

THE ANALYSIS OF THE LAST WHITE MAN THROUGH CRITICAL RACE THEORY

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Abstract

This research paper analyzed the sociological and psychological impacts of racism on the characters Anders and Oona in the novel "The Last White Man". These characters faced psychological trauma and challenges, which include: Guilt, frustration, terror, grief, and agony. The sociological impacts are a struggle against white supremacy and facing whites in open streets and markets. This work highlighted the burning issue of racial discrimination. This study approach contains data sources: which are books, articles and research papers, documentation technique of collecting data, qualitative technique of analyzing the data: in this technique sentences from the novel are taken and then described and analyzed through the lens of Critical Race Theory in general and through the perspective of Delgado and Stefancic in particular. The two concepts, sociological and psychological, come under the umbrella of Critical Race Theory. Moreover, this research highlighted the continuous importance of this topic and underlined the sympathetic portrayals of Pakistani writers towards African-American communities. Likewise, the history of racism in America is also traced back from the very inception of 1661 to 2022. In the end, this research deepens our understanding of how racism is portrayed in literature and encourages critical debates about its effects on society and the lasting value of these literary pieces. At the end, the current study recommends the romantic aspect of the novel, "The Last White Man," for future researchers. Moreover, it also recommends superiority and inferiority complexes which are also applicable to this novel.

Keywords: Racism, white supremacy, racial bias, white people, black people, Black Lives Matter, George Floyd Death.

Introduction

Racism is the expression of a mindset of superiority and resentment against an individual or group based on race, lifestyle, or national origin (Sunnemark, 2003). Racism is the term used to characterize any practice of offense centered on a person's race, culture, nationality, religion, etc. (Arum, 2007). Racial biases in America refer to a system of exploitation, power, and ignorance used to oppress different ethnic groups based on ethnicity, behavior, culture, and skin color (DiAngelo & Fragility, 2018). Individuals who have white skin color view Racism as the result of authority and partiality; as a result, some white people emphasize that those individuals are not racists since they lack authority (Tatum, 2017). When Africans first came to Virginia in 1661, Racism in the United States officially began. Enslaved Portuguese people were brought to America in 1619 to work on tobacco crops because of their skin color. Who were regarded as goods? (Tilghman, 2016). The view of race is not recent. It has been continuing since the sixteenth century (DiAngelo & Fragility, 2018). Additionally, in the 18th century, bias was there in American society. According to Emmanuel Kant, white people are the world's only raised up, cultured, and built-up race, and black people are innately inferior (Ali, 2007).

In 1705, the Virginia legislature prohibited certain groups from holding public trust power, including convicts, blacks, mulattos, and Indian, in religious, martial, or public offices (Ali, 2007). This is how, the classification scheme for grading human races was developed by various anthropologists and thinkers during 19th century. One notable figure was W. Winwood Reade, who authored "Savage Africa" in 1846. In this book, he made dangerous racial estimates, suggesting Britain and France would govern Africa, leading to awful consequences for African populations. He advocated the idea of the strong devouring the weak, citing it as part of the law of nature (Rose, 1999).

In 1859, Darwin presented his theory of evolution, outlining how evolution works and how the best survives. His theory was not racist, but some people misapplied it to defend unethical actions like genocide and racial prejudice, giving rise to the phrase "Social Darwinism". This term was then used by people by saying blacks are the ancient people while whites are modern generation (Singhal & Rogers, 1999). In 1866, scientist Fredric Farrer categorized races into three denominations excluding indigenous Africans. The same situations occurred in the 20th century; racial discrimination was there. America persists despite social justice and democracy, with subtle and dangerous forms of exploitation and negative stereotypes perpetuating the exploitation of African Americans. Some laws were made in America, such as the Jim Crow Acts. Jim Crow directives prohibited whites from serving blacks in hospitals, restaurants, civic transit, institution of higher education, orphanages, and other areas (Fremon, 2000). The phrase "Jim Crow" denotes a group of guidelines and principles that Southern states and towns applied between 1877 and 1965 to authorize isolation inside their boundaries legally" (Tischauer, 2012). Jim Crow, or black people's open and systematic segregation, flourished perniciously throughout the 20th century (Tilghman, 2016). Black and white people is still present in the modern world. Racism in the United States can be categorized into three main types, all involving the oppression and dehumanization of African Americans and other groups (Constantine & Sue, 2006).

Moreover, these literary works collectively examine the development of racism in America from diverse angles. Toni Morrison's "The Bluest Eye" (Morrison, 2007), Kathryn Stockett's "The Help" (Stockett, 2009), Sing, Unburied, Sing" by Jesmyn Ward (Ward, 2017), "Homegoing" by Yaa Gyasi (Gyasi, 2016), The Nickel Boys" by Colson Whitehead (Whitehead, 2019), "The Underground Railroad" by Colson Whitehead (Whitehead, 2019) and "The Hate U Give" by Angie Thomas examine racial issues (Thomas, 2017). The same issue was also highlighted through the presentation of Black Lives Matter (Tillery, 2019) and George Floyd's death (Cheung, 2020). All forms of Racism are genuinely outlined using critical race theory as a framework. Firstly, this framework appeared in the social sciences and legal studies in the latter half of the 20th century, and it looks at how racism and race interact with other types of social stratification and how they do so in relation to the law and legal institutions. Three important thinkers in the creation of Critical Race Theory are Jean Stefancic, Richard Delgado, and Derrick Bell. Delgado and Stefancic contend that racism is pervasive in institutions, social structures, and policies rather than limited to isolated instances of prejudice. It tries to comprehend the ways in which societal systems support racial inequity (Abdullah & Abdullah, 2022).

Through The Last White Man, Mohsin Hamid powerfully interrogates racial prejudice and societal structures that privilege whiteness, revealing how deeply ingrained these constructs are in American and Western culture. By following Anders' journey of transformation and societal rejection, Hamid critiques racial hierarchies and the destructive fear of racial difference. The novel encourages readers to confront the discomfort of racial change,

suggesting that overcoming racial prejudice requires a collective reassessment of ingrained biases and a willingness to embrace a future where identity transcends skin color.

This novel portrays the true image of racism in society at this time. This inspection meticulously assesses how racism and unfair treatment have affected black lives in American society in general and in the novel *The Last White Man* in particular, through the lens of Critical Race Theory in general and through the perspective of Jean Stefancic and Richard Delgado in particular. It also uses the sociological and psychological perspectives. Muhsin Hamid has captured the same racial discrimination in American society in 2022 in the mentioned book through the characters of Anders and Oona. It talks about the racial tension and pigmentation in a society that is plagued with prejudice. The book is a powerful commentary on the poisonous effects of racism, the injustice it breeds, and the moral struggle to abolish it.

Research Objectives:

1. To critically examine the psychological and sociological impacts of racism on the characters in Mohsin Hamid's novel *The Last White Man*, using Critical Race Theory as an analytical lens.
2. To explore how the novel reflects historical and contemporary forms of racial discrimination, and how it critiques systemic racism through narrative and character transformation.

Research Questions:

1. How does *The Last White Man* portray the psychological and sociological consequences of racial transformation on its characters, particularly through the framework of Critical Race Theory?
2. In what ways does the novel reflect and critique both historical and ongoing racial injustices in American society, as seen through its narrative structure and character experiences?

Literature Review

Mohsin Hamid was born on July 23, 1971, in Lahore, Pakistan. *The Last White Man*, his fifth book set in an English-speaking country, follows Anders, a white man who transforms into a Black man overnight. As riots and violence fueled by racial tension erupt in his town, Anders seeks refuge with his ailing father, the last white man. By the novel's end, Anders and his partner, Oona, are raising a daughter in Anders' childhood home, highlighting a generational shift toward a more racially complex future (Clemens, 2022).

The narrative explores how Anders' drastic change in skin tone drives him to confront anxiety, fear, and social alienation in a society that now views him as an outsider. The novel critiques the societal structures that define individuals by their skin color and emphasizes the fear of losing the privileges tied to race. Hamid situates the story in a small American town or a similar Western locale to underscore society's bigotry and prejudice, examining how deeply ingrained racial assumptions and biases are in Western culture. Anders' experiences reveal the collective anxiety and resistance that accompanies significant social and racial shifts (Jahan et al., 2024).

When Anders' girlfriend, Oona, first encounters his transformation, she feels unsettled and disoriented, struggling to reconcile her relationship with his changed appearance. Meanwhile, their community spirals into chaos as tensions rise, leading to acts of violence, including murder. This collective unrest underscores the pervasive societal fear of change and the extremes people resort to when confronted with perceived threats to established racial norms. Extremist factions emerge, intensifying hostility and exacerbating existing racial tensions (Kapur & Naik, 2023).

The narrative delves into how race, socioeconomic status, identity, and culture influence the characters' experiences. Racism impacts the protagonists' thoughts and emotions, particularly Anders, who wrestles with identity crises and an inability to find a space free from racial prejudice. This highlights how individuals in marginalized or altered racial identities often face profound existential challenges and societal exclusion (Rasheed et al., 2024).

Anders, initially part of the privileged white majority, is forced to navigate life as a member of a marginalized group following his sudden change in skin color. This transformation exposes him to the struggles of historically oppressed communities. Anders feels torn between his old identity and the new, marginalized self, grappling with a fractured sense of belonging and a redefined understanding of identity (Zahra et al., 2024).

The protagonist's journey, coupled with society's reaction to his altered appearance, sheds light on the complexities of identity formation within power dynamics. Hamid's *The Last White Man* ultimately emerges as a postcolonial critique that challenges the entrenched racial and cultural hierarchies by addressing themes of race, identity, otherness, and resistance. Through Anders' transformation, Hamid dismantles racial constructs and encourages readers to consider a society unburdened by racial prejudice, advocating for a world that transcends inherited biases (Jabeen et al., 2024).

Research Methodology

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative-descriptive design to analyze Mohsin Hamid's *The Last White Man* using Critical Race Theory (CRT). This method is appropriate for exploring abstract concepts such as race, identity, and social injustice in literary texts.

Data Sources

The primary data is the novel *The Last White Man* (2022). Secondary sources include scholarly books, journal articles, and theoretical works, particularly those by Delgado and Stefancic, offering context on CRT and racial history in the U.S.

Data Collection

Data was collected through documentary analysis, focusing on key passages in the novel that reflect racial transformation, psychological trauma, and social exclusion. Secondary materials were used to support thematic interpretation.

Data Analysis

A thematic analysis was conducted, identifying major themes such as racial identity, microaggressions, and institutional bias. These were interpreted through CRT principles. Additionally, a sociological literary approach was applied to relate fictional elements to real-world racial dynamics.

Ethical Considerations

No human subjects were involved. All sources were cited properly, and academic integrity was upheld.

Analysis and Discussion

This novel represents racial bias and tension. These quotes demonstrate racism either directly or indirectly. The following quotes from the book were examined and discussed within the context of critical race theory (Hamid, 2022).

"One morning, Anders, a white man, woke up to discover that there was a male, darker person in bed with him. Though this was terrifying, it was undoubtedly impossible, and he was reassured that the other moved as he moved and was in fact just him." (Hamid, 09)

Critical race theory, which looks at how race and racism are created and maintained in society, can be used to study these expressions. In this passage, white guy Anders arouses up to find out that he has darkened. The concept of racial consciousness, sometimes known as

racial awakening, is a key idea in critical race theory, and this transition might be seen as a metaphor for it. Anders' growing discovery of his altered skin tone represents his fresh racial consciousness. According to critical race theory, people frequently go through an awakening process to the reality of race and racism, which can be caused by individual experiences or realizations.

Anders' initial reaction of seeing a different person in bed with him, someone darker—reflected how persons of other racial backgrounds are frequently seen as "other" or as distinct from themselves. This impression may have its origins in racial ideologies that emphasize difference and separation in society which left strong sociological and psychological impacts on Anders. Furthermore, it can be interpreted as a statement on the premise that race is a social construct as Anders discovers that the darker person in bed with him is actually himself. The concept of racial essentialism is opposed by critical race theory, which emphasizes that race is a product of social and historical circumstances rather than a fixed quality. Moreover, Anders' confidence that the other person is simply him shows that, at a fundamental level, regardless of our racial identities, we are all human beings. This is how Hamid starts his story; he transports the audience to an undisclosed location that evokes a little American town or location in the west while illustrating the prejudice and bias that are pervasive in society.

The metaphorical examination of racial consciousness and the flexibility of racial identity in these lines, as seen through the lens of critical race theory, can be understood as a challenge to the traditional biasness and boundaries connected with race.

"He took a photo of himself; the same dark skin was there. Since he realized that being accepted by society would be the toughest part, it was terrifying and disheartening for him. He was trapped indoor." (Hamid,11)

As these lines clearly state that the psychological change in the mind of the Anders compels him to have a picture of himself in order to know it better. This leads Anders to the anxiety, regret, depression, and internal trauma. These remarks emphasize Ander's initial denial or surprise about his racial identity. Which is a clear sign of sociological impacts on Anders. It illustrates how people of color could occasionally minimize or disregard their racial experiences as a result of cultural pressures or internalized racism. Critical Race Theory stresses the significance of acknowledging and addressing racial reality. Moreover, it emphasizes the difficulties people of marginalized racial backgrounds encounter in their quest for acceptance and belonging in a predominately white society. According to it, systemic racism creates obstacles that prevent people of color from experiencing complete inclusion and acceptance, making the process difficult and discouraging. Furthermore, it represents the feeling of confinement or restriction that people of color may have as a result of systematic racism. According to it, racism limits opportunities and access to resources, which can keep vulnerable communities isolated socially and economically. These lines essentially underline the character's battle with racial identity, societal acceptance, and the oppressive forces of systemic racism. These major issues that are discussed within the framework of critical race theory.

"Anders had a moment of panic after handing over his credit card, but the clerk did not glance at it, at his name, at his signature, and he did not acknowledge Anders mumbled thanks and goodbye, did not move or even smile, as if Anders had not spoken at all." (Hamid,12)

Movement of panic means the internal anxiety and trauma which is clearly a psychological impact on Anders mind. When the clerk does not look at Anders and also not reacting to goodbye show social prejudice and isolation which definitely sociological factor. These sentences can be examined from the perspective of Critical Race Theory as a reflection of

racial dynamics and micro aggressions. The treatment of Anders could be viewed as a kind of discrimination known as a micro aggression. The clerk's actions, including failing to acknowledge Anders and not reacting to his gratitude and goodbye, have been motivated by racial discrimination. This lack of acknowledgement can be a result of Anders' race. Additionally, a type of racial invisibility is suggested by the clerk's refusal to interact with Anders. It seems that because of his race, Anders is being made invisible or unimportant. This idea is in line with Critical Race Theory's investigation of how specific racial groups are neglected and marginalized in society.

"His boss looked him over and said claimed that if it was me, I would have killed myself." (Hamid, 27)

On the one hand, Anders is scrutinized and treated rudely by his employer, who is likely a subordinate at work. It puts sociological pressure on Anders which in turn cause psychological impacts on Anders. This could be interpreted as a reflection of societal power disparities, as those in positions of control frequently have the freedom to say offensive things without thinking about how they could affect other people. On the other hand, racial biases, prejudice, inequality, social injustice and feeling of superiority bring Anders' boss to act violently and rudely towards the black community in general but Anders in particular. Moreover, the employer' and society's callous disregard for black, Anders' pain can be viewed as a sort of oppression by the white head. The disrespectful remarks made by the boss only make Anders' situation worse. Anders was black that is why he was treated harshly and violently; it was societal insensitivity and oppression because it represents a tendency in society where individuals are quick to condemn and judge a person by their skin color rather than offering emotional support and understanding. Critical Race Theory frequently examines how institutions of white community affect people who were having black skin color. In this instance, the boss is a metaphor for the power structure and insensitive corporate culture.

By introducing the character of Anders, the author has effectively illustrated the plight of every person who experiences these problems, whether racism or existentialism. However, in the subsequent chapters of the novel, he turns his attention to society as a whole because it frequently experiences the same abrupt transformation. The author illustrates the pandemonium that followed the people's transition.

There has been an increase in violence and murder which simply present the hatred of one against other. Guns were being used by individuals to purge their brownness. (Hamid, 40)

"The terror of transformation dominates the town" suggests that the town is undergoing significant social changes, possibly related to demographics or power dynamics. In Critical Race Theory, this represents a shift in the racial composition of the town, which is causing anxiety and resistance among certain groups. Moreover, the phrase "an increase in violence and murder" suggests that racial tensions have risen, giving rise to hatred and hostility. According to critical race theory, these violent acts may have been provoked by underlying racial animosities and power struggles. Additionally, it is clear from the statement that "guns were being used by individuals to purge their brownness" those guns are being used to exert dominance or control over those who have a specific skin tone. This is in line with Critical Race Theory's argument that racism can take overt and systemic forms, using violence as a means of oppression. Furthermore, the statement "Nobody moved to stop this situation" may allude to complicity or indifference on the part of those in authority or the majority group, which allowed these racial atrocities to continue. In addition to that, Fear of being murdered because of one's skin color" demonstrates how common racial discrimination is and how it affects people's lives. The persistent threat and terror that people of color may feel as a result of systematic racism is highlighted by critical race theory. People stopped leaving the house,

and the desolate streets and stores show how marginalized groups withdrew as a result of the hostile climate, isolating them.

"The cleaning guy had started to look at him in a new way after Anders changed, and Anders had not liked it, but it got him thinking" (Hamid, 34).

Anders makes a racial distinction when he describes the cleaning man as having "dark skin." Critical race theory would underline how this classification might support prejudice and stereotypes. This classification may reinforce prejudices and stereotypes. Furthermore, the statement that the cleaning man "never exercised there" may be taken as an example of racial othering, in which the man is either excluded from the gym's community or is seen as distinct due to his occupation and color. This illustrates how racial prejudice can cause people to be excluded. Additionally, Anders' irritation with the cleaning man's altered behavior and his belief that he was being viewed differently by the man could be interpreted as micro aggressions. The study of subtly unfriendly environments for minority groups is a key component of critical race theory. In addition, everyone went brown save from Anders' father. The only other White man who accepted and loved him was him. He is aware that the changeling has no impact on Anders' heart, mind, or soul. He was regrettably the last white person to embrace this.

"Oona's mother said, 'You should be ashamed of yourself.' When Oona responded, 'I am ashamed of myself,' her mother countered, 'Oh no, you are not, but you should be.'" (Hamid, 61)

Oona mother statement might allude to a possible racial component. Oona might have been involved in a racial incident or conversation where her mother's attitude suggested that she ought to be embarrassed of her behavior or viewpoints. Moreover, Oona's reaction can be a sign of internalized racism which is psychological impact, in which she has taken onboard unfavorable opinions or prejudices about her ethnic identity. Oona's awareness that she cannot win this battle may be a metaphor for how challenging it is to address racial issues. It is frequently emphasized in critical race theory that facing racism can be difficult and ongoing, and that people may not always find quick success or resolution. Oona's mother's statement seems to capture an intricate racial interaction. Oona's mother might be hinting that Oona isn't fully aware of how deeply ashamed of her own racial identity she is. This might be connected to the notion that people might not always be aware of or recognize their internalized racism.

The pervasive racism in society is the cause of this uneasiness. Themes of racism, bias, and discrimination are prevalent in the novel. They are criticized for how society treats people according to their race. Finally, both Mohsin Hamid uses his writing to discuss racial and racist concerns in his society, challenging readers to think about these issues and their effects. It examines and criticizes the widespread racial prejudice and discrimination that prevailed in the respective area.

Conclusion

In the conclusion, the information provided above offers an analysis of racism with a focus on its prevalence in the United States. It chronicles the history of racism in America from the entrance of Africans in 1661 up to the implementation of Jim Crow laws and racial grading systems. Introducing critical race theory, which emphasizes racism's inherent nature in laws and institutions and cites Delgado and Stefancic as major thinkers, it closes by examining current racism kinds. Furthermore, in this literary analysis of Muhsin Hamid's fifth novel, "The Last White Man," library research is used to analyze racism in the novel. The novel addresses the upsetting subject of racial inequality. "The Last White Man" takes place in a more up-to-date metropolitan environment and examines racial prejudice through a character's physical change. The novel explores themes of loneliness, hypocrisy, and the

yearning for fair skin, challenging how society views people based on their ethnicity and encouraging readers to consider the issues' permanency.

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