

The Way We Please/Police Ourselves: the Secret Bondage between Jouissance and the Symbolic Order in *Reluctant Fundamentalist*

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Abstract

Mohsin Hamid's *Reluctant Fundamentalist* is a novel depicting a well-educated Pakistani who was hired as a financial analyst for a prominent company in New York. The novel reveals a seamless narration in which political ideology and personal feeling are taken into a mesmerizing constellation of an individual's globalized revolt.

This essay examines Hamid's novel from a Žižekian perspective, with references to reflection on global capitalism. It focuses on the overwhelming influence of global capitalism, in which the working of the superegoic jouissance serves as the entrapping force. Though encouraging the individual to enjoy and transgress the norms, the superegoic jouissance is in effect the underside that complements the symbolic order secretly manipulating the individual. This essay suggests that the way to break out of the vicious circle of the symbolic order and its transgression is reached via love to the excluded other.

In order to explore the contradiction inherent in capitalism's oscillation between the big Other qua symbolic law and superegoic jouissance, my reading of *Reluctant Fundamentalist*, which adopts a psychoanalytical approach, locates the working of global capitalism as a mode of fantasy and *objet petit a*. Fantasy and *objet petit a* become two crucial motivations of desire forging not just the American dream of being wealthy, but also the nightmare of being abandoned. Hamid has constructed different aspects of love and loss between the Pakistani protagonist and his beloved American girl, Erica. When Changez Khan finally understands the meaning of his employer Underwood Samson's guiding principle that demands its employees "focus on the fundamental" (Hamid 98), he comes to realize the secret complicity between his fundamental fantasy and the American empire of global capitalism. I argue that Changez's final Bartleby-like gesture – his returning to his country away from America – signifies his radical resistance to answer the call of the superegoic jouissance.

Keywords: Mohsin Hamid, Žižek, superego, big Other qua symbolic order, secret connection, Christian love, global capitalism