



Postcolonialism in Hamid's *The Last White Man*

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ABSTRACT

This study uses postcolonialism as a lens to analyze Mohsin Hamid's *The Last White Man*. The study aims to examine how racism, identity, and otherness affect Ander and Oona's personalities as they relate to the main characters in this book within the framework of postcolonial theory. The researcher applies a qualitative approach by applying the descriptive analytical method to analyze the various characters in the novel—including Ander's father, Eric, and Oona's mother. This research makes references to the works of postcolonial literary critics, including Homi K. Bhabha's *Sign Taken for Wonders* and *The Real Me*, Leela Gandhi's *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction*, Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin White Masks*, and Edward Said's *Orientalism*. Verbal data, such as texts, is employed for the basic analysis and the solution to the research questions. Findings show that Hamid has skillfully portrayed postcolonial themes of racism, otherness, and identity in his book (*The Last White Man*). This study can be employed for postcolonial analysis of other books, such as *Exit West*, in the future.

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1. Introduction

The Last White Man, one of Mohsin Hamid's books, is introduced in this section. In this study, the author's colonial and postcolonial viewpoints will be used to analyze the cultural conflict in this Hamid novel. Using the theoretical framework, it further explores situations in this novel when there is a major cultural clash and cross-cultural overlap. It will also demonstrate how a collision of cultures impacts the human psyche. Man cannot live alone since he is a social animal. To survive, he needs to interact with other creatures. In that society, he must also maintain his individuality. Literature is a social institution that uses language as the medium and language as a social notion, claims (Damono, 1984). Literature has combined human culture and civilization to become an everyday phenomenon. In general, both spoken and written words are included in literature. Literature is regarded as art in all its forms—poetry, prose, short stories, fiction, dramas, and novels. The novel is one of the literary works. It comes within the headings of narrative and fiction stories. The political representation of colonialism in literature is based on the concepts of rule and control over "others." Because it is "man-made," colonial representation is a form of colonial discourse that produces a false ideology. Some of the ideas, convictions, and values that constitute our way of life are reflected in ideology. These implicit and explicit ideas, beliefs, and values influence every aspect of our way of life, society, and thought. It is a system for grouping people into superior and inferior social classes. Fanon (2023) makes the case in *Black Skin White Masks* that colonial representation justifies white supremacy over colonized people to draw an arbitrary line dividing the two groups.

The word "postcolonialism" broadly refers to the representations of race and identity in the modern age after the independence of various colonized countries. Literature created in nations that are or have been colonies of other nations is the focus of a theory called

postcolonial theory. This comprises literature that uses the subjects of colonizing nations' colonies and was written in or by people of such nations. The cornerstones of the theory are the ideas of otherness and resistance. Many practitioners agree that when postcolonial theory first appeared in the critical toolbox in the 1970s, Edward Said's *Orientalism* served as its foundation. Examining postcolonial concerns about racism and otherness is the aim of the current research. Man has no right to be regarded as a significant character in the structure of the nation. Because of this dishonesty and plotting, his identity is also under question. As a result, it is not up to an individual to determine their own identity. That is more of a social classification problem. The general public views Pakistanis as easy pickings, and this is true not just of Pakistani society but also of societies worldwide. Instead of being seen as regular people, they are considered as extremists. The identity crisis continues, even in a distant country where they have to deal with prejudice and ethnic discrimination. As a result, Hamid, a British-Pakistani novelist, elaborates on this scenario of delusional identities in his works. This study will emphasize and analyze this scenario.

Throughout his literary career, Hamid has distinguished himself by focusing on contemporary subjects and purposefully rearranging time, place, and characters to make them universally relevant. *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, *Exit West*, *The Last White Man*, and *How to Get Rich in Rising Asia*. Hamid has consistently and intelligently addressed contemporary topics including racism and colorism, migration, capitalism, and 9/11. His talent resides not only in the poetic quality of his writing, which has a rich interiority in the development of characters but also in his ability to bring up controversial topics without exaggerating them. *The Last White Man* is a fantastical investigation of race and power. Anders woke up to discover that his skin had turned "a deep and undeniable brown." (p.3) Following Kafka's example, it is still unclear why this rapid transformation occurred and what it means. Anders is challenged by the changes he has undergone. In such instances scattered throughout this book, we feel the sharp sting of Hamid's intelligence and his capacity to express the beloved ideals of White superiority. Anders tells his management that he won't be coming to work because he's too sick, expecting a faint chance that his situation will eventually get better. He is only forced to leave and rejoin the group by hunger in the end. Although Anders speculates that there may have been "flickers of hostility or distaste," no one in the grocery store seemed to notice his transformation. (p.9) In the view of the conspiracy-minded, who have been deceived by inflammatory websites and radio shows, this superficial change is a tragedy. Some people who have recently darkened end their lives out of desperation.

1.1. Study's main objectives

The study's concentration is determined by the broader context of the aforementioned study, the author will concentrate on Anders and Oona, the protagonist of *The Last White Man* to analyze the identity and racism issues utilizing a postcolonial perspective. The following are the objectives of this study:

- To analyze different characters from the book *The Last White Man and The Reluctant Fundamentalist* in the context of postcolonial theory.
- To find out how Anders and Oona's personalities are affected by racism, identity, and otherness.

1.2. Research Questions

This study has the following research questions:

- How is the postcolonial aspect of racism portrayed in the novel *The Last White Man*?
- How are the issues of, identity, and otherness discussed by Hamid in *The Last White Man*?

2. Literature Review

In chronological order, this section presents earlier studies on postcolonial concerns of racism, otherness, and identity. While postcolonial themes have been covered by earlier authors and in a variety of ways, those discussed in *The Last White Man* are wholly new because the book is one of the most recent and no prior research has been done on it. This literature review will help us understand this. Awan, Andleeb, and Yasin (2016) in his study, "Psychoanalysis and Transformation of Heroes in Mohsin Hamid's Novels *Moth Smoke* and *The*

Reluctant Fundamentalist claims that Mohsin Hamid is a proponent of postcolonial characterization. Hamid also exhibits a very modern hero quality within the particular context of the regional Asian culture. He is skilled at depicting Indo-Pak culture in his social fiction writing. Few authors might reach their greatest level of success with just a few early works. Hamid's two works were successful in helping him achieve it. The present Pakistani worldview is beautifully captured in both of these works. In these stories, he masterfully manages characters, particularly the heroes. This study aims to evaluate the personalities of both heroes, Darashikoh from *Moth Smoke* and Changez from *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. Both heroes experience a critical sequence of incidents that makes them helpless, non-heroic men. The heroes' outward interactions and their interior responses to them are the focus of this inquiry. In this study, complexes that are enslaving the nation's youth and producing a generation that is heavily burdened by complexes are also identified. Postcolonial rising countries like Pakistan are characterized by a widespread obsession with money, things, and women, with far too few exceptions.

Additionally, Aljibori (2021), "A Postcolonial Reading of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* by Mohsin Hamid and *The Inheritance of Loss* by Kiran Desai," aims to analyze mimicry, hybridity, and diaspora in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and *The Inheritance of Loss* from a Postcolonial perspective. There are four chapters total in Aljibori's work, along with an introduction and a conclusion. The introduction section of his study contains references to relevant works and past research on the topic, as well as biographies of the two authors and a list of their published works. His study's introduction also featured a basic explanation of postcolonial theory. His study discusses postcolonial themes of imitation, hybridity, and diaspora since it approaches the works from a postcolonial perspective. Moreover, Hira Ali and Dr. Naveed Ahmad (2020) in their study "Hybridity in Hanif Kureishi's Fiction" explore the hybridity from the perspective of post-colonial intellectuals with a geo-biographical orientation. The critical analysis focuses on the narratives of Hanif Kureishi in conjunction with the prominent post-colonial theories of Robert Young and Homi K. Bhabha. Those born into the colonial legacy of hybrid culturally constructed identities in Britain faced challenges in gaining social recognition, as Kureishi's biracial protagonists often felt displaced in the dominant white Western society. The young ones of Asian immigrants in Britain experienced a split in their personalities, and their Asian skin color made them noticeable in White Western society despite their social achievements. White Britain held authority over hybrid or black Britain, and Kureishi portrayed the critical exploration of the experiences of colonial immigrants in the social realms of Britain through his artistic writings. In a multicultural society, an individual's identity is shaped and transformed through interactions with different people, customs, and social lifestyles. Kureishi, as an artist, does not favor either White Britain or black Britain but underscores the tendency of Asians to assimilate with the dominant white culture for acceptance. He refrains from presenting hybridity as a negative process and instead offers a genuine reflection of the lives of Asians residing in Britain. In today's world, post-colonial migrants face significant challenges in gaining acceptance in colonial discourses.

Additionally, Hira Ali, Naveed Ahmad, and Mehwish Sadiq in their article "Racism in *My Beautiful Launderette* by Kureishi" suggest that the study on racist psychology in *My Beautiful Launderette* by Kureishi explores postcolonial intelligentsia viewpoints, drawing on W.E.B. Du Bois' concepts of the veil and double consciousness from *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903). The stereotypical racial discrimination experienced by immigrants leads to the double consciousness of individuals, making it challenging to have a unified identity. Whites consider themselves superior to blacks, perpetuating racial prejudices that create an imaginary barrier between the two groups. Kureishi's work addresses the struggles of Asian immigrants in contemporary Britain within the framework of Du Bois' racial theory, highlighting racial tensions and their drastic effects on society. Despite the abolition of slavery in 1833, racism persisted to justify the Empire, embedding itself in the psychology of every community. Kureishi, having a hybrid identity, faced racial and cultural prejudices but achieved success as a writer. The screenplay "My Beautiful Launderette" reflects on racial and cultural stereotypes as barriers to success but also offers a sign of hope through the characters of Omar and Johnny, who establish a launderette and form a romantic relationship, symbolizing a desire for equality. Kureishi emphasizes the need to overcome racial, social, and cultural problems to create a place where people can interact freely without discrimination.

However, Ali and Ahmad (2018) in their study "Identity Crisis in Hanif Kureishi's *My Son the Fanatic*" assume that the exploration of identity crisis in Hanif Kureishi's *My Son the Fanatic* focuses on the difficulty postcolonial subjects face in self-defining their identities in the territories of colonizers. The study aligns with the postcolonial ideology that the search for identity has become a pressing reality in the global world. Asians migrating to British colonies tend to mimic the white residents to discover their identities by assimilating with the dominant culture. Assimilation is portrayed as the abandonment of personal ethnic identity in favor of adopting the ideals of British society. A person's identity is intricately shaped by interactions with people, lifestyles, and society, and multicultural societies often present individuals with identity issues.

In addition, Aijazuddin (2022) asserts in her study "*The Last White Man and What it Means to be Brown*" that the beginning of Mohsin Hamid's most recent book, *The Last White Man*, tells a dystopian society and, in a sense, sums up his writing style. Anders, a white man, discovered that he had changed into a dark, identifiable brown when he awoke one morning. In the opening scene of the story, a man realizes that he has changed overnight and is not of his own free will. Because of his change into darkness, other people have different opinions about him. He doesn't know how Oona, his former high school love, or his gym coworkers will view him. The only characters identified in the book are Anders and Oona; the setting and location are left unspecified. He looks into the implications of more white people adopting brown skin in the world that they live in.

Furthermore, Ashfaq (2022) in his study "*Home Boy: A Case of Identity Crises and Transformation*" claims that postcolonial literature has been significantly influenced by colonial legacies and that its protagonists constantly live in the shadow of a tragic past. Identity crises are a prominent topic in postcolonial literature. Major themes in South Asian literature include the identity, cultural clash, ambivalence, and dualism of people who have lived under foreign rule and now reside in a system that keeps colonial ideology. While trying to assist readers and characters in understanding such contradicting issues, postcolonial literature does not provide any solutions. The suffering, crises, and resolution of Chuck's identity issues in H.M. Naqvi's *Home Boy* are the subjects of this article. Finally, Ashfaq looks at how the structural oppression of the neocolonial system influenced Chuck's confused emotions, and he finally comes to terms with his recently acquired identity.

However, Afrin (2019) asserts in her study "*The Alienated Other: Identity Crisis and Belongingness in The Reluctant Fundamentalist and The Thief and the Dogs*" that a variety of factors, such as culture, history, politics, and society, have an impact on how an individual's identity is constructed, as discussed by Stuart Hall in 2003. Additionally, the researcher has talked about how diaspora environments shape and alter the identities of immigrants. A person's sense of identity and belonging is influenced by situations and positions in politics, religion, and society. This subject is covered in the books *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and *The Thief and the Dogs* by Mohsin Hamid and Mahfouz, respectively.

In addition, Charles (2022)," in his study "*The Last White Man is a fantastical exploration of Race and Privilege*" *The Last White Man* by Mohsin Hamid is a fascinating, complex novel that explores what would happen if white people started to turn brown, or "dark," as Hamid refers to it throughout the book. *The Last White Man's* plot, according to the researcher, has a lot of potential options, but Hamid keeps everything in check and keeps things from getting out of hand. Anders, whose name relates to the German word for "other," doesn't want to go out after the makeover because he feels guilty and has noticed that people treat him differently. He also observes other dark-skinned coworkers at the gym that he has long ignored.

However, Aamir (22 July 2022) argues that a person's subjective perception of their identity, which includes their past experiences, current relationships, beliefs, and values, is referred to as their identity. This helps individuals in developing a trustworthy identity that generally persists. Individuals' ideas of who they are, what kind of people they are, and how they relate to others make up their identities. The researcher concludes that nationalism and national identity consciousness are two important phenomena that are disappearing in the contemporary global environment. Pakistan's educational system does not provide curricula to

promote patriotism and patriotic abilities in our future generations as a result of our colonial past and the effects of the beautiful, globalized globe. We are raising the future without establishing a proud identity for kids. Even though our state is connected to several boards, an expanding number of schools, and a foreign educational system, we remain optimistic. We are sure that this educational system will foster Pakistan's future intellectuals and supply the nation with the most spirited and patriotic economic energy.

Moreover, Birgani (2019) in his study "Arundhati Roy's: *The God of Small Things*: As a Hybrid Linguistic Text" claims that Arundhati Roy is an Indian writer and activist for women. Birgani's research focuses on Arundhati Roy's book *The God of Small Things*. In 1997, she published her first book. Because it is semi-autobiographical, a significant portion of it is about her early years in Aymanam. The novel's action takes place in Kerala, an Indian state, in Ayemenem. Kerala's varied and complex society makes it appear like a miniature version of India. The book uses Indian surroundings and people as illustrations of the postcolonial perspective. Postcolonial resistance is an important issue in *The God of Small Things*, the researcher concludes. Roy uses the colonial language of English, which is a kind of resistance against colonization. Roy makes comments about children's lives as a form of resistance, which could be interpreted as Orientalism in some ways. The debate above makes it evident that multiple perspectives have been expressed on postcolonial issues including racism, identity, and otherness. Researchers have looked at these problems from a variety of angles. My research, however, is the most recent because no other research efforts have been done on it. *The Last White Man*'s subject of postcolonial analysis is unexplored.

3. Research Methodology

The research methods used to conduct the study are covered in this section. A part of the research relating to the section on research questions is the research design. She would be able to answer any questions regarding the issue according to the strategy for gathering and evaluating proof and evidence. It contains details on data-gathering methods and information about data-collection methods. A comprehensive description of the method is provided in this section. The study also includes textual analysis to identify the study's goal by applying the framework. The qualitative approach was adopted by the researcher. The method that is most frequently employed in the academic research of literature is qualitative, and this proposed research activity discusses literature in particular that is novel. The novel *The Last White Man* by Mohsin Hamid is used in this study to describe postcolonialism. The current study focuses on post-colonialist perspectives. Each research has a distinct method of expression. The research uses a particular style of writing and word choice. The primary goal of research in this area is to examine the text's distinctive style.

The research aims to analyze the characterization and identity crisis of the main character in *The Last White Man* using postcolonial concerns of identity, racism, and otherness from postcolonial theory. This study uses both an analytical-descriptive method and a qualitative approach. The author analyses the unit of analysis using references from the study. She also makes an effort to answer the research questions by reading the text and citing quotations that support her arguments. By reading and analyzing the book *The Last White Man*, the researcher herself acted as the research tool. The author not only analyses the data but also uses it to support this study. For the current paper, the information gathered is both descriptive and narrative. As a result, to evaluate the data and draw generalizations and conclusions, qualitative techniques like definition, explanation, and interpretation are used. Before employing that knowledge to analyze and describe the data, the author carefully and accurately reads *The Last White Man* in their entirety. Second, the author assigns a score to the phrases or sentences in the novel that represent each category of character and characterization, especially about the main character and their identity crisis. Arrange and analyze the data lastly. The analysis unit for this study is Hamid's novel *The Last White Man*. The current study, which is qualitative by nature, makes use of a textual-narrative analysis of *The Last White Man* from the perspective of postcolonial literary discourse.

4. Theoretical Framework

Postcolonial theory has been used in this work while taking the findings of literary critics like Edward Said, Frantz Fanon, Homi K. Bhabha, and Leela Gandhi into account. The postcolonial writers also examine how the literature of colonial powers encourages negative images of the colonized to defend colonialism. However, attempts to provide a singular definition of the

debate surrounding postcolonial philosophy have been strongly criticized by certain scholars. The framework is designed with the objectives of the current study in mind, and to achieve those objectives, the researcher will use textual analysis as a tool to look at various aspects of the novels. The text is extensively examined to find various patterns that are revealed because the researcher is interested in word choice and the reality that it creates.

5. Discussion

Mohsin Hamid refers to both Gregor Samsa from *The Metamorphosis* and Eustace Scrub from *The Voyage of the Dawn Trader* in the opening sentence of his thought-provoking and beautiful new book, *The Last White Man*. A racial fable set in an Anglophone country is *The Last White Man*. Samsa, the main character of *The Metamorphosis*, is known for changing into a cockroach; in *The Voyage of the Dawn Trader*, the third Narnia Chronicle, Eustace wakes up from a nap on a rocky island and changes into a dragon. The opening of Hamid, which intentionally uses language from Lewis and Kafka, sets the mood for a fascinating tale that gradually reveals its truths. Hamid is aware of this topic because he incorporated Narnia in his 2017 book *Exit West*, which explored the global immigration dilemma. It is successful. In addition to winning the Aspen Words Literary Prize and the Los Angeles Times fiction prize, it went on to become a best-seller and be designated a New York Times best book of the year. In the first scene of *The Last White Man*, Anders wakes up one morning to discover that he has turned a deep and irrefutable brown and assumes that someone else is sleeping in his bed. But it's the dark-skinned man, not the other way around. He identifies himself in a selfie taken on a phone. According to Hamid,

Not much shock or sorrow,, as he had been before (p.4).

He calls Oona, an old high school acquaintance who is now a friend with benefits, because she is fit and in her 20s. When she sees her boyfriend in bed, she runs over, startled by his altered appearance, but unconsciously feels humiliated and drawn to him. His coworkers ignore him at the gym where he works, but a small Black cleaner looks at him sympathetically. Anders gradually comes to understand what it means to be ignored in that hypermasculine, all-white setting. He's not the only one: Stories quickly start flooding in from all across the world as Caucasians mysteriously turn darker and society's proportions begin to turn toward people of color. *The Last White Man* skillfully plays with an evolutionary irony: Race is a biological illusion, and genetic variation within populations is higher than the genetic variation between other populations as a whole, as the Human Genome Project showed. His concerns extend beyond whiteness because the fair-skinned people—who are considered to have invented the wheel—emerged on the Russian steppes around 6,000 years ago, creating the social category of manhood. Even though there is an obvious racial barrier between them and Anders's father, who is terminally ill, it is ultimately their bond of affection that triumphs.

Moreover, given how far our discussion of the internet has progressed, the writer appears to be running late. He expects us to find it engaging as he opens one chapter by discussing the personal nature of truth in the most basic sense online. At some point, even his voice starts to seem sickening. He goes too far. The cleaning staff member at work declines Anders' offer to instruct him, saying,

"...no, and then he added..... like is a raise." (Hamid, 2023).

When Anders goes brown, he can no longer identify himself. Oona is captivated by the brownness, while he feels embarrassed and unsure. And in this instance, a lot of the uncomfortable events in the book. Although people don't understand they are being racist or hateful, their reactions to Anders' changed appearance have shock value. Oona's mother at seeing Oona and Anders together. The thought of her daughter sharing a bed with a dark man causes her to physically become ill or vomit. This emphasizes the necessity for us to have a discourse about self-reflection and understanding who we are and what we represent. Anders is not traveling by himself. As more people start to become dark, preconceptions about them and one another in social change. Although Anders' story is different, everyone may identify with it. Others around him begin questioning what this means, how it could have happened, and whether it means that we are similar or different. Up to Anders' father's passing, the minority

of the darkened becomes the majority. In a sea of brown, he is the last white man. Despite the absence of any other names except Oona and Anders and a clearly defined locale, the reader can connect to the author's writing. Although it appears to be an American town, readers are free to imagine any other location of their choice. By doing this, Hamid establishes a direct conversation between the reader and the fiction. We can use this whatever we choose. The narrative builds to a new hope as white people disappear. Despite their losses and the dissolution of their identities, Anders and Oona work hard to establish a family that will support them. Even a stubborn person like Oona's mother can be changed. *The Last White Man* is another bracing work from a consummate master; while it may lack the pixie dust of *Exit West*, its smooth prose brings new life to stale discussions about race and identity.

With her old racist widowed mother as a similar challenge, Oona—who is still mourning the death of her twin brother who passed away too soon from addiction—supports her. The narrative creates new optimism as the number of white people decreases. Anders and Oona continue to connect the broken parts of their family, brick by brick, to enable them to live despite their losses and the destruction of their identities. Even a person as obstinate as Oona's mother can change. While lacking the magic of *Exit West*, *The Last White Man* is another reviving masterpiece from an experienced craftsman; its smooth prose breathes new life into tired conversations about race and identity.

6. Conclusion

The findings of this study reveals that the impact of Postcolonial concerns is portrayed in Hamid's *The Last White Man* beautifully. The issues of racism identity and otherness are discussed by Hamid in *The Last White Man*. The study analyzes different characters from the book *The Last White Man* in the context of postcolonial theory. To conclude, we may argue that *The Last White Man* tackles problems like racism, identity, and otherness. In this analysis, the postcolonial themes in these two books are revealed. All of the study's research questions can be defined by this study. The main themes of the book are identity, love, grief, and transformation. In the book, *The Last White Man*, which was influenced by magic realism, Anders, a white guy, awakens one morning to discover that his skin tone has altered and that he now has an odd appearance. This book's narrative is created in a purposefully simple literary style that allows for practically any speech punctuation.

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