is also interesting to note that this attempt to creatively facilitate and cinematically showcase the human yearning for love/trust across distant/ hostile borders (such as between Erica-Changez and between Bobby-Changez) was not only worked out at the level of the film’s content. This impetus towards fostering relationships across hostile/distant cultural diversities also manifested itself through the selection of the people who would form a part of the filmmaking team—essentially people who had diasporic lives/backgrounds and who could therefore instinctively empathize with affection across hostile/distant borders. Thus emphasizing the centrality of diasporic sensibilities in the process of cinematic production both at the level of individuals (people on the sets who have had diasporic lives or experiences personally) and at the level of the team (the filmmaking team which is marked by people from multiple cultural contexts and often hybrid national allegiances—Mira Nair, Mohsin Hamid, Shimit Amin, Ami Boghani, Declan Quinn, Riz Ahmed, Kate Hudson, the many South-Asian actors), Wheeler says: “Working with partners from such varied cultural backgrounds made our collaboration an attempt, like that of Changez and Bobby, to reach across cultural divides to try and discover the things that make us all human” (Nair 2013, 22). This returns us to our recurrent

realization of how central Nair's (and her team's) diasporic entities were to their understanding of the matter of Hamid's novel and to their collaboratively rich filmmaking processes.

The film also sanitises and practically reverses Changez's reaction at the televised sight of the twin towers falling. In the novel, Changez confesses that he "smiled" and was "remarkably pleased" at the sight (Hamid 2007, 72). The film, however, substitutes the pleasure with (in Changez's words) "awe" in the first place at, among other things, the "genius" of the attacks. Only later does he suggest that he felt also "a split second of pleasure at arrogance brought low" and in the experience of this emotion he clearly suggests the complicity of the American agent (by asking Bobby if he has not also felt this way" before "conscience kicks in." The film's moralizing and universalizing of the experience of Changez goes even further. While in the novel Changez frankly declares that he was "pleased at the slaughter of thousands of innocents" though this burdens him, as he says, "with a profound sense of perplexity," the film shows Changez effectively reversing this tenor. He clearly recognises that he "should have felt sorrow or anger." He clarifies to Bobby that he is "not celebrating the death of 3000 innocents" just as Bobby "would not celebrate the death of 100,000 in Baghdad or Kabul." Drawing Bobby into this analogy, he seems to posit a distinctly moral angle to this reaction. He makes this most explicit in the climactic comparison of the 9/11 attacks with a victory of good over evil, and significantly with a Christian fable that dramatizes this triumph of good over evil, by saying confidently: "David had struck Goliath."

Thus, as indicated earlier, while the novel makes us confront the uncomfortable question of human cruelty in the face of the intolerable 'other' who challenges one's limits of ethical tolerance, the film dilutes this entirely. The issue of cruelty is raised only indirectly when

Changez is shell-shocked at the sight of Erica's multimedia art exhibit ("I had a Pakistani once")—a pastiche of quotes and neon images from the history of her relationship with Changez that arguably stereotypes him as the iconic Pakistani and reduces their relationship to her experimentation at intimacy with the cultural 'other.' Repulsed by the art display, Changez responds violently. Hurt by his anger, she begs him to stop using the rhetoric of 'attack' usually associated with terrorism'—something that Changez seems to unproblematically oppose. She pleads repeatedly: "Please stop attacking me." Undeterred, Changez viciously reminds her of her callous and drunk driving that had caused the death of her lover (Chris) in a car accident, and thus heartlessly deals a severe blow to a grief that was already relentless and soul-crushing for Erica. Shocked and shattered, Erica points to Changez's inherent proclivity towards cruelty by lamenting: "Oh, I didn't know. I didn't know you could be capable of such cruelty." This mention of cruelty in the realm of interpersonal relationship is anticipated earlier through the professional domain when he unhesitatingly suggests the severe downsizing of a company in Philippines to save it enormous costs—a harsh (and almost inhuman) move to which even his colleagues respond by saying: "Boy, that's brutal," or "That's too aggressive," and Jim congratulates him on his capacity for ruthlessness by saying: "You have a gift for this. A very lucrative gift" —a gift of ruthlessness that is connected implicitly by the film to violence as enormous as the 9/11 attacks when Changez speaks to Bobby of the "ruthlessness" of the 9/11 attacks. The film, however, does not dwell on the most provocative suggestions of cruelty as a basic human instinct with which the novel preoccupies itself. In fact, it invests significantly in communicating to its audience that Changez in his various classes as a university professor explicitly disavows violence, attempts only to search academically and personally for a "Pakistani dream" that "does not involve emigration," closely mentors his students to make them

follow the same non-violent path, and authoritatively instructs them through emissaries and in person to keep calm when the American forces and Pakistani police violently invade the Pak Tea House premises to track down Rainier's kidnapper. The film, to put it succinctly, refashions the American interlocutor as an ethical agent, a righteous spy sent to question and if necessary kill a Pakistani 'fundamentalist,' who ends up realizing the innocence and essential nobility of this supposed fundamentalist, Changez. Thus, the novel is a cynical philosophical reflection on morality and the possibility of unimpeachable moral choices in a world so fraught with hostility and with human fear and cruelty. The film departs significantly from this novelistic impetus to question the notion, possibility, and desirability of absolute morality. It becomes instead a practical response to the seething problems of the contemporary world. It does not dwell in moral uncertainties but serves a more immediate political purpose, answering to the current geopolitical necessity of assuaging cultural suspicions and building international peace, and to implicitly the more personal need of a South-Asian diasporic woman for a global, albeit multi-locational, 'home' for the nomadic migrant. In the Photo Diary, Nair says that she has made this film about "the schism between official America and Muslim people" which "becomes more pronounced with each passing day" and that this is a story, therefore, "about how we, East and West, regard each other" (Nair 2013, xi). Pilcher, the producer, notes that Hamid's novel allowed Nair and herself to "honestly explore many of the political themes that besiege our world when East meets West and commerce clashes with culture" (Nair 2013, 29). Nair explains that the film gave her the chance to "create multilayered characters, . . . to see beyond the terrible stereotype that is constantly projected on our television screens and, if we have done our work right, to create a bridge between worlds that will not know each other unless we have a dialogue" (Nair 2013, xii).^{xiv} It is to this larger global cry for change that the film seems to be responding through the

creative departures it makes in order to nurture the possibility of a reassuring global ‘home’ for the South-Asian diasporic traveller. Testifying to the personal and creative motivations of Nair, Ami Boghani, screenwriter and co-producer of the film, says that in view of the shifting geopolitical scene, “Mira tasked the writing team with keeping the film utterly contemporary yet resoundingly timeless” (Nair 2013, 21). The film thus responds to the resounding shifts within Pakistan and on the global scene, which registers in the film through significant additional episodes that do not appear in the novel. There is the portrayal of Changez’s humiliating full-body strip search (at the airport when he returns from the Philippines) as well as his insulting arrest on the street and subsequent interrogation just because of his skin-colour (that made him the closest lookalike for who was, to all appearances, a mad Bangladeshi screaming on New York streets—someone who had been telephonically reported to the Police by a bystander but who managed to leave before the Police arrived searching likely for an ‘un-American’-looking fellow). This more public and systemic racial profiling is paralleled in the film at the level of private relationships when Erica stereotypes him as a Pakistani in her multimedia art installation, and when she speaks of the mindlessness of the 9/11 and ends by throwing a question, as if to Changez, “How does that happen? . . . How did it happen like that?” To this he replies with proud indignance, “What makes you think I’d know?” It is with a view to the changing and turbulent contemporary developments, then, that the film inserts these tangible fragments of daily discrimination and torture, and aims not only to remedy the colossal global crisis but also to recuperate the possibility of transnational ‘homing’ by presenting a largely sanitised and moralised setting for the story and by showing us how precious lives such as Rainer’s and Sameer’s are lost if we persist with our stereotypical cultural suspicions.

Nair's film emerges, therefore, as the most illuminating, albeit complex, creative adaptation of the novel that one could imagine, infused with the generative richness of the filmmaker's South-Asian diasporic sensibilities that echo the 'mongrel'-like South-Asian subjectivity of the novelist and his protagonist. Extending this fractured diasporic subjectivity to Bobby in the film and grounding the cinematic narrative in disturbing global displacement with its attendant feelings of alienness and longing for 'home,' Nair universalizes the diasporic sensitivity to the West and the East, propelling both sides into an acuter pursuit of global understanding and transnational 'homing' than the novel's philosophically reflective tone could ever make possible. In doing so, Nair however, dramatizes the innermost impulse of the novel where Changez declares, "Something of us is now outside, and something of the outside is now within us" (Hamid 2007, 174). This statement echoes how Nair's split existence makes her feel "both an insider and an outsider" with shifting but real 'homes' across multiple geographic locations—a feeling and a 'homing desire' that is reflected through the figures of both Changez and Bobby, caught in the rootlessness of diasporic ruminations and therefore eager to find 'homes' in each other through cross-cultural understanding (Nair 2013, xii). Bringing these motivations to a climax, Changez's soulful prayer is heard at Sameer's funeral as the film closes, engulfing and including the audience in an earnest appeal for global cross-cultural peace:

Do not take revenge in his name./Too much blood has flowed into this river.

Do not curse fate./ Allah holds our son in His embrace. . . .

Pray for a future /Free of dictators and tyrants/Free of all invaders . . .

Go tell the majestic sun to preserve its precious rays/ We'll teach the core of our own
beings to glow with its [own] light.

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ⁱ As we know from Hamid’s own essay, “Slaying Dragons,” his own novel grew through seven years, starting in a pre-9/11 world and ultimately metamorphosing to include the 9/11 watershed when excluding it was no longer imaginable in the changed reality of a post-9/11 world (Hamid 2009, 230-1). It is only natural then that Nair’s cinematic adaptation would also follow this impulse and take the story of the novel a few years further while making the film in a post-2011 world where Bin Laden had been killed.

ⁱⁱ A small part of my observations on Mohsin Hamid’s novel overlap with a brief segment in the first chapter of my book, *Postsecular Theory: Texts and Contexts* (Orient Blackswan, 2020).

ⁱⁱⁱ The offer to Changez to join the forces of Islamic fundamentalism as well as Changez’s clear denial of this offer is shown more categorically in the film than in the novel. The novel, however, does show Changez explaining his aversion to violent religious fundamentalism and his dedication to his position of university professorship.

^{iv} The novel, and especially the film, point to how terms such as ‘terrorism’ or ‘fundamentalism’ are instrumentalized by the West, i.e. the way they operate as “slippery and dangerous trope[s] in the hands of dominant geopolitical forces, military leaders, formations of counter-terrorism, and the mainstream western media” and the way what is ignored is Western economic fundamentalism (the “the terror and violence of new forms of imperial sovereignty”) (Morton 2010, 247). In the novel, Changez realizes that what is institutionalized through the West-dominated global developments is “the advancement of a small coterie’s concept of American interests in the guise of the fight against terrorism” (Hamid 2007, 178). The film takes this up and shows that unlike what this ‘small coterie’ does, the true interests of the West (America) as of the East (Muslim world) lie in global peace.

^v Strengthening the link between the diasporic sensibility of the author/actor and the author’s production of a work of art or the actor’s performance of a role, Nair even mentions the emphasis she laid on a diasporic background for the actor playing Changez so that he might best understand the feeling of alienness when caught between fractured identities and the desire for a home that is forever fluid and elusive. To play this character that is split in allegiances and emotions towards both America and Pakistan, Nair seemingly wanted a South-Asian diasporic actor (or a South-Asian actor with a divided identity) who would have an instinctive understanding of the text. Nair notes: “I was counting on a charismatic Pakistani actor—or certainly a subcontinental one—someone who could move fluidly between the languages and *disparate worlds with truthful ease*” (2013, 55; emphasis added). This process ended with the casting of British actor and rapper of part-Pakistani origin, Riz Ahmed, who was born to a British Pakistani family in London, and who was therefore able to play the role with “instinctive ease” after a wonderful audition (Nair 2013, 56).

^{vi} This is the immigrant experientiality that Hamid claims for himself and describes interestingly as a “mongrel” identity in his interview with Singh, distinctive because of the mongrel’s implied absence of ‘purity,’ and signifying an identity that is split much like Nair’s between Pakistan, India, and the West (both USA and UK for Hamid).

Hamid describes his own “mongrel” identity saying that on the one hand, he has the predicament of being “someone with a Muslim-sounding name coming into the John F. Kennedy Airport”— “someone with avowedly secular politics and liberal values writing in Pakistan.” On the other hand, he lives in Lahore “which is thirty kilometres from the border of India” and so “there is clearly a blurring that takes place” (Singh 2012a, 149-150.)

^{vii} Mira Nair is quoted as saying this at the Penguin Books India Spring Fever 2013 held in New Delhi in a *NEWS18* article. (*NEWS18*, “*Reluctant Fundamentalist* is for my Son: Mira Nair”)

^{viii} Margaret Scanlan discusses the mainstream depiction of migrants as sinister and violent vehicles of terror and then discusses the work of postcolonial novelists like Hamid to show how works like *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* are located on the faultline of rigid mainstream binaries which they render blurry—such as the binary between Islam and the secular West (Scanlan 2010).

Post-9/11 postcolonial fiction, according to Singh, is able to reshape the figure of the terrorist from the typical American “images of the non-western, Islamic, bearded, turbaned, radical jihadi,” with the “accompanying markers of illiteracy, fundamentalism, hatred, and violence,” into the figure of “the disempowered refugee, the disenfranchised immigrant, and the dissident citizen”—a figure that “mount[s] a critique of the neo-imperial nature of the war on terror” which is, says Singh quoting Elleke Boehmer, an “imperialist agenda inextricably entwined with the history of neoliberal globalization and America’s place within it” (Singh 2012b, 29; Quoting Boehmer 2010, 14). It is interesting, therefore, that this figure comes to be epitomized, in Nair’s recreation, not only by Changez but also, as I show above, Bobby—reimagined figures that now participate in this larger critique and thus help propel the movement towards global connection.

^{ix} Hamid remarks interestingly: “An Indian director making a film about a Pakistani man. That’s not an easy thing to do.” He gestures towards the national rivalry and cultural animosity that exists between India and Pakistan but ultimately reminds us of the similarity she shares with the protagonist or himself in terms of her split and diasporic existence—growing up in India but bearing in heart her (father’s) home in Lahore (Nair 2013, 81). This biographical context of split identities with fractured ‘homes’ is ultimately marked by an emotional longing for a trans-national ‘home’ across geographical and political space. Thus, we learn from the Photo Diary also of Nair’s emotional connection with and organic belonging to Pakistan, which in fact functioned as a primary motivation behind her decision to make the film. Nair visited Pakistan in 2004 for the first time, and went on an emotional tour to Lahore, a city with which she had family connection. After returning from Lahore in 2004 she says she “looked for a tale to tell of contemporary Pakistan, a tale one never sees.” It was in 2007 that Nair read the unpublished manuscript of Hamid’s novel and “immediately recognized it as the one” (Nair 2013, 11).

^x This is suggested by the Hamid’s text itself when Changez describes Lahore as the last great outpost of the Muslim world and elsewhere describes himself as having been on the other (eastern) side of the “wall against the East” that he sees in Rhodes—a wall that was built to guard “against the Turks” (Hamid 2007, 23).

^{xi} In Harleen Singh’s interview of Hamid, we hear the author explain how, in his novel, the “formal structure” of a dramatic monologue (“almost like a stage-play with one character speaking”) plays a special role. It is because of this form that, “by creating half of a conversation, a conversation of which you only hear one half, and where the other party of the conversation is only present as an echo, a space opens up in the novel, a vacuum that the reader is invited to fill” (Singh 2012a, 225).

^{xii} One might even argue that this desire that is referred to holds true also in the case of the desire for money/success that drives both Changez and the Americans, but that can ultimately only lead to disenchantment—the kind of disenchantment that, by the logic of the novel, only Changez encounters, and that the hypocritical American will never follow through on his desire enough to encounter.

^{xiii} Ami Boghani, screenplay writer and co-producer, says that Mohsin Hamid, LA-based screenwriter William Wheeler, and she herself had to synthesize “all of the weapons in . . . [their] collective mental arsenal to extract a powerful, fast-paced screen story from the novel’s contemplative monologue, all the while manoeuvring to keep the essence of the story intact” (Nair 2013, 21).

^{xiv} Nair says: “I wanted to make a contemporary film about Pakistan, one that would break all misconceptions about the country and reveal it in a manner not seen before—as a simmering, confident nation caught between its ancient heritage and the demands of a globalized world” (Nair 2013, 11).