Setting and Background:

Changez' story begins in the year before the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre in the U.S in 2001. There are two primary locations for the narrative – Lahore and New York. In Lahore, Changez belongs to an upper class family, whose wealth has diminished, but whose status remains – “We continue to be invited to the...parties of the city’s elite.” It’s for the lack of money that Changez goes to Princeton on a scholarship.

The political background is important to The Reluctant Fundamentalist. Changez comes to feel strongly that:
- America is not supporting Pakistan (and repaying Pakistan for its support) in its conflict against India
- That Pakistan is betraying its Muslim allies
- That Pakistan’s reliance on U.S aid is a cause for shame.

This summary from Wikipedia provides some clear background to Pakistan-U.S relations in the years before and after 9/11:

Prior to the September 11 attacks in 2001, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia were key supporters of the Taliban in Afghanistan, as part of their "strategic depth" objective vis-a-vis India, Iran, Russia and to try to bring stability to Afghanistan after years of civil war following the Soviet withdrawal. The Taliban, being primarily Sunni and Pushtun, are of the same ethnic origin as Pakistanis on the other side of the Afghan border and were natural allies. However U.S initially did support Taliban, but later pulled support.

After 9/11, Pakistan, led by General Pervez Musharraf, reversed course under pressure from the United States and joined the "War on Terror" as a US ally. Having failed to convince the Taliban to hand over bin Laden and other members of Al Qaeda, Pakistan provided the U.S. a number of military airports and bases for its attack on Afghanistan, along with other logistical support. Since 2001, Pakistan has arrested over five hundred Al-Qaeda members and handed them over to the United States; senior U.S. officers have been lavish in their praise of Pakistani efforts in public while expressing
their concern that not enough was being done in private. However, General Musharraf was strongly supported by the Bush administration – a common theme throughout Pakistan’s relations with the US has been US support of military dictators to the detriment of democracy in Pakistan.

In return for their support, Pakistan had sanctions lifted and has received about $10 billion in U.S. aid since 2001, primarily military. In June 2004, President George W. Bush designated Pakistan as a major non-NATO ally[2], making it eligible, among other things, to purchase advanced American military technology.

From - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pakistan_-_United_States_relations

**Narrative:**

There are three distinct, but intertwined narratives in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*:

* The conversation between Changez and the American in Lahore

This text has been labeled a dramatic monologue. It is narrated in first person entirely in the course of one conversation that Changez has with an un-named American he meets in the Old Ankarli district of Lahore. It is a monologue since it is only Changez who directly speaks – his responses to what the American says are recorded, but we do not get to see the American represented directly ourselves.

There are 12 chapters. Each chapter begins with an interaction between Changez and the American. Each interaction is laden with suggestions that Changez seems to think the American is some kind of intelligence operative for the U.S. The third sentence of the book reads: “I noticed that you were looking for something; more than looking, in fact you seemed to be on a mission.”

The conversation between Changez and the American ends ambiguously. Changez has offered to escort the American back to his hotel, only for the American to believe that they are being followed by men who appear to him to be conspiring with Changez. That last sentence has him reaching into his jacket for what may or may not be a gun.

* Changez’s career at Underwood Samson

Changez narrates briefly his attendance at Princeton where his intelligence and hardwork meant he did very well. His aspires to a position at Underwood Samson, a small but elite valuation firm. He succeeds in getting a position, and is quickly recognized as the most talented of all the new recruits. Changez is initially very successful in the work he does on projects. However, the catastrophe of the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the World Trade Centre change this.
Changez is in Manila at the time. His initial response to the attacks is a “smile” that someone had brought “America to its knees.” He tries to hide this response, but resentment towards America and its reactions to 9/11 grows inside him. Eventually he finds his position at Samson Underwood unbearable and he resigns.

* Changez’s relationship with Erica

Just after Changez signs on with Underwood Samson he goes on a holiday to Greece with a group of graduating students from Princeton. On the trip he meets Erica, a beautiful aspiring writer. They like each other, but do not begin a relationship. Later, when Changez returns to New York, he goes out with Erica frequently. He falls in love with her and she likes him, but they do not ever have a real relationship. Erica has profound grief over the death of her childhood and then young adulthood lover, Chris. She has suffered depression since his death, but in the period when she meets Changez seems to be making a recovery. The 9/11 attacks, however, are a catalyst for a relapse into her depression. She is admitted into a psychiatric clinic and later disappears, presumed to have committed suicide by drowning. Throughout his own inner turmoils, Changez’s love for Erica is essentially unchanged. He knows in the end that she has died, but still disbelieves.

**Characters:**

**Changez:**

Changez professes himself a ‘lover’ of America to his anonymous listener at the start of the novel. To begin with, for Changez, the journey from Pakistan to Princeton (and then to Underwood Samson) was about “a dream come true. Princeton inspired in me the feeling that my life was a film in which I was the star and everything was possible.” Later, Changez calls the dream his “American dream.” Changez’s life before 9/11 is a life of possibilities, not the least of which is the possibility of achieving status – “Underwood Samson had the potential to transform my life as surely as it had transformed his, making my concerns about money and status things of the distant past.” Status is particularly important for Changez. As Jim points out to him a number of times, Changez’s motivations are often founded in his feelings of being an ‘outsider’ - “You’re a watchful guy. You know where that comes from?...It comes from feeling out of place...Believe me. I know.” Status and power, then, offer Changez a chance to ‘transform’ (a word that is significantly used a number of times throughout the novel to describe him) himself from an outsider to an insider. The motivation of status for Changez, though, isn’t simply a symptom of finding himself an outsider in a foreign country. It comes from the feeling that his own country is powerless in the world –

“Nothing prepared me for the drama, the power of their view from the lobby. This, I realized, was another world from Pakistan; supporting my feet were the
For Changez, Erica represents his attraction to America and its power. He admires Erica when he first sees her as: “so stunningly regal was she. Her hair was piled up like a tiara on her head...” She is like an “Empress” he says at one point, or a “lioness: strong, sleek, and invariably surrounded by her pride.”

Erica, in a way, represents a certain elegance and dignity that comes with American power (as opposed to Pakistan’s undignified reliance upon American aid). But Changez comes to be disillusioned with the might of America and what it stands for. Changez’s disillusion with America begins not when he is closest to it, but when he is farthest away. His disillusion begins first in Manila – when 9/11 happens – then comes to its crisis point in South America. In Manila, Changez “attempted to act and speak, as much as my dignity would permit, more like an American.” Even so, looking at his colleague in Manila, he felt only that his colleague was so “foreign” and that “I felt at that moment much closer to the Filipino driver than to him.” Changez’s initial reaction to 9/11 is to “smile.” - “I was caught up in the symbolism of it all, that fact that someone had so visibly brought America to its knees.” It is outside America that Changez can best observe the imperialism of America – even early on in the novel when he is in Greece he observes about his fellow graduates: “I will admit there were details which annoyed me. The easy way with which they parted with money, for example...Or their self-righteousness in dealing with those whom they had paid for a service.” Later on in Valparaíso, Chile, he is plunged into a “deep bout of introspection” at the thought that “I was a modern day janissary, a servant of the American empire at a time when it was invading a country with a kinship to mine...”

What makes Changez a reluctant fundamentalist is that he is a lover of America and the idea of the American dream. On his return to Lahore at the height of the Pakistan-India crisis, he feels: “I had changed; I was looking about me with the eyes of a foreigner...that particular type of entitled and unsympathetic American who so annoyed me...” While he shakes off this apparent affection for America and what can be achieved there, amidst his growing resentment at “the manner in which America conducted itself in the world...” his love for Erica endures. He tells us at the end of the novel that: “I would rise at dawn without having slept an instant. During the preceding hours, Erica and I would have lived an entire day together” and that, “Such journeys have convinced me that it is not always possible to restore one’s boundaries after they have blurred and made permeable by a relationship.” Certainly in the veiled aggression that Changez shows towards his American listener throughout his conversation that is a satisfaction at having power over an American. But in his longing tale he tells of
Erica, there is also a sadness that America has driven him to a fundamentalism that has forced him to leave behind what could have been his dream.

**Erica:**

Erica, in the novel, is a representation of America, how it changes after 9/11 and Changez’s relationship to these changes. Erica is a beautiful, aspiring writer, who is the daughter of upper class New York parents. She is the centre of attention at social gatherings. However, like Changez, Erica is an outsider: “Yet one got the sense that she existed internally at a degree of remove from those around her… some part of her…was out of reach, lost in thoughts unsaid.” Erica’s grief at the loss from cancer of Chris – her first and only lover from childhood through to adulthood – has left her with a profound and enduring grief. Inside her, Changez sees a “crack.” But in a strange way the ‘crack’ inside her that appears to Changez as a thing that is broken, is not a thing that is broken at all. It is a place far behind the world where things are right. Seeing her in a social context Changez feels that “She was struggling with a current that pulled her within herself…” Chris, Erica tells Changez, is “home.” And she is being pulled away from the real physical world towards this powerful feeling of “home.”

9/11 is both a catalyst and a parallel for Erica’s final journey to home. She says that “The attacks churned up old thoughts in my head.” Those old thoughts are that there is no longer the possibility to have what there once was – a way of life has been lost. “It seemed to me,” says Changez after 9/11, “that America… was increasingly giving itself over to a dangerous nostalgia at that time.” The country looks backwards, at how things were better once upon a time. Erica, too, looks backwards. Chris is her lover from childhood, a lover with “Old World appeal” from a time when life was simple and innocent. Erica is “disappearing” into the same “powerful nostalgia” as America as nation is. She is finally admitted to a psychiatric facility where a nurse explains to Changez that: “It was difficult for Erica to be out in the world…when in her mind she was experiencing things that were stronger and more meaningful than the things she could experience with the rest of us.”

Erica commits suicide by drowning herself – her clothes left neatly folded by the edge of the river. The death by drowning is symbolic – rivers representing journeys and drowning to be totally immersed, just as Erica totally immerses herself in the end in the “home” that Chris represents. But just enough ambiguity is left as well. No body was ever found, and Changez imagines Erica leading a new life somewhere. Just as the ending between Changez and the American he is talking too is ambiguous, the lack of complete certainty about what happens to Erica tells us about the uncertainty of the times we now live in.

**Jim:**

Jim is Changez’s mentor at Underwood Samson. Jim identifies in Changez someone who is “hungry” and like himself. For Jim, a primary motivation for his success at Underwood Samson seems to be this outsider mentality – and never wanting to be an outsider again. Changez infers at one point, on a visit to Jim’s
apartment, that it is Jim’s sexuality that has posited him as an outsider – “I never let on that I felt like I didn’t belong in this world. Just like you.” Though Jim actively works to make Changez feel at home in the world of Underwood Samson, there is something cynical about how he goes about it. His counseling of Changez about what it is like to be an outsider can come across as less of a celebration of being able to be an outsider in an insider’s world, than a reminder that it is necessary to repress or leave behind part of yourself in order to succeed. At the start of the novel Changez is reminded of *The Great Gatsby* when he attends one of Jim’s parties. The comparison is significant – Gatsby lied about his identity in order to achieve a fantasy of a materialistic American Dream. Jim says to Changez at one point: “And that’s where you are. You’re blood brought from some part of the body that the species doesn’t need anymore. The tailbone. Like me. We come from places that were wasting away.” Jim has been able to succeed because he is “hungry” and he had seen in Changez a hunger that he could exploit. He “didn’t think twice” in the end when he comes to firing Changez.

**Wainwright:**

Wainwright is Changez’s fellow new recruit at Underwood Samson. The audience might naturally expect him to be a competitive rival to Changez at the firm. However, from the moment Wainwright jokes with Changez about the firm’s introductory presentation to the new recruits being like a scene from *Top Gun*, he establishes himself as a character opposite to these expectations. He shares a meal with Changez at the Pak-Punjab Deli after a night drinking at the company’s expense. Changez observes Wainwright eating the “last crumb on his plate” and feels “I had found a kindred spirit at the office.” Wainwright is empathetic to the doubts Changez begins to have about the consequences – in terms of job losses – of the valuations that Underwood Samonson do – “I get where you’re coming from.” However, he has also accepted that he is working for “the man” and that they can only “focus on the fundamentals.” Later on, after Changez grows his beard on his return from Pakistan, Wainwright advised him that he “needs to be careful. This whole corporate collegiality veneer only goes so deep. Believe me.” That is the last interaction recorded between Wainwright and Changez in the novel, but it leaves us with the sense that of the Americans that are close to Changez in the novel – Jim, Erica and Wainwright – none of them seem to have the values that Changez so resents in American culture.

**Juan Bautista:**

Juan Bautista is the only character in the novel whose full name is revealed. Like Erica and Changez, Juan’s name is symbolic – it’s Spanish for John The Baptist, Jesus’ cousin who baptizes people in the river Jordan and first reveals Jesus as the messiah. Changez is not meant to be a messiah figure in the novel, but he does have an epiphany when he works on valuing the publishing company Bautista is in charge of in Chile. Juan Bautista tells Changez the stories of the janissaries – christians boys captured by Muslims as children, brainwashed and then sent to fight against their own empires as adults. Bautista’s suggestion, of course, is that Changez himself is a modern day janissary – but in reverse – “I was a modern day janissary, a servant of the American empire at a time when it was...
invading a country with a kinship to mine…” It's Bautista whose word’s are the catalyst for Changez to finally resign from Underwood Samson and return to Pakistan, symbolically, in a way, revealing to Changez his mission, just as John the Baptist revealed to the world the mission of Jesus.

**Chris:**

Chris represents an America of innocence. He is a character who Erica remembers with “Old World appeal” and he is a character who represents “home” for Erica. On the wall of Erica’s bedroom hangs a picture Chris drew when he was 8 or 9: “It depicted under stormy skies a tropical island with a runway and a steep volcano; nestled in the caldera of the volcano was a lake with another, smaller island in it – an island on an island – wonderfully sheltered and calm. “ The imagery is clear – amidst a turbulent and frightening world (the stormy skies), Chris and childhood are something innocent and secure. This harks back to a time when Americans felt safe and secure, isolated from the rest of the world like an island within an island. Chris died of lung cancer – a type of cancer that usually only affects smokers – except Chris wasn’t a smoker. The symbolism is that America, too, is dying of cancer – its vitality being eroded by a disease it doesn’t deserve to have.

**The anonymous American:**

_The Reluctant Fundamentalist_ has been called a ‘thriller’ and this comes entirely from the exchange between Changez and the anonymous American he talks to throughout. At the beginning of each chapter Changez observes something about the American, such as – “A bulge manifests itself...precisely at the point...undercover security agents...tend to favour wearing an armpit holster...” – that suggests he believes the American to be an secret agent. But the ambiguity comes from questions such as: Why does the American seem to voluntarily stay with Changez for so long? Why does he seem to simply ask conversational questions of Changez? Why does Changez wait until the American is nearly at his hotel door to do ‘something’ if in fact he does do anything at all? And, if the American is in fact an agent, why doesn’t he do something? For every reason why the American could be an agent, and why Changez himself might want to harm him, there are also reasons why this might not be the case. It’s a matter of perception which is also at the root of the responses that characters have to 9/11 in the novel.

**Themes:**

**Identity & Perception:**

“I lacked a stable core. I was not certain where I belonged,” Changez says towards the end of the novel. The journey from the beginning to the end of _The Reluctant Fundamentalist_ carries with it many important questions of identity for Changez. To begin with he feels that he is “something special” – he is defined by success and the land of America where “everything is possible.” But after 9/11 this identity doesn’t sit right for Changez. He feels the “growing importance of tribe”
and realized that he has changed – “I was looking about me with the eyes of a foreigner...that particular type of entitled and unsympathetic American who so annoyed me.” 9/11 is the trigger for an identity crisis for Changez – and Bautista’s words the catalyst for a new direction.

But Changez is not the only one concerned with identity. There is also Jim, always drawing upon his background as an outsider in his discussions with Changez, but always seeming to want to succeed in a way that will repress his background. Erica is also searching for her identity – who she is after Chris has gone.

Conflict & Culture:

Identity is inextricably linked to culture. And 9/11 brings with it a culture clash. Conflict invites us to take sides, to revert to fundamental beliefs. In what becomes characterized as a culture clash between the Islamic East and the Christian West after 9/11, Changez finds that he takes the side of the East – “It was right for me to refuse to participate any longer in facilitating this project of domination; the only surprise was that I had required so much time to arrive at my decision.”

Power & Status:

Much of Changez’s resentment towards America is fuelled by the feeling of the powerlessness of Pakistan and their dependence on American support. He thinks of their proud history: “For we were not always burdened by debt, dependent on foreign aid and handouts; in the stories we tell of ourselves we were not the crazed and destructive radicals...but rather saints and poets...conquering kings.” Underwood Samson is the very representation of power including in its name a reference to the biblical Samson – a figure of extraordinary strength. Changez’s first impression of Underwood Samson is: “Nothing prepared me for the drama, the power of their view from the lobby. This, I realized, was another world from Pakistan; supporting my feet were the achievements of the most technologically advanced civilization our species had ever known.” Despite the power of where he works, Changez ultimately feels “powerless.” He is “angry” at the “weakness” of Pakistan. He decision to return to Pakistan is about power. This can be seen in his conversation with the American throughout the novel where he seeks to be in the most powerful position.

Grief:

There is personal grief and national grief in The Reluctant Fundamentalist. Erica’s grief for Chris is profound as is Changez’s grief for Erica. Erica’s grief reflects the larger grief of America after 9/11. It is a country grieving for what it sees as the death of a safer, innocent world before 9/11.

Symbolism:
Names are significant in the novel. Changez is actually pronounced as Ching-giss and is an Urdu version of Genghis. Changez’s name, then, is a reference to Genghis Khan – the 13th century Mongolian warrior who conquered many nations, including Muslim ones. The name doesn’t necessarily reflect that Changez is a warrior or that he is intent on conquering other nations, but it does reflect how his identity is torn. On the one hand he feels that he is aiding America in its domination of Muslim countries like Pakistan (in this sense he is like Genghis), on the other hand he wants to aid his own Muslim nation.

Erica's name is part of America. This symbolizes the link between her journey of grief after 9/11 and its parallel in the grief of America as a nation.

There are a number of Christian references in names in The Reluctant Fundamentalist. The clearest is Chris, a reference to either Christian or Christ. Erica grief at the loss of Chris, her feeling that her identity is bound to his, tells us something about the deep rooted Christian identity of America. Juan Bautista’s name is Spanish for John The Baptist. John reveals the identity of Christ, just as Juan Bautista reveals to Changez his real identity as a janissary.

Quotes:

More than looking, in fact you seemed to be on a mission...p. 1

True, your hair, short-cropped, and your expansive chest – the chest I would say, of a man who bench-presses regularly...are typical of a certain type of American. P. 2

This is a dream come true. Princeton inspired in me the feeling that my life was a film in which I was the start and everything was possible. P. 3

Students like me were given visas and scholarships, complete financial aid...and invited in the ranks of the meritocracy. In return, we were expected to contribute our talents to your society...p.4

I knew in my senior year that I was something special...I was confident of getting any job I wanted. P. 5

So I get where you’re coming from, Changez. You’re hungry, and that's a good thing in my book. P. 10

But status, as in any traditional, class conscious society, declines more slowly than wealth...We continue to be invited to the...parties of the city’s elite. P. 11

There was a mental state I used to attain when I was playing soccer: my self would disappear, and I would be free, free of doubts and limits, free to focus on nothing but the game. P. 14
Underwood Samson had the potential to transform my life as surely as it had transformed his, making my concerns about money and status things of the distant past. P. 16

I could not prevent myself from offering to carry her backpack – so stunningly regal was she. Her hair was piled up like a tiara on her head...

You give off this strong sense of home. P. 22

I will admit there were details which annoyed me. The easy with which they parted with money, for example...Or their self-righteousness in dealing with those whom they had paid for a service. P. 23

Documenting her effect on her habitat, a naturalist would likely have compared her to a lioness: strong, sleek, and invariably surrounded by her pride. P. 25

Yet one got the sense that she existed internally at a degree of remove from those around her...some part of her...was out of reach, lost in thoughts unsaid. P. 25

He was a good-looking boy with what she described as an Old World appeal. P. 31

“So I king of miss home, too,” she said. “Except my home was a guy with long, skinny fingers.” P. 32

When my turn came, I said I hoped one day to be the dictator of an Islamic Republic with nuclear capability; the others appeared shocked, and I was forced to explain that I had been joking. P. 33

You glance...brings to mind the behaviour of an animal that has ventured too far from its lair and is now, in unfamiliar surroundings, uncertain whether it is predator or prey! P. 35

Nothing prepared me for the drama, the power of their view from the lobby. This, I realized, was another world from Pakistan; supporting my feet were the achievements of the most technologically advanced civilization our species had ever known. P. 38

Often, during my stay in your country, such comparisons troubled me. In fact, they did more than trouble me; they made me resentful. Four thousand years ago, we, the people of the Indus River basin, had cities...while the ancestors of those who would invade and colonize America were illiterate barbarians. Now our cities were largely unplanned...And America had universities with individual endowments greater than our national budget for education. P. 38

You are here, after all, on business. P. 42

No? Very wise; one ought not to encourage beggars, and yes, you are right, it is far better to donate to charities that address the causes of poverty rather than to
him, a creature who is merely its symptom. What am I doing? I am handing him a few rupees – misguided, of course...p. 45

“You’re a watchful guy. You know where that comes from?...It comes from feeling out of place...Believe me. I know” 48

My world would be transformed, just as this market around us has been. P 51

I detect a certain seriousness in your expression, as though you are wondering what sort of training camp could have given a fellow from the plains such as myself a cause to engage in these activities! p. 53

I had a peculiar feeling; I felt at home. P. 57

I’m more unsettled than nervous...It’s like I’m an oyster. I’ve had this sharp speck inside me for a long time, and I’ve been trying to make it more comfortable, so slowly I’ve turned it into a pearl. But now it’s finally being taken out, and just as it’s going I’m realizing there’s a gap being left behind...and so I kind of want to hold onto it a little longer. P. 59

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...p. 59

It depicted under stormy skies a tropical island with a runway and a steep volcano; nestled in the caldera of the volcano was a lake with another, smaller island in it – an island on an island – wonderfully sheltered and calm. P. 60

I like Pakistanis. But the elite has raped the place well and good, right?...You guys have got a serious problem with fundamentalism. P. 63

His tone – with...its typically American undercurrent of condescension – struck a negative chord with me... P. 63

You’re touchy about where you come from. P. 64

I watched as she attracted people to her...I was reminded of our trip to Greece, of the gravity she had exerted on our group. P. 65

She reminded me of child who could only sleep with the door open and the light on. P. 66

For a while I stopped talking to people. I stopped eating. I had to go to the hospital...My mom had to take three months off work because I couldn’t be by myself. P. 68

I glimpsed again...the crack inside her. P. 68

...like butterflies and fireflies, they belonged to a dreamier world incompatible with the pollution and congestion of a modern metropolis. 71
I am increasingly curious as to the nature of your business...p. 73

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. P. 75

We were mired in traffic, unable to move, and I glanced out the window to see, only a few feet away, the driver of a jeepney returning my gaze. There was an undisguised hostility in his expression...p. 76

I looked at him – at his fair hair...his oblivious immersion in...our work...and thought, you are so foreign. I felt at that moment much closer to the Filipino driver than to him. P. 77

I never let on that I felt like I didn’t belong in this world. Just like you. P. 80

But I did grow up up with a poor boy’s sense of longing, in my case for not for what my family had never had, but for what we had had and lost. P. 81

In this Jim and I were indeed similar: he had grown up outside the candy store, and I had grown up on its threshold as its door was being shut. P. 81

And then I smiled. Yes, despicable as it may sound, my initial reaction was to be remarkable pleased. P. 83

I was caught up in the symbolism of it all, that fact that someone had so visibly brought America to its knees. P. 83

I flew to New York uncomfortable in my own face: I was aware of being under suspicion; I felt guilty...p. 85

If you are not ready to reveal your purpose in traveling here – your demeanour all but precludes the possibility that your are a tourist wandering aimlessly through this part of the world...p. 88

Your flag invaded New York after the attacks; it was everywhere...p. 90

They all seemed to proclaim: We are America...the mightiest civilization...p. 90

I didn’t want to be alone. The attacks churned up old thoughts in my head. P. 91

I feel haunted...p. 92

I love it when you talk about where you come from...you become so alive. P. 93

The destruction of the World Trade Centre had...churned up old thoughts that had settled in the manner of sediment to the bottom of a pond; now the waters of her mind were murky with what had previously been ignored. P. 94
Looking back now, I see there was a certain symmetry to the situation: I felt I was entering in New York the very same social class that my family was fallout out of in Lahore. P. 97

Her eyes were turned inward, and remarks made by her companions would register only indirectly on her face. P. 98

She was struggling with a current that pulled her within herself...p. 98

She did not respond; she did not resist; she merely acceded as I undressed her. P. 102

I would realize what seemed familiar was the emotion with which she spoke, an emotion similar to that which she evoked in me. I attempted to separate myself from the situation, to listen to her as though I were not both aching for her and hurt that – seemingly despite herself – her body had rejected me. P. 103

But tonight, as I think we both understand, is a night of some importance. P. 105

Certainly I wanted to believe; at least I wanted not to disbelieve with such an intensity that I prevented myself as much as was possible from making the obvious connection between the crumbling of the world around me and the impending destruction of my personal American dream...p. 106

And that’s where you are. You’re blood brought from some part of the body that the species doesn’t need anymore. The tailbone. Like me. We come from places that were wasting away. P. 110

They try to resist change. Power comes from becoming change. P. 110

Focus on the fundamentals. This was Underwood Samson's guiding principle...p. 112

I was reminded of the film Terminator, but with the roles reversed so that the machines were cast as heroes. P. 113

Afghanistan was Pakistan's neighbour, 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. P. 114

For we were not always burdened by debt, dependent on foreign aid and handouts; in the stories we tell of ourselves we were not the crazed and destructive radicals...but rather saints and poets...conquering kings. P. 116

But once more I am raising my voice and making you rather uncomfortable...p. 116
Then pretend...pretend I am him. P. 119

It was as though we were under a spell, transported to a world where I was Chris and she was with Chris...p. 120

I felt at once both satiated and ashamed. P. 121

I used to turn to it, my writing, when I needed to get something out that was stuck inside. But I can’t get it out now. P. 127

I think I knew even then that she was disappearing into a powerful nostalgia, one from which only she could choose whether or not to return. P. 129

It seemed to me that America, too, was increasingly giving itself over to a dangerous nostalgia at that time. P. 131

I had always thought of America as a nation that looked forward; for the first time I was struck be its determination to look back. P. 131

It occurs to me that you have been contacted with the precision of an old church bell tower...p. 131

Yet even at Underwood Samson I could not entirely escape the growing importance of tribe. P. 133

Surely it is the gist that matters...it is the thrust of one's narrative that counts, not the accuracy of one’s details. P. 135

I was saddened to find it in such a state...This was where I had come from, this was my provenance, and it smacked of lowliness. P. 141

I had changed; I was looking about me with the eyes of a foreigner...that particular type of entitled and unsympathetic American who so annoyed me...p. 141

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 on our side. P. 144

I felt powerless; I was angry at our weakness...p. 145

I would soon be gone, leaving my family and my home behind, and this made me a kind of coward in my own eyes...p. 145

I was filled with contempt for myself...p. 146

Then you have been in the service...just as I expected. P. 147
I had not shaved my two week old beard. It was, perhaps, a form of protest on my part, a symbol of my identity. P. 148

Inside me, for multiple reasons, I was angry. P. 148

It was difficult for Erica to be out in the world...when in her mind she was experiencing things that were stronger and more meaningful than the things she could experience with the rest of us. P. 151.

I had to choose whether to continue to try to win her over or to accept her wishes and leave...Maybe...it was a test and I failed...p. 155

A bulge manifests itself...precisely at the point...undercover security agents...tend to favour wearing an armpit holster...p. 158

America was maintaining a strict neutrality between the two potential combatants, a position that favoured...the larger... p. 163

I was reminded of Lahore and of that saying, so evocative in our language: the ruins proclaim that building was beautiful. P. 163

Juan Bautista added considerable momentum to my inflective journey, a journey that continues until this day. P. 166

I lacked a stable core. I was not certain where I belonged. P. 168

I was a modern day janissary, a servant of the American empire at a time when it was invading a country with a kinship to mine...p. 173

I had always resented the manner in which America conducted itself in the world...p. 177

It was right for me to refuse to participate any longer in facilitating this project of domination; the only surprise was that I had required so much time to arrive at my decision. P. 177

September has always seemed to me a month of beginnings, a spring of sorts...p. 187

And she was...following it to its conclusion, passing through places I could not reach. P. 189

As a society you were unwilling to reflect upon the shared pain that united you with those who attacked you. P. 190

I would rise at dawn without having slept an instant. During the preceding hours, Erica and I would have lived an entire day together. P. 195
Such journeys have convinced me that it is not always possible to restore one’s boundaries after they have blurred and made permeable by a relationship…p. 197