

Script

Parasite Hello! I will be discussing 3 stills from Bong Joon-Ho's movie *Parasite* and a short excerpt from the book *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* by Mohsin Hamid. Both works utilize the unique properties of their medium as a way to more easily understand religious and class conflicts between different belief systems. But first, a short summary of each work.

The movie *Parasite*, winner of 4 Academy Awards in 2020, highlights how class discrimination and greed creates and affects the relationship between the destitute Kims and the wealthy Parks with the use of satire and dark wit. A perfect movie to symbolize the current social issues plaguing many countries today like the Hindu-Muslim dilemma in India and the plight of Uighur Muslims in China, *Parasite* found a global audience and grossed \$264 million worldwide.

The Reluctant Fundamentalist, written by author Mohsin Hamid in 2007, chronicles the experiences that the fictional protagonist, Changez has during his stay in America and how his personality and relationships were changed by the 9/11 terror attacks. Using a unique dramatic monologue to narrate, Hamid draws the reader into Changez's innermost thoughts and leaves it up to the reader to decide their perception of his actions – and how the story ends. In fact, he mentions this in an interview with *The Guardian* – “So readers end up creating their own versions of what happens in the book, and the book in turn moves and shifts and reflects in response to the individual inclinations and world views of readers.”

For my first scene, I chose the hair-raising scene of Geun-Sae, the man hiding in the basement of the Parks' house from creditors, banging his head on switches that turn on lights wherever the oblivious Mr. Park is walking. This juxtaposition showcases one of the major issues that cause class conflicts – Bong Joon-Ho is trying to say that the wealthy live in such a different world from poor people that they take everything for granted. This mindset is echoed around the world, from the visual difference between a 5-star hotel and the *favelas* around it in metropolitan Brazil and the fact that 10% of the Indian population holds around 77% of the wealth. This notion is also shown emotionally throughout the movie, with both of the poorer families having relatively more turbulent emotions than those of the Park family – an example of the effect that financial status has on personality.

For my second scene, I chose Ki-Jung, the dry-humored daughter of the Kim family, squatting and smoking on top of a toilet spraying sewage water due to a sewage flood in their house due to high rainfall. In this scene, the juxtaposition between the situations of the two families are at their maximum height at this movie – we see cigarettes, toilets, and sewage all in one scene, all symbols of the poor. The very next day, we see Ms. Park talking about how the rain was “blessing” and how it “cleansed” the environment around her. This, juxtaposed with the fact that the Kims had to sleep in a gym the night before because of that very same rain, also illustrates the same point that I made up above – the

wealthy live in a world of their own, oblivious of the plight of the poor.

The last scene I picked from *Parasite* was the hiding scene – after the Parks come back early from a camping trip due to heavy rain, the Kims are forced to hide under a table to keep themselves from being discovered by the Parks. While the Kims are hiding under the table, the Parks talk about them, but only their perception of them, not the Kims themselves. Mr. Park notes that Mr. Kim has a “smell” (which symbolizes the fact that the Kims can never escape their poverty) that he doesn’t like, and Ms. Park agrees. All this is said while the Kims are hiding underneath the table. This is probably the most literal analogy of the wealthy refusing or not even acknowledging the lower class – Bong Joon-Ho’s argument is that the wealthy are too preoccupied with themselves and their status to bother looking at anything else. This mentality can be seen in other parts of the movie – when the German family moves into the house oblivious to the fact that a murder happened there, for example.

The Reluctant Fundamentalist The excerpt I will be analyzing for this book is Changez’s conclusion for why he left American and began teaching anti-American rhetoric in Pakistan:

... America was only engaged in posturing. As a society, you were unwilling to reflect upon the shared pain that united you with those who attacked you. You retreated into myths of your own difference, assumptions of your own superiority. And you acted out these beliefs on the stage of the world, so that the entire planet was rocked by the repercussions of your tantrums, not least my family, now facing war thousands of miles away.

In this short paragraph, Changez lays his heart bare for the Stranger – or, according to Hamid, the reader, you. Much of what he states here is similar to *Parasite* – that America, rich and prosperous as it was, refused to acknowledge other cultures’ pain from 9/11 because of their assumed superiority. Changez also goes on to add the effect of this, saying that this caused the entire planet to be “rocked by the repercussions of [American] tantrums”. This is similar to *Parasite* – the effect of the wealthy refusing to acknowledge the poor resulted in Mr. Park’s and Ki-Jung’s bloody demise. Both of these authors are trying to say that two groups refusing to interact and/or acknowledge the other never works out, since one group is always going to feel like they’ve been slighted – in *TRF*, it’s Changez, while in *Parasite*, it’s both Mr. Kim and Geun-Sae of the Oh family.