

Justus Liebig University Giessen

English Department

Seminar: "Terrorism"



Summer Semester 2011

Identity and Identification in Mohsin Hamid's

The Reluctant Fundamentalist

Table of Contents

1. Introduction	1
2. Identity and Identification in the Discourse of <i>The Reluctant Fundamentalist</i>	2
2.1 Reliability of the Narrator	2
2.2 Intermedial References.....	3
2.3 Visual Vocabulary.....	6
3. Identity and Identification in the Story of <i>The Reluctant Fundamentalist</i>	8
3.1 Changez and His Different <i>Personae</i>	8
3.2 Pre and Post September 11 Identity and Identification	10
3.2.1 Changez' Outer Appearance and the Melting Pot New York.....	10
3.2.2 September 11 and Its Effects on Changez.....	11
3.2.3 Changez' Beard and Post September 11	12
4. Conclusion.....	16
5. Works Cited.....	18

1. Introduction

Ten years after the attacks on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, 9/11 and connected concepts such as terrorism, Islamism and the war on terror are still present in the media all over the world. Undeniably, 9/11 represented a clear cut in world history and attacked the U.S. as superpower at her deepest. The events have been of great importance for the world's development in the last ten years and affected people in their everyday life.

Being such a decisive event, a lot of people found in music, writing or other creative works an important means to process their feelings. Mohsin Hamid hence joins numerous narrative representations of 9/11 with his novel *The Reluctant Fundamentalist (TRF)*. However, at the same time, he breaks with the dominant western point of view in narrative representations of 9/11 by telling the personal 9/11-story of a young Pakistani living in the U.S. Examining Hamid's work, the reader might perceive that the beard plays an important role throughout the novel. This facial hair appears to have symbolic quality, as it is often taken as an outward identifying feature for terrorists. Immediately, the problem of inferring a specific identity on the basis of outer identification arises and develops to a guiding theme in *TRF*. This paper therefore wants to examine how identity and identification are represented in the discourse as well as in the story of *TRF* and which means are employed to substantiate this central hypothesis in the novel.

As not only story-based implications substantiate the hypothesis that the novel *TRF* can be read as questioning identity deduction from outer identification of a person, the first part of this paper will reflect upon the *discourse*, that is, the narrative design of the *story* in *TRF*. Using the distinction between *story* and *discourse* as introduced in Russian formalism, the structure of the narrative with focus upon reliability of the narrator, intermedial references, as well as specific lexical choices will be investigated. In a second step, the paper at hand tries to examine the representation of identity and identification in the story of the novel. In this part, the protagonist's struggle with identity will be outlined by taking a rather poststructuralist point of view. The paper will start off the second part by elaborating at first on the protagonist's taking different *personae*, that is, his playing different roles. This will be undermined by drawing on social identity theory. Using discourse

theory, the concept of *othering* and again social identity theory as a basis of the further analysis, the paper will then outline the perception of the protagonist in pre and post-9/11 New York / America as well as the discursive construction of *the* terrorist with special focus upon the symbolic quality of the beard.

2. Identity and Identification in the Discourse of *The Reluctant*

Fundamentalist

2.1 Reliability of the Narrator

The narration of *TRF* starts *in medias res*, as the autodiegetic and overt narrator, Changez, a Pakistani who spent some years of his life in the U.S., meets the overt narratee, an American tourist (as it seems), and begins to reflect about his student life at Princeton University and later work life in New York City. The conversation in a café between Changez and the narratee represents the frame tale, whereas the actual story is told by Changez. The frame tale, however, gains in importance throughout the course of the story, as it becomes clear that the narrator suffered from some kind of identity crisis, which was activated by the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001 and apparently led him to have anti-American sentiments. In his monologized dialogue with the American tourist, the narrator drops hints that the apparent tourist might be an undercover agent commissioned to observe him. The frame tale then becomes at the end the center of attention, as it is left open if it is the narratee who will trap the narrator or vice versa.

The conception of the story thus conveys a feeling of ambiguity and confusion, because it does not explicitly tell the reader – reductionally and colloquially speaking – who the good or the bad guy is and whom to believe: the narrator or the narratee? One could argue that this is the central question and point of the novel; that it tells the reader not to jump to conclusions from already acquired stereotypical knowledge. The novel can then be read as telling to not infer from appearance to substance, from outer identification to identity.

The aspect of reliability plays in this context an important role. It is of importance on both story levels, that is, in the frame tale and the story-within-the-story. As

mentioned above, the narrator is autodiegetic; plus the dialogue in the frame tale is monologized by the narrator. These technical aspects of the narrative already indicate that it is at least biased, which means the reader only knows one side of the story – in this case the narrator’s side. This problem is even addressed directly by Changez, the narrator, when talking to the American, the narratee:

But surely it is the *gist* that matters; I am, after all, telling you a history, and in history, as I suspect you - an American - will agree, it is the thrust of one’s narrative that counts, not the accuracy of one’s details. Still, I can assure you that everything I have told you thus far happened, for all intents and purposes, more or less as I have described. (Hamid 2007: 135)

Two issues are mentioned here: the historical bias as well as the accuracy of story-telling; the first alluding to the characteristic of historiography being inherently biased and therefore of limited trustworthiness and the latter referring to a story’s never fulfilled claim to be complete. Through the narrator’s mere mentioning of the issue of reliability, reliability itself is not sustained. Reliability is even more challenged by the narrator’s following comment: “I assure you, sir: you can trust me. I am not in the habit of inventing untruths! And moreover, even if I were, there is no reason why this incident would be more likely to be false than any of the others I have related to you” (2007: 172-173). Here, the reliability of the whole story is put into question. This in turn leads back to the matter of appearance and substance, or outer identification and identity, as it gives rise to the image of a (maybe false) shell and a (true) kernel within.

2.2 Intermedial References

Just as a lot of narrative texts use intertextual references, Mohsin Hamid employs a great deal of intermedial references in *TRF*. According to Rajewsky’s definition of intermediality as those “configurations that have to do with a crossing of borders between media” (2005: 46), intermedial references in a specific medium point to aspects of another medium. Furthermore, Rajewsky suggests that

the media product uses its own media-specific means, either to refer to a specific, individual work produced, in another medium (i.e., what in the German tradition is called *Einzelreferenz*, ‘individual reference’), or to refer to a specific medial subsystem (such as a certain film genre) or to another medium *qua* system (*Systemreferenz*, ‘system reference’). (2005: 52-53)

In the case of *TRF*, individual references are solely used for specific movies such as *Top Gun* (Hamid 2007: 39-40), *Star Wars* (2007: 72-73), *Grease* (2007: 73), *The Terminator* (2007: 113), and *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* (2007: 194), whereas system references point to the systems of cinema, theatre and even architecture.

Concerning individual intermedial references, Rajewsky points out that these can have two functions. First, the allusion to – in this case – a specific movie, can have a meta-medial function, thus referring to and criticizing silently the cinematic genre as such. Second, intermedial individual references are often ascribed to an evocative function. In Kurtz's words, Rajewsky describes the latter as *narration in italics*, that is, the use of existing images to abbreviate the narration (Kurtz in Rajewsky 2002: 153).

When relating these points to *TRF*, the meta-medial function becomes rather secondary and the focus shifts on the evocative function. The following quotation from *TRF* makes this clear: "I was, in my own eyes, a veritable James Bond – only younger, darker and possibly better paid" (Hamid 2007: 72-73). The intermedial reference here works similar to a metaphor: By referring to the *James Bond* series of movies, the mental image of the character James Bond and associations with this *persona*, such as the chic and invincible Macho, are evoked and transferred to Changez, the protagonist in *TRF*. This, in fact, substantiates the pervading impression of Changez playing different roles, which makes the reader feel as if only his outer shell, but not his actual identity could be identified.

While representing an intermedial individual reference, the above mentioned allusion can simultaneously be seen as an intermedial system reference. Through pointing to the movie *James Bond*, not only specific associations with the movie as such but also associations with the system behind these movies are evoked. In connection with one of the main settings of the narrative, the U.S.A., links to *the American center of the movie industry, Hollywood*, and the connected *duplicity and fakeness* are automatically established. Criticism of the system presenting actors who merely play roles in a secondary reality is also implied and even adds to the overall impression in *TRF*, that the identity we infer from the person we see, does not necessarily have to be congruent with the identity of the person as such. More generally speaking, this would mean that identity cannot be deduced from (outer)

identification. In this particular sense the criticism can also be interpreted as being directed at the superficiality of the cinematic genre and in the context of the novel as targeting American society in general.

In line with this criticism, intermedial system references to movies or more generally speaking to the system of cinema are also introduced. Textual evidence for this can be found in the following quote: “Princeton inspired in me the feeling that my life was a film in which I was the star and everything was possible” (Hamid 2007: 3). Alluding to the American Dream, which is often promoted in and connected with Hollywood (movies), this statement of the narrator and protagonist Changez implies that from Changez’ very arrival on, he was trapped in a life full of illusions, placing appearance over substance. It also alludes to the narrator taking different *personae* which will be focused upon more precisely in section 3.1. Intermedial system references are also made to the setting of films: “The area [...] felt surprisingly familiar, although I had never been there before; I realized later that I owed my sense of familiarity to the many films that had used it as a setting” (Hamid 2007: 56). This implies the interpretation that even though something might appear familiar and seem as if we already know it or have identified it, we actually do not know it at all. Putting this into context, the main point of the novel – identity cannot be deduced from identification – becomes clear again. Additional references to the cinematic system, especially to the setting of movies, can be found elsewhere (2007: 131, 176) in the novel.

As mentioned above, intermedial system references to movies or cinema are not the only system references in the novel. Allusions to the system of theatre can also be found in a twofold way: Whereas the reader can find system references to theatre that are similar in their structure to those of cinema, there are also cues that point more implicitly to theatre. The first refer to theatrical lighting (2007: 54), to the stage (2007: 114) and figuratively to costumes (2007: 131); the latter, however, allude to the theatre system as such by the way in which the narrator describes the setting and actions of characters in the novel which is strongly evocative of *stage directions*. Statements like “What? My voice is rising?” (2007: 37) or “There, it is done, and off he goes” (2007: 124) read as if they were stage directions in a theatre play or drama.

If transformed into a theatre play or drama, one could imagine these citations would look like this:

Changez (voice rising): “[...] I was *immediately* a New Yorker.”

Or

Changez: “You will grant me that honor? Thank you.”

(waiter finishes his prayer and goes back into the restaurant’s kitchen)

Changez: “I had been telling you of my disquiet on the night I finally made love to Erica [...]”¹

Hence, again - be it more openly or more implicitly – these intermedial theatre-system references allude to the duplicity of the theatre system, that is, to fiction and reality, costume and actual clothing, as well as characters and actors as individual (real) people. These dichotomies in turn can then be interpreted as revealing the aspects of appearance and substance, or what Rajewsky calls the character of appearance (2002: 153), in order to substantiate the fact that identity cannot be inferred from outer identification.

The same effect is given rise through an intermedial system reference to architecture: “When I first arrived, I looked around me at the Gothic buildings – younger, I later learned, than many of the mosques of this city, but made through acid treatment and ingenious stonemasonry to look older – and thought, *This is a dream come true*” (Hamid 2007: 3). The buildings were not what they appeared to be, namely gothic, but actually more or less recently constructed complexes that were just made to look like they were from the gothic era. The protagonist’s environment thus is presented as if it was just a construction for a set of a movie, which again makes the reader think of the above-mentioned character of appearance and juxtaposition of identity and identification.

2.3 Visual Vocabulary

While examining *TRF*, the reader gets the impression that Hamid uses a lot of visual vocabulary for the linguistic arrangement of the novel. On the one hand, this can be seen in a rather narrow sense - speaking in Saussurean terms - with the specific signifier representing a signified grasping the idea of something visual. On the other hand, however, this could be seen in a broader sense as a signifier representing a

¹ Adapted according to Hamid 2007: 37 and 124.

signified which is connected on a secondary level to something visual or which is perceived as something visual. The following quote from *TRF* illustrates this perfectly: “But I observe, sir, that you are watching me with a rather peculiar expression” (Hamid 2007: 105). The words *observe* and *watching* obviously stand for purposefully looking at something, whereas the word *expression* designates the clearly visual movement of facial muscles representing someone’s emotions.

Through this constant confrontation with visual vocabulary, the reader might identify the visual as an important motive throughout the novel. Thinking about this, not only does the mere motive of the visual evoke again the juxtaposition of appearance and substance, outer identification and identity, so does the Saussurean concept of the signifier and the signified.

There are, however, with regards to the story, scenes in or aspects of the novel which gain in importance in the connection with the visual. These are the aspects of identity and the protagonist’s relationship with Erica, an American fellow student. In respect to the aspect of identity, Changez’ encounter with the Filipino cab driver in Manila (Hamid 2007: 76-77) can be seen as a key scene. In this scene, the cab driver looks at Changez as if he too, just as his co-workers, would represent western meritocracy. This in turn initiates Changez’ torn between his Pakistani identity and American *persona*, alluding again to the concepts of appearance and substance. Outer identification and identity are of central importance in the relationship between Changez and Erica, too. Changez’ descriptions of Erica are often very visual, with a focus on her physical appearance: “I noticed Erica was untying the straps of her bikini.[...] I followed her, watching the muscles of her lower back tense delicately to stabilize her spine” (2007: 26-27). Beyond doubt, his attraction towards Erica is, at least at first, to a great extent of physical nature. However, what keeps Changez attracted and what fascinates him with Erica is her emotional brokenness: “I met her eyes, and for the first time I perceived that there was something *broken* behind them, like a tiny crack in a diamond that becomes visible only when viewed through a magnifying lens; normally it is hidden by the brilliance of the stone” (2007: 59). His attraction is thus directed toward both her appearance and her substance, that is, her identity.

3. Identity and Identification in the Story of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*

3.1 Changez and His Different *Personae*

As mentioned in the previous section, the protagonist, Changez, has difficulties living his true identity. Born and raised in Pakistan, Changez spends as an international student a formative time in the U.S. and adapts to the particular way of life of this western meritocratic country. According to social identity theory, which distinguishes between personal identity and social identity (Reicher 2004: 928), Changez seems to grapple with finding his personal identity in between his social identities as Pakistani and Americanized international student or later employee of *Underwood Samson*, a business valuation company in NYC. Social identity theory implies that “when I behave in terms of any given social identity, I am guided by the norms, values, and beliefs that define the relevant identity” (2004: 929). Obviously not able to reconcile the social identities (and corresponding norms, values and beliefs) of the Pakistani and the international student / New Yorker, Changez seems to feel the obligation to be either the one or the other and hence puts his personal identity, which would reflect both social identities, aside. In return, he apparently feels the need to play his *roles*, his social identities, to perfection and thus takes on different *personae*.

At Princeton University, he admits playing the role of the Pakistani Prince: “At Princeton, I conducted myself in public like a young prince, generous and carefree”, while working in three different jobs to keep up this *persona* and his life-style. Changez also confirms that he played his role successfully, as “[m]ost people I met were taken in by my public persona” (Hamid 2007:12). Yet, later on in the novel, after 9/11 and, connected with these events, during his identity crisis, Changez seemingly perceives the need to be more Pakistani and therefore finds support in his father’s opinions: “I dressed myself in them as though they were my own” (2007: 107). His father’s thoughts are depicted here as if they were a costume, as if putting on this costume would help Changez to play the *persona* of the Pakistani.

The situation is similar with Changez’ role as New Yorker trainee and adherent to American meritocracy: “On that day, I did not think of myself as a Pakistani, but as an Underwood Samson trainee, and my firm’s impressive offices made me *proud*” (Hamid 2007: 38). Again, it becomes clear that the protagonist cannot reconcile his

Pakistani-self and his social role as employee at Underwood Samson. Finding reassurance in identification with his employer, Changez seems to feel the need to become more American. This culminates when staying during a business trip in Manila:

I did something in Manila I had never done before: I attempted to act and speak, as much as my dignity would permit, more like an *American*. The Filipinos we worked with seemed to look up to my American colleagues, accepting them almost instinctively as members of the officer class of global business – and I wanted my share of that respect as well. (Hamid 2007: 74)

Playing his role so perfectly well, Changez obviously wants to receive the same reward – respect – for his being American as his colleagues do, too. However, it already becomes clear that Changez struggles with and does not feel good about constantly incorporating this *persona*. In addition Changez explicitly voices the fictitious character and the acting quality of the situation by stating: “I felt I was play-acting when in reality I ought to be making my way home, like the people on the street outside” (2007: 77). It is not until after 9/11 when he returns home to Pakistan for a visit that he remarks he was actually constantly cloaking and hiding his personal identity in the U.S. (2007: 141) and that everything he did was only appearance.

As he is used to playing different roles, Changez is caught into a similar trap in his relationship with Erica. Similarly dramatic, he has to take on the *persona* of Chris, Erica’s deceased boyfriend, to reach Erica and to be able to make love with her (2007: 119-120). Even though or maybe precisely because Erica seems to be the only person in Changez’ social environment in the U.S. with whom he can live his personal identity, Changez again plays a person different from himself in order to be as near as possible to Erica. Nevertheless, it is in connection to her that he actually realizes the implications of his constant impersonation of different identities:

It occurred to me that my attempts to communicate with her might have failed in part because I did not know where I stood on so many issues of consequence; I lacked a stable *core*. I was not certain where I belonged – in New York, in Lahore, in both, in neither. (2007: 168)

What Changez addresses here as “stable *core*”, can be seen as his personal identity, his substance or kernel. Because he is torn between the U.S. and Pakistan and because he apparently feels he cannot reconcile his American or New Yorker and

Pakistani identity, Changez fails to impersonate his identity. His appearance, that is, the one who was identified by others as a Pakistani prince, an American meritocrat or Chris, turns out not to be his substance or true identity.

3.2 Pre- and Post - September 11 Identity and Identification

Before September 11, 2001, Changez perfectly blends in into the melting pot New York City. Despite and at the same time because of his foreign outer appearance, he is part of this multicultural city. However, as soon as the WTC is destroyed by the attacks, his foreign outer appearance becomes a sign for “otherness”. The development of Changez self and social perception in relation to the events of 9/11 will be outlined in the following paragraph.

3.2.1 Changez’ Outer Appearance and the Melting Pot New York

Having moved to New York City because of his new job, Changez feels very comfortable living in this multicultural city. Because of this cultural, as well as “religious mosaic” (Dinnerstein et al. 2003: 269), no one seems to identify him as foreign or not being a New Yorker. Diversity being one of the main principles of the U.S., it is not unusual for Changez to hear the taxi driver speak his native language or to eat Pakistani food at one of the city’s delis and working together with other non-white internationals (Hamid 2007: 36-37; 42).

Nevertheless, the protagonist’s foreign outer appearance naturally serves as means to classify him. For instance: When invited for dinner at Erica’s house, Erica’s father automatically identifies Changez as Muslim and therefore as a non-drinker (Hamid 2007: 61). According to Reicher, this is a perfectly natural behavior:

Just as personal identity defines our uniqueness relative to the individual, so our distinctive social identity is defined by what marks us out as different from other groups. Social identities are necessarily defined in comparative terms and so group members indulge in social comparison between their ingroup and relevant outgroups. (Reicher 2004: 929)

That is to say, people always classify other people according to characteristics that will distinguish the others from themselves. It is a natural way of classification and obviously helps us make sense of our environment.

To sum this up: Before 9/11 Changez foreign outer appearance is not misemployed as a means of *othering* or exclusion by inferring a specific identity, but merely as a way to classify possible differing habits.

3.2.2 September 11 and Its Effects on Changez

As the attacks on the World Trade Center happen, Changez is on a business trip to the Philippines and watches the news of the event on TV. At first perceiving the images as fictitious, Changez eventually reacts with a smile when realizing that the news are reality (Hamid 2007: 82). As the narrator tells the reader, seeing these pictures, Changez “was caught up in the *symbolism* of it all, the fact that someone had so visibly brought America to her knees” (2007: 83). It is hence the symbolic destruction of American meritocracy and of the center of “global networks of commerce” (Lyon 2003: 47) which left Changez, who apparently is no longer torn between his Pakistani and American self, smiling.

As just already hinted at, the events obviously represent the trigger for Changez to become more conscious of his personal identity and find an end to his identity crisis. From that point on and in the aftermath of September 11, he clearly identifies with his homeland Pakistan:

I chanced upon a newscast with ghostly night-vision images of American troops dropping into Afghanistan for what was described as a daring raid on a Taliban command post. My reaction caught me by surprise; Afghanistan was Pakistan’s neighbor, our friend, and a fellow Muslim nation besides, and the sight of what I took to be the beginning of its invasion by your countrymen caused me to tremble with fury. (Hamid 2007: 113-114)

Feeling allegiance with the fellow Muslim / neighboring countries of Pakistan but also exclusion from the discursively promoted intense patriotism in the U.S. (2007: 130), Changez’ nationality becomes suddenly more important for both him and his environment in NYC. Changez himself is no more torn between his social identities as Pakistani and trainee in the U.S. He now clearly identifies with his native country Pakistan. For other Americans, however, his foreign outer appearance becomes a means of imputing allegiance to terrorist cells.

3.2.3 Changez' Beard and Post September 11

After 9/11 and after finally realizing his personal (Pakistani) identity, Changez feels the need to return to Pakistan to see his family. An important process in his shaping his newly found Pakistani identity seems to be growing a beard just like his father and his older brother (Hamid 2007: 146). When considering the numerous allusions to Changez' beard in the frame tale (2007: 1, 25, 29, 61, 86-87, 148), it becomes clear that the beard is of special importance to the narrative and plays a central role within it. As the reader learns from the protagonist's illustrations, Changez knows about the symbolism of his beard, especially with connection to 9/11, and already expects that his immigration back into the U.S. will be problematic (2007: 147). He explains the performative act of growing the beard as follows: "It was perhaps, a form of protest on my part, a symbol of my identity, or perhaps I sought to remind myself of the reality I had just left behind" (2007: 147-148).

Another explanation delivers the theory of maximum differentiation: According to this theory, when divided into two groups – ingroup and outgroup – people will most likely strive to maximize the difference between their ingroup and the perceived outgroup (Reicher 2004: 928). In the case of Changez, this can be applied to his dissociating from the U.S. and identifying with Pakistan through the beard. His behavior could also be explained by the Prototype Approach: This approach states that in a group, a prototype member will be identified in order to represent the group. Similarity to this prototype increases in turn perceived group membership (Huddy 2001: 144). If Changez picked his father and brother as prototypes for being a Pakistani, his new-grown beard designates affiliation with Pakistan. However, the growing of the beard can also be read as a performative act in order to regain agency in identity. Huddy argues that there is ascribed and acquired identity (2001: 137). The beard would then stand for an open protest, an ostentatious dissociation from the U.S., and therefore transforms the ascribed foreign into an acquired foreignness.

Since returning from Pakistan and entering the U.S. with the beard, Changez' identity is suddenly interpreted by his social environment according to his new-grown facial hair: "More than once, traveling on the subway – where I had always had the feeling of seamlessly blending in – I was subjected to verbal abuse by complete strangers, and at Underwood Samson I seemed to become overnight a

subject of whispers and stares” (Hamid 2007: 148). Outer appearance and identification is hence, once again, placed over actual substance and identity. The propagated images and discourse on terrorism and the attacks of 9/11 thus already had their impact on people, influencing them in such a way that they perceive foreign-looking people with suspicion and presumption of possible terrorist ideas. This happened in the novel as well as in reality during the aftermath of 9/11. Wingfield and Bushra describe the situation as follows: “Individual Arab Americans are associated with or blamed for the acts of small groups of extremists who share their ethnicity or religion. News reports of acts of political violence are one source of these sentiments” (2001 [1995]: 132).

Discourse Theory hence represents a useful point of view in order to analyze the situation. If we define discourse as a group of statements and sentences within and defined by a specific social context, contributing to the consistency of this social context (Mills 2007: 11), it could be argued that in the novel as well as in reality a discursive construction of *the* terrorist took place, taking the face of Osama Bin Laden and diffusing a stereotypical image of *the* terrorist. Stereotypes as “a mental image or generalized set of beliefs that a person holds about most members of a particular social group” (Oskamp/Schultz 2005: 26) rely on the Representative Heuristic. According to this heuristic, judgments are made through evaluating certain features, which are taken as representative for a specific group (2005: 23). In this case, the features of foreign / middle-eastern appearance, a beard and occasionally a turban are associated with *the* group of terrorists. Correspondingly, as Changez’ outer appearance – his foreign look and his beard – is in some way conform to the image of the stereotypical terrorist, Changez himself is seen as suspicious. Interestingly enough, the beard is often presented as an outer feature of Islamic fundamentalists. However, the beard can be worn in the Islam “in emulation of the Prophet” (BBC), to demonstrate masculinity (Winchester 2008: 1772) or wisdom and authority (Delaney 1994: 167-168), and therefore by no means exclusively expresses resistance to the west or religious fundamentalism (1994: 168).

Discourse theory also suggests that discourses necessarily work with exclusion. What has been said automatically stands in opposition to and therefore excludes what has not been said (Mills 2007:12). Lyon observed this phenomenon and notes in his

book *Surveillance after September 11* that the media tries to repress dissent from public opinion in connection with 9/11. To illustrate this, he remarks that “President Bush declared in a pre-emptive strike that those not against the terrorists were with the terrorists” (2003: 51). One can then draw the conclusion, that if a person does not openly and ostentatiously dissociate herself in regard to opinion and appearance from those who committed the terrorist attacks on September 11, she will automatically be interpreted as taking the side of these terrorists. This not only happened in the novel to Changez, who is affronted as ““Fucking Arab”” (Hamid 2007: 134), but also in reality to Sikhs, who were attacked because they wore a turban (Cainkar 2009: 65).

Despite being a concept which was developed to describe (post-) colonial methods of cultural sensemaking, the term *othering* can also be applied in this context. Similar to the (post-) colonial reports on the orient, which depicted the orient negatively as the *other* in opposition to a positively presented colonizer (Mills 2007: 116), middle-eastern countries are often depicted monolithically culpable and suspicious in the 9/11 discourse. However, it is not only in the context of 9/11 that Arabs and Muslims are suspected and presented in a monolithic way. According to Cainkar, Arabs and Muslims have already earlier been described in a negative way and presented as having anti-American sentiments:

Pre-9/11 social constructions that had proffered the existence of a collective value-set and orientation shared by Arabs and Muslims, including a propensity to violence, a disposition to terrorism, and an entrenched hatred of America, had set the stage for these propositions [(Arabs and Muslims support the attacks and willingly hide terrorist sleeper cells)] to gain wide public support. (2009: 64)

As Cainkar correctly remarks, it is hence not only since September 11, that there has been a discursively promoted *othering* of middle-eastern countries and their inhabitants. In fact, the act of *othering* these and other countries is very likely still rooted in western society from colonial times.

Processes similar to profiling techniques at airports especially directed at passengers corresponding to the “category of ’Muslim-Arab’” (Lyon 2003: 50) are a result of these discursively propagated acts of exclusion. This category serves the screening of potential terrorist before entering an aircraft (Harris 2002: 140). According to Harris, already “by the middle 1990s, airport ‘stops’ of Arab Americans and Muslims had become a regular occurrence” (Harris 2002: 141). In the

novel, Changez experiences these profiling techniques as well: When returning to the U.S. after his visit in Pakistan and when leaving the U.S. for good, he undergoes secondary inspection as if “being of a suspect race” (Hamid 2007: 178). Again, as several times before, the aspects of appearance / outer identification and identity play an important role and can therefore be said to be an important motive throughout *TRF*.

However, social identity theory delivers a plausible explanation for the formation of the particular image and discursive construction of *the* terrorist. Discriminating between ingroup and outgroup, this theory argues by giving empirical evidence that ethnocentrism (as opposed to authoritarianism and need for structure) is the main catalyst for identification with the ingroup (Huddy 2001: 139). Another point is that external labeling apparently is beneficial for ingroup identification as well. Huddy illustrates that relevant aspects for external labeling are “external cues” such as “skin color, gender, group-specific facial and other physical features, language, and cultural practices” (2001: 140). Representing the outgroup in the context of 9/11, Muslims and Arabs could be easily identified by their foreign appearance, cultural or religious practices, as well as by their language. Ingroup identification then manifested in reality, as well as in the novel, in ostentative patriotism or, as the narrator in *TRF* puts it, an invasion of the American flag (Hamid 2007: 90).

4. Conclusion

Mohsin Hamid's novel *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* can definitely be read as criticizing deduction of identity on the basis of identification from outer appearance. By considering the narrative construction of the novel, in particular the autodiegetic narration as well as the extremely monologized dialogue, the paper discovered that the reliability of the narrator can be seen as problematic. Textual evidence confirmed this assumption and offered the conclusion that the reader cannot be sure about the narrator's actual identity, that appearance might suggest something different from actual substance. A similar conclusion was drawn from the second sub-part of the paper through an analysis of intermedial references. It was discovered that there are both intermedial individual and system references; the first referring to movies such as *James Bond* and the latter alluding to the system of cinema, theatre and architecture. Thereby these references evoke the *double* nature of these systems with their secondary realities or false facades. The third and last part of the second sub-chapter presented the linguistic arrangement of the novel, which focuses to a great extent on visual vocabulary and therefore again evokes the recurrent theme of identity and identification.

Chapter three subsequently tried to outline the representation of this guiding theme in the story of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. To do this, the paper first drew on the aspect of different *personae* played by the narrator of *TRF*. As it could be observed throughout the novel, the protagonist and narrator impersonated several *personae*: the Pakistani prince, the Americanized meritocrat and Chris, the deceased boyfriend of the narrator's acquaintance Erica. Taking social identity theory as a basis for this analysis, the paper found out that the protagonist is torn between his social identities and only finds an end to this struggle after the events of 9/11. It is hence again outer appearance that is not congruent with inner substance or identity. An important step in the narrator's identity formation process was growing a beard similar to that of his father and older brother. The paper tried to explain this step by offering explanations from social identity theory, the Prototype Approach and the concept of performativity. Furthermore, reactions towards the protagonist with the beard were described, showing that especially at airports this facial hair represented an identifying feature, a means for identifying him as and suspecting him of being a

terrorist. Drawing on discourse theory and the concept of stereotypes, possible explanations and interpretations of the behavior of the narrator's social environment were given. Elaborating on acts of exclusion, the paper then pointed out the monolithic medial representation of Muslims and Arabs in the novel as well as in reality by referring to the concept of *othering*. Again stressing the recurrent theme of substance / identity as opposed to outer identification / appearance, *othering* was then illustrated by taking the treatment of so called Muslim-Arabs as an example. However, the paper also offers explanation for this behavior: By referring once again to social identity theory, the paper demonstrated that the construction of the image of an enemy served to heighten identification with the ingroup, as manifested in the novel as well as in reality with overt patriotism.

As it showed, Identity and Identification play an important role and therefore act as a recurrent theme or *leitmotif* throughout the novel *TRF*. It became apparent that identification in the sense of judging someone by his outer appearance not only plays an important role but is comparably significant in the sense of identifying with a group. Identity as in national, social, and personal identity can hence also be seen as central for the interpretation of the novel.

5. Works Cited

- (2010). *Are Beards Obligatory for Muslim Men?* 27. June 2010. 08 January 2012.
<<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/10369726>>.
- Cainkar, Louise (2009). *Homeland Insecurity: the Arab American and Muslim Experience After 9/11*. New York: Russel Sage Found.
- Delaney, Carol (1994). "Untangling the Meanings of Hair in Turkish Society." *Anthropological Quarterly* 67.4: 159-172.
- Dinnerstein, Leonard, Roger L. Nichols and David M. Reimers (2003). *Natives and Strangers: A Multicultural History of Americans*. New York: Oxford UP.
- Hamid, Mohsin (2007). *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. London: Penguin Books.
- Harris, David (2002). *Profiles in Injustice*. New York: New Press.
- Huddy, Leonie (2001). "From Social to Political Identity: A Critical Examination of Social Identity Theory." *Political Psychology* 22.1: 127-156.
- Lyon, David (2003). *Surveillance after September 11*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Mills, Sara (2007). *Der Diskurs*. Trans. Ulrich Kriest. Tübingen: Narr Francke.
- Oskamp, Stuart and P. Wesley Schultz (2005). *Attitudes and Opinions*. New York and London: Psychology Press.
- Rajewsky, Irina O. (2002). *Intermedialität*. Stuttgart: UTB.
- Rajewsky, Irina O. (2005). "Intermediality, Intertextuality and Remediation: A Literaray Perspective on Intermediality. *Intermédiatités* 6: 43-64.
- Reicher, Stephen (2004). "The Context of Social Identity: Domination, Resistance, and Change." *Political Psychology* 25.6: 921-945.
- Winchester, Daniel (2008). "Embodying the Faith: Religious Practice and the Making of a Muslim Moral Habitus." *Social Forces* 86.4: 1753-1780.
- Wingfield, Marvin and Bushra Karaman (2001). "Arab Stereotypes and American Educators." *Social Studies and the Young Learner* [1995]: 132-136.