ISSN E: 3006-1466
ISSN P: 3006-1458
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
CJSSR
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
Vol.04 No.01 (2026)

FROM WHITE PRIVILEGE TO IDENTITY CRISIS: A CRITICAL RACE THEORY ANALYSIS OF MOHSIN HAMID'S *THE LAST WHITE MAN*

Mahrukh
Lecturer in English at Alfarid Islamic Model Girls' College
Tahir Rasool Bhatti
Lecturer in English at Gift University

Abstract
Mohsin Hamid's The Last White Man (2022) presents an innovative literary exploration of race by imagining a world in which white individuals gradually awaken with dark skin. Rather than depicting racial transformation as a biological phenomenon, the novel employs magical realism to expose the ideological foundations of whiteness, privilege, and racial hierarchy. This study critically examines the novel through the lens of Critical Race Theory (CRT), focusing on the psychological consequences of losing white privilege and the reconstruction of identity following racial transformation. Using qualitative textual analysis, the research investigates how Hamid dismantles the assumptions of racial superiority through the experiences of Anders and other characters whose identities are destabilized by changes in racial appearance. The findings demonstrate that racial identity in the novel is neither fixed nor biologically determined but socially constructed through historical systems of privilege and exclusion. As white privilege disappears, characters experience anxiety, grief, alienation, and existential uncertainty, revealing the extent to which privilege shapes personal identity and social belonging. Simultaneously, the novel proposes the possibility of ethical transformation by encouraging empathy, mutual recognition, and resistance to racial binaries. By integrating Critical Race Theory with contemporary literary criticism, this article argues that The Last White Man challenges dominant racial ideologies and imagines a post-racial future founded upon shared humanity rather than inherited privilege. The study contributes to contemporary scholarship on race, identity, and post-racial discourse by demonstrating how speculative fiction functions as a powerful medium for interrogating systemic racism and reimagining social justice.

Keywords: Critical Race Theory, Mohsin Hamid, White Privilege, Identity Crisis, Race, Magical Realism, Post-racial Society, Contemporary Fiction

1. Introduction
The question of race remains one of the most enduring concerns in contemporary literature because racial identity continues to influence political institutions, economic opportunities, cultural belonging, and interpersonal relationships across the globe. Although biological conceptions of race have largely been rejected by modern science, race continues to function as a powerful social category through which privilege, discrimination, and inequality are organized. Contemporary fiction increasingly challenges these structures by examining how racial identities are socially produced rather than naturally determined. Among recent literary works, Mohsin Hamid's *The Last White Man* offers one of the most original explorations of race by imagining an unprecedented social phenomenon in which individuals classified as white gradually awaken with dark skin. Instead of presenting racial transformation as a fantasy for entertainment, Hamid uses magical realism as a political and philosophical strategy to expose the instability of racial categories and the invisible mechanisms through which whiteness maintains social authority.

The publication of *The Last White Man* has generated considerable scholarly attention because it departs from traditional narratives of racial discrimination. Rather than depicting the experiences of historically marginalized racial communities alone, the novel shifts analytical attention toward those who occupy positions of racial privilege. The transformation experienced by Anders and other characters forces privileged individuals to confront the psychological, social, and existential consequences of losing the advantages historically associated with whiteness. This reversal enables readers to recognize privilege not as an invisible norm but as a socially constructed position sustained through institutions, cultural narratives, and historical power relations. Consequently, Hamid transforms speculative fiction

ISSN E: 3006-1466
ISSN P: 3006-1458
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
CJSSR
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
Vol.04 No.01 (2026)

into a critical examination of systemic racism, identity politics, and contemporary debates surrounding post-racial societies.

Critical Race Theory provides a particularly valuable framework for examining these issues because it understands racism as an ordinary and structural component of society rather than an exceptional phenomenon produced solely by individual prejudice. Emerging from legal scholarship during the late twentieth century, Critical Race Theory argues that race functions primarily as a social construction designed to maintain unequal distributions of power and privilege. Scholars such as Delgado and Stefancic (2023), Bell (1992), Crenshaw (1991), and Ladson-Billings (2021) argue that racial identities acquire meaning through political institutions, historical narratives, and everyday social practices instead of biological realities. These theoretical assumptions closely correspond with Hamid's fictional universe, where racial transformation reveals the fragility of whiteness and exposes how privilege depends upon collective social recognition rather than physical appearance.

One of the most significant contributions of Hamid's novel lies in its representation of identity crisis following the loss of racial privilege. Identity is frequently understood as a stable psychological category; however, *The Last White Man* demonstrates that personal identity is deeply intertwined with social recognition and systems of dominance. As Anders gradually loses his white identity, he experiences confusion, anxiety, grief, isolation, and emotional disorientation. His psychological struggle illustrates how racial privilege functions not merely as an external social advantage but also as an internalized component of selfhood. The novel therefore extends discussions of race beyond political institutions into questions of psychology, belonging, memory, and existential identity.

Another remarkable aspect of the novel is its challenge to binary understandings of race. Instead of replacing one dominant racial identity with another, Hamid imagines a society in which inherited racial categories gradually lose coherence. This transformation encourages readers to reconsider assumptions regarding racial purity, national identity, and cultural superiority while envisioning possibilities for more inclusive social relationships. Consequently, the novel contributes not only to literary discussions of race but also to broader interdisciplinary debates concerning multiculturalism, migration, globalization, and post-racial futures.

Despite increasing scholarly interest in *The Last White Man*, existing criticism has concentrated predominantly on magical realism, migration, globalization, and postcolonial identity. Comparatively limited attention has been devoted to examining the psychological consequences of losing white privilege through the analytical framework of Critical Race Theory. Existing studies often acknowledge Hamid's critique of racial hierarchy but seldom investigate how identity itself becomes destabilized when privilege is removed. Furthermore, few scholars have systematically connected the novel's representation of existential crisis with broader CRT concepts such as whiteness as property, systemic racism, racial formation, and social construction. This gap limits a comprehensive understanding of the novel's contribution to contemporary racial discourse.

Accordingly, this article argues that *The Last White Man* should be understood not merely as a narrative about racial transformation but as an exploration of how identity is fundamentally produced through systems of privilege. By applying Critical Race Theory to Hamid's novel, this study demonstrates that the loss of whiteness produces profound psychological and social consequences precisely because whiteness has historically functioned as an invisible source of institutional power. The article further contends that Hamid ultimately proposes empathy and shared humanity as alternatives to racial hierarchy, thereby reimagining identity beyond inherited structures of dominance.

Literature Review

ISSN E: 3006-1466
ISSN P: 3006-1458
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
CJSSR
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
Vol.04 No.01 (2026)

The relationship between race and literature has occupied a central position in contemporary literary scholarship because fictional narratives often expose the ideological mechanisms through which racial identities are constructed, maintained, and contested. Contemporary fiction increasingly employs speculative narratives to interrogate the persistence of racism, the politics of identity, and the social consequences of privilege. Rather than treating race as a biological category, recent literary criticism approaches race as a historically contingent and culturally produced system of meaning that organizes access to power, citizenship, and social recognition. Within this intellectual tradition, Mohsin Hamid's *The Last White Man* has emerged as a significant contribution to twenty-first-century discussions of race, identity, and social transformation.

Critical Race Theory has profoundly influenced literary studies by providing conceptual tools for examining how narratives reproduce or resist systemic racism. Originating in legal scholarship through the work of Derrick Bell, Kimberlé Crenshaw, Richard Delgado, and other scholars, CRT argues that racism is embedded within ordinary institutional practices rather than existing only in exceptional acts of prejudice. The theory emphasizes that whiteness operates as an invisible norm associated with privilege, authority, and social legitimacy, while racial minorities frequently encounter structural disadvantages that remain hidden within dominant cultural narratives. Literary critics have increasingly applied these principles to investigate how fiction exposes the cultural production of race and reveals the ideological foundations of racial inequality.

Recent scholarship has also emphasized the psychological dimensions of racial privilege. Studies examining whiteness suggest that privilege often remains invisible to those who possess it because social institutions normalize white experiences as universal. When privilege is challenged or removed, individuals may experience anxiety, defensiveness, resentment, and identity instability. These observations are particularly relevant to Hamid's novel because Anders' transformation illustrates how deeply racial privilege becomes integrated into personal identity. His emotional disorientation demonstrates that whiteness functions not merely as physical appearance but as an institutional and psychological position reinforced through everyday social interactions.

Speculative fiction has become an increasingly influential genre for examining racial politics because it enables writers to imagine alternative social realities capable of revealing ideological assumptions that often remain invisible within ordinary life. Through magical realism and speculative transformation, authors create fictional scenarios that encourage readers to reconsider accepted categories of race, nationality, and identity. Hamid employs this strategy by removing biological explanations altogether and presenting racial transformation as an unexplained collective phenomenon. This narrative decision redirects attention away from scientific causation toward the social meanings attached to racial identity, thereby emphasizing that racism persists because of cultural beliefs rather than biological differences.

Although scholars have acknowledged the novel's engagement with race, migration, and globalization, relatively few studies have concentrated specifically on the psychological consequences of losing white privilege. Existing criticism often interprets the novel as an allegory of multiculturalism or postcolonial identity while paying comparatively less attention to the emotional experiences accompanying racial transformation. Consequently, the intersection between Critical Race Theory and psychological identity remains underdeveloped within current scholarship.

This study addresses that gap by examining how Hamid represents identity crisis as the inevitable consequence of dismantling institutional privilege. Rather than interpreting racial transformation solely as a metaphor for diversity, the article demonstrates that the loss of whiteness destabilizes the social and psychological structures upon which identity has

ISSN E: 3006-1466
ISSN P: 3006-1458
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
CJSSR
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
Vol.04 No.01 (2026)

historically depended. In doing so, the study extends existing literary scholarship by integrating Critical Race Theory with analyses of identity formation, privilege, and psychological transformation.

Research Gap

Current scholarship on *The Last White Man* primarily emphasizes magical realism, migration, globalization, and postcolonial identity. While these perspectives illuminate important aspects of the novel, they often overlook the psychological dimensions of racial transformation and the lived experience of losing white privilege. Existing studies rarely examine how identity becomes destabilized when institutional advantages associated with whiteness disappear. Furthermore, few investigations employ Critical Race Theory systematically to connect the novel's representation of privilege, identity, and social transformation. This article addresses these gaps by foregrounding the psychological consequences of racial transformation and demonstrating how Hamid's narrative critiques whiteness as a socially constructed system of power.

Research Objectives

1. To examine the representation of white privilege in Mohsin Hamid's *The Last White Man* through the framework of Critical Race Theory.
2. To investigate the psychological consequences of racial transformation on the identity of the protagonist, Anders.
3. To analyze how the novel deconstructs whiteness as a socially constructed category rather than a biological reality.
4. To explore Hamid's vision of empathy, shared humanity, and identity reconstruction beyond racial hierarchy.

Research Questions

1. How does *The Last White Man* represent the loss of white privilege through the experiences of Anders?
2. What psychological consequences emerge from racial transformation in the novel?
3. In what ways does Critical Race Theory explain Hamid's critique of whiteness and systemic privilege?
4. How does the novel imagine identity reconstruction beyond conventional racial boundaries?

Theoretical Framework

This study employs **Critical Race Theory (CRT)** as its primary analytical framework to investigate the representation of race, privilege, and identity in Mohsin Hamid's *The Last White Man*. Since its emergence within American legal scholarship during the late twentieth century, Critical Race Theory has expanded beyond jurisprudence to become an influential interdisciplinary framework for analyzing literature, culture, education, sociology, and political discourse. Rather than treating racism as an isolated consequence of individual prejudice, CRT argues that racial inequality is systematically embedded within legal, political, economic, and cultural institutions. Consequently, racial privilege persists because social structures continually reproduce unequal power relations through seemingly ordinary practices.

Derrick Bell's principle of the permanence of racism provides an essential foundation for this analysis. Bell argues that racism constitutes an enduring characteristic of modern societies rather than an occasional deviation from democratic ideals. Although overt racial discrimination may decline, institutional mechanisms frequently reproduce privilege through more subtle forms of exclusion. Hamid's novel reflects this principle by demonstrating that whiteness functions as an invisible social advantage whose significance becomes apparent only after it disappears. Anders' transformation illustrates Bell's argument that privilege often remains unnoticed until institutional benefits are withdrawn.

ISSN E: 3006-1466
ISSN P: 3006-1458
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
CJSSR
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
Vol.04 No.01 (2026)

Kimberlé Crenshaw's contributions to Critical Race Theory further illuminate the novel's treatment of identity. Although Crenshaw is best known for developing the concept of intersectionality, her broader scholarship emphasizes that identities emerge through interconnected systems of power rather than isolated social categories. In *The Last White Man*, racial transformation does not merely alter physical appearance; it disrupts employment, family relationships, emotional security, and social belonging simultaneously. Anders' experience demonstrates that racial identity intersects with class, citizenship, professional status, and psychological stability, producing a multidimensional crisis that extends beyond skin color itself.

Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic argue that race is fundamentally a social construction rather than a biological reality. Biological science has repeatedly demonstrated that racial categories possess no fixed genetic boundaries, yet societies continue to organize privilege according to racial classifications. Hamid's fictional premise embodies this theoretical assumption by refusing to explain the biological cause of transformation. The absence of scientific explanation redirects readers' attention toward society's reactions instead of physical change. Consequently, the novel suggests that race derives its meaning from collective social beliefs rather than immutable biological characteristics.

Another important CRT concept informing this study is Cheryl Harris's theory of **whiteness as property**. Harris argues that whiteness historically functioned as a valuable social asset that granted legal protections, economic opportunities, political authority, and social legitimacy unavailable to marginalized communities. Whiteness therefore operates similarly to property because it provides exclusive rights, institutional advantages, and cultural recognition. Anders unknowingly benefits from these privileges before his transformation. After losing his white appearance, however, he immediately experiences uncertainty regarding social acceptance, personal safety, and professional identity. Hamid thereby illustrates that whiteness possesses value not because of biology but because societies collectively invest it with institutional power.

Critical Race Theory also emphasizes the importance of **counter-storytelling**, a concept developed by Delgado to challenge dominant narratives that normalize racial inequality. Counter-stories reveal perspectives ignored by mainstream discourse and expose assumptions that privilege particular racial identities. Hamid's narrative functions as an extended counter-story because it reverses traditional racial expectations. Instead of representing racial minorities as objects of discrimination alone, the novel invites privileged readers to imagine the emotional consequences of losing racial advantage. This reversal destabilizes inherited assumptions regarding normality, belonging, and social hierarchy.

Collectively, these CRT principles provide a comprehensive analytical framework for understanding Hamid's novel. Rather than interpreting racial transformation as magical fantasy, this article examines the novel as a critique of institutional privilege and an exploration of identity formation within systems of racial power.

Methodology

This research adopts a qualitative interpretive methodology grounded in textual analysis. The study does not seek to quantify literary elements but instead investigates the meanings generated through narrative structure, symbolism, characterization, and dialogue. Qualitative textual analysis is particularly appropriate because *The Last White Man* employs magical realism and speculative fiction to explore abstract social concepts such as race, privilege, identity, and belonging.

The primary data consist exclusively of Mohsin Hamid's novel *The Last White Man* (2022). Passages concerning Anders' transformation, interpersonal relationships, psychological responses, and changing social interactions constitute the principal corpus analyzed in this

ISSN E: 3006-1466
ISSN P: 3006-1458
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
CJSSR
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
Vol.04 No.01 (2026)

article. Secondary sources include scholarly literature on Critical Race Theory, whiteness studies, identity formation, magical realism, and contemporary racial discourse.

The analytical procedure follows three stages. First, textual passages illustrating racial transformation and identity crisis are identified through close reading. Second, these passages are interpreted using concepts derived from Critical Race Theory, including social construction, systemic racism, whiteness as property, and counter-storytelling. Finally, thematic patterns are synthesized to explain how Hamid critiques racial hierarchy while imagining possibilities for identity reconstruction beyond inherited privilege.

Rather than searching for authorial intention, this methodology focuses upon relationships between literary representation and broader social structures. Consequently, interpretation remains grounded in textual evidence while drawing upon Critical Race Theory to explain the ideological significance of narrative events.

Analysis and Discussion

White Privilege as an Invisible Social Identity

One of the most significant achievements of *The Last White Man* lies in its exposure of white privilege as an invisible social position rather than a consciously recognized advantage. Before Anders undergoes racial transformation, neither he nor the surrounding society explicitly discusses whiteness. It functions silently as the normative condition through which everyday life proceeds without interruption. Hamid intentionally represents privilege as ordinary because systemic power rarely announces itself openly. Individuals benefiting from privilege often perceive their experiences as natural rather than historically constructed.

Critical Race Theory argues that privilege acquires its greatest strength precisely because it remains invisible. Social institutions normalize the experiences of dominant groups while portraying alternative experiences as exceptional. Anders initially moves through professional spaces, neighborhoods, and public institutions without questioning whether his racial identity influences these interactions. His confidence, security, and expectations of acceptance emerge not solely from personal qualities but from occupying a socially privileged racial position.

Hamid demonstrates that privilege is recognized most clearly at the moment of its disappearance. When Anders awakens transformed, he immediately experiences uncertainty regarding ordinary activities that previously required no conscious reflection. Everyday routines become psychologically exhausting because the assumptions supporting them have collapsed. Simple interactions acquire new emotional intensity as Anders becomes increasingly aware of being observed, judged, or misunderstood. The transformation therefore exposes privilege by making visible the institutional protections that whiteness had previously provided.

Importantly, Hamid avoids portraying Anders as personally responsible for historical systems of racial inequality. Instead, the novel distinguishes between individual morality and structural privilege. Anders is neither exceptionally racist nor overtly discriminatory. Nevertheless, he unconsciously benefits from institutions organized around whiteness. This distinction reflects Critical Race Theory's central argument that racism operates primarily through structures rather than isolated personal intentions. Consequently, the novel critiques systems instead of merely condemning individuals.

The Psychological Collapse of Racial Certainty

The disappearance of white privilege initiates a profound psychological crisis for Anders. Rather than celebrating transformation as liberation, he experiences fear, disbelief, denial, and emotional instability. These reactions illustrate that identity extends far beyond physical appearance. Throughout his life, Anders has internalized assumptions regarding who he is, how others perceive him, and where he belongs within society. Once racial identity changes, these assumptions become impossible to maintain.

ISSN E: 3006-1466
ISSN P: 3006-1458
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
CJSSR
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
Vol.04 No.01 (2026)

Initially, Anders responds with disbelief. He repeatedly examines his appearance, hoping that the transformation represents temporary illusion rather than permanent reality. This denial reflects the first stage of identity disruption because his previous self-understanding remains incompatible with visible change. Hamid carefully emphasizes silence, hesitation, and fragmented emotional responses to illustrate that psychological transformation often precedes intellectual comprehension.

As Anders gradually accepts physical change, anxiety replaces denial. He begins anticipating negative reactions from colleagues, neighbors, and strangers even before direct discrimination occurs. This anticipatory fear reveals the internalization of racial hierarchy. Although his personality remains unchanged, he recognizes that society frequently interprets bodies before evaluating individual character. Consequently, he experiences insecurity not because his identity has fundamentally changed but because society now assigns different meanings to the same individual.

Critical Race Theory explains this phenomenon by emphasizing that racial identity acquires significance through social interpretation rather than biological essence. Hamid's narrative repeatedly demonstrates that Anders' memories, values, relationships, and aspirations remain remarkably consistent following transformation. The only substantial difference involves society's perception of his body. This narrative strategy dismantles biological understandings of race while highlighting the ideological mechanisms through which privilege operates.

Psychologically, Anders experiences a profound sense of mourning. The object of grief is not merely skin color but an entire system of expectations associated with whiteness. His confidence, predictability, and social certainty gradually dissolve because they depended upon institutional recognition. Hamid thereby illustrates that privilege becomes integrated into personal identity through years of unexamined social reinforcement. Losing privilege therefore resembles losing an essential component of the self, producing confusion comparable to bereavement.

Furthermore, Anders' emotional isolation intensifies because language itself proves inadequate for describing unprecedented transformation. Friends struggle to understand his experience, while public discourse increasingly reduces complex identities to simplified racial categories. Hamid suggests that systemic racism damages communication by limiting society's ability to recognize shared humanity beyond inherited classifications. Anders' silence therefore symbolizes not only personal confusion but also the broader inability of racialized societies to imagine identities independent of established hierarchies.

Anders and Oona: Love Beyond Racial Categories

One of the most compelling dimensions of *The Last White Man* is Hamid's portrayal of the relationship between Anders and Oona. While the novel primarily interrogates race and privilege, it also explores the possibility that authentic human relationships can transcend socially constructed racial boundaries. Their relationship functions as a counter-narrative to the fear, prejudice, and polarization surrounding the mysterious transformations. Rather than allowing racial difference to determine emotional attachment, Hamid presents love as an ethical force capable of resisting socially imposed categories.

At the beginning of the novel, Anders' relationship with Oona appears relatively ordinary, reflecting the comfort and predictability associated with his previous social identity. However, after Anders awakens with dark skin, the dynamics of their relationship inevitably change. The transformation introduces uncertainty, not because Anders becomes a different person internally, but because the surrounding society interprets his body differently. Hamid deliberately distinguishes between external appearance and internal identity, encouraging readers to question the assumption that race defines the essence of an individual.

ISSN E: 3006-1466
ISSN P: 3006-1458
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
CJSSR
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
Vol.04 No.01 (2026)

Initially, Oona also experiences confusion. Her response reflects the broader societal inability to separate physical appearance from personal identity. Yet Hamid avoids portraying Oona as simply prejudiced or intolerant. Instead, her hesitation illustrates how deeply racial classifications are embedded within social consciousness. Like many individuals living within racialized societies, she must renegotiate assumptions that have long appeared natural and unquestionable.

As the narrative progresses, Oona gradually recognizes that Anders' transformation has altered neither his moral character nor his emotional commitment. His compassion, vulnerability, memories, and aspirations remain intact despite the change in appearance. This realization represents one of the novel's central philosophical arguments: identity cannot be reduced to biological markers or inherited racial classifications. Hamid thereby rejects essentialist understandings of race while affirming the continuity of human personality beneath socially constructed differences.

Critical Race Theory provides an illuminating perspective on this relationship. CRT argues that dominant societies frequently assign moral and intellectual characteristics to racial categories, thereby obscuring the individuality of human beings. Hamid dismantles this ideological process by allowing readers to observe that Anders remains fundamentally the same person throughout the transformation. The only significant alteration occurs within society's perception of him. Consequently, prejudice emerges not from biological reality but from socially produced systems of meaning.

Their evolving relationship also demonstrates that emotional intimacy requires the recognition of shared humanity rather than racial similarity. Oona's acceptance symbolizes an ethical transformation that parallels the broader social transformation occurring throughout the novel. Instead of reinforcing racial binaries, Hamid proposes empathy, vulnerability, and mutual recognition as foundations for authentic human relationships. Love therefore becomes an act of resistance against racial hierarchy because it refuses to accept socially imposed divisions as natural or inevitable.

Furthermore, Hamid intentionally avoids presenting their relationship as simplistic optimism. External social tensions continue to influence both characters, illustrating that individual acceptance alone cannot dismantle institutional racism. Nevertheless, the relationship represents a hopeful possibility that meaningful interpersonal connections can survive even when established racial identities collapse. In this sense, Anders and Oona function not merely as romantic partners but as symbolic figures illustrating the ethical potential of post-racial coexistence.

Identity Reconstruction Beyond Whiteness

Perhaps the most significant contribution of *The Last White Man* lies in its exploration of identity reconstruction following the collapse of racial privilege. Rather than concluding with despair or irreversible fragmentation, Hamid gradually shifts the narrative toward adaptation, resilience, and ethical renewal. Although Anders initially experiences profound psychological disorientation, he slowly begins reconstructing his sense of self independently of inherited racial privilege.

This process reflects an important insight within Critical Race Theory. If race is socially constructed, then identities shaped by racial privilege are also historically contingent rather than permanent. Anders' transformation exposes the instability of categories that previously appeared natural. His subsequent adaptation demonstrates that identity can be reimagined beyond socially inherited systems of dominance.

Initially, Anders attempts to preserve elements of his previous identity. He hopes to maintain familiar routines and relationships despite the transformation. However, these efforts prove increasingly difficult because social institutions continue interpreting his body according to

ISSN E: 3006-1466
ISSN P: 3006-1458
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
CJSSR
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
Vol.04 No.01 (2026)

established racial expectations. This tension forces Anders to confront the possibility that identity cannot depend exclusively upon external recognition.

Gradually, however, Anders begins redefining himself through ethical relationships rather than institutional privilege. His developing awareness of vulnerability enables him to recognize experiences previously invisible during his privileged existence. Fear, uncertainty, exclusion, and social anxiety become sources of empathy rather than resentment. Hamid suggests that suffering may generate ethical insight by revealing shared aspects of the human condition that transcend racial classifications.

The novel also critiques conventional understandings of masculinity and social success. Before transformation, Anders' confidence derived partly from institutional recognition associated with whiteness. Afterward, traditional markers of authority become unstable, compelling him to construct self-worth through personal integrity rather than social dominance. This shift represents a profound ethical transformation because identity becomes grounded in character rather than privilege.

Hamid's narrative therefore rejects both biological determinism and cultural essentialism. Race neither disappears completely nor remains the defining characteristic of human existence. Instead, racial identity becomes one historical dimension among many aspects of individual experience. This nuanced position distinguishes the novel from simplistic post-racial narratives that merely deny the continuing effects of racism. Hamid acknowledges historical injustice while simultaneously imagining possibilities for more inclusive forms of social belonging.

The reconstruction of identity is equally significant at the collective level. As increasing numbers of individuals experience transformation, rigid racial classifications gradually lose coherence. Societies accustomed to organizing power through visible racial distinctions encounter profound uncertainty. Institutions built upon assumptions of racial hierarchy struggle to maintain previous forms of legitimacy. Hamid thereby illustrates that systemic change requires not only legal reforms but also transformations in collective imagination.

Identity reconstruction ultimately emerges as both a personal and political process. Individual psychological adaptation intersects with broader institutional changes, demonstrating that liberation from racial hierarchy requires simultaneous transformation of consciousness and social structures. This dual emphasis reflects Critical Race Theory's insistence that meaningful justice involves structural reform as well as cultural reorientation.

Discussion

The analysis demonstrates that *The Last White Man* should be interpreted as a sophisticated literary interrogation of whiteness, privilege, and identity rather than merely as speculative fiction concerning racial transformation. Hamid employs magical realism not to escape political reality but to expose ideological assumptions that ordinarily remain hidden within everyday social life. By reversing conventional racial expectations, the novel enables readers to perceive whiteness as a historically constructed position of institutional privilege rather than a neutral human norm.

One of the study's principal findings concerns the invisibility of privilege. Before transformation, Anders rarely reflects upon the social advantages associated with whiteness because these advantages appear natural and universal. Only after losing racial privilege does he recognize the institutional protections that previously shaped his daily existence. This narrative strategy strongly supports Critical Race Theory's argument that dominant forms of power become most visible when they are disrupted.

The research further demonstrates that racial identity possesses profound psychological significance. Anders' anxiety, grief, and existential uncertainty reveal that identity develops through continuous interaction between individual self-perception and collective social

ISSN E: 3006-1466
ISSN P: 3006-1458
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
CJSSR
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
Vol.04 No.01 (2026)

recognition. Hamid therefore expands discussions of race beyond political institutions by examining the emotional consequences of structural inequality.

Another significant finding concerns Hamid's rejection of biological conceptions of race. Throughout the novel, physical transformation leaves personality, memory, morality, and emotional capacity fundamentally unchanged. The dramatic alterations occur primarily within social perception rather than individual essence. This distinction reinforces Critical Race Theory's understanding of race as a social construction maintained through institutional practices rather than biological realities.

The analysis also suggests that Hamid offers neither naïve optimism nor complete pessimism regarding post-racial futures. Instead, he proposes that genuine transformation requires ethical reconstruction grounded in empathy, vulnerability, and mutual recognition. Individual relationships such as that between Anders and Oona symbolize possibilities for human solidarity, while persistent social tensions remind readers that structural inequalities cannot disappear automatically.

From a literary perspective, *The Last White Man* contributes significantly to contemporary global fiction by integrating magical realism with political philosophy and Critical Race Theory. Hamid demonstrates that speculative literature can engage pressing social issues while simultaneously challenging readers' assumptions regarding race, identity, and justice.

Implications of the Study

This study has several theoretical, literary, and social implications.

From a theoretical perspective, it demonstrates the continuing relevance of Critical Race Theory for contemporary literary criticism. The framework provides powerful conceptual tools for examining how fiction represents institutional privilege, racial identity, and systemic inequality.

From a literary perspective, the research contributes to emerging scholarship on Mohsin Hamid by highlighting the psychological dimensions of racial transformation rather than focusing exclusively on migration, globalization, or magical realism.

Socially, the findings encourage readers to recognize privilege as a structural rather than individual phenomenon. By exposing the instability of racial categories, Hamid invites reflection upon contemporary debates concerning multiculturalism, migration, diversity, and social justice.

Educationally, the article may also assist university instructors teaching courses in postcolonial literature, race studies, Critical Race Theory, and contemporary fiction by illustrating how literary narratives encourage critical reflection on institutional inequality.

Conclusion

Mohsin Hamid's *The Last White Man* offers one of the most innovative literary explorations of race in contemporary fiction. Through the extraordinary premise of universal racial transformation, the novel dismantles biological understandings of race while exposing the institutional foundations of whiteness and privilege. Applying Critical Race Theory reveals that Hamid's narrative is fundamentally concerned with the relationship between identity and systems of power rather than physical appearance itself.

The analysis demonstrates that Anders' psychological crisis results from the disappearance of institutional privilege rather than merely from altered skin color. His experiences of grief, anxiety, isolation, and identity fragmentation reveal the extent to which privilege shapes both personal identity and social belonging. Simultaneously, his gradual adaptation illustrates that identity can be reconstructed through empathy, ethical responsibility, and shared humanity rather than inherited racial hierarchy.

The novel therefore challenges readers to reconsider deeply embedded assumptions regarding race, belonging, and social difference. By exposing whiteness as a socially constructed system

ISSN E: 3006-1466
ISSN P: 3006-1458
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
CJSSR
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
Vol.04 No.01 (2026)

of power rather than a natural category, Hamid contributes significantly to contemporary discussions of racial justice and post-racial imagination.

Ultimately, *The Last White Man* does not propose the elimination of difference but rather the transformation of relationships through recognition of common humanity. In doing so, it affirms literature's enduring capacity to question ideological certainties and to imagine more equitable futures.

References

Bell, D. (1992). *Faces at the bottom of the well: The permanence of racism*. Basic Books.

Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color. *Stanford Law Review, 43*(6), 1241–1299.

Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. (2023). *Critical race theory: An introduction* (4th ed.). New York University Press.

Hall, S. (1996). Who needs identity? In S. Hall & P. du Gay (Eds.), *Questions of cultural identity* (pp. 1–17). Sage.

Hamid, M. (2022). *The Last White Man*. Riverhead Books.

Harris, C. I. (1993). Whiteness as property. *Harvard Law Review, 106*(8), 1707–1791.

hooks, b. (1992). *Black looks: Race and representation*. South End Press.

Ladson-Billings, G. (2021). Critical race theory—What it is not! In J. A. Banks (Ed.), *The Routledge international companion to multicultural education* (pp. 35–47). Routledge.

Morrison, T. (1992). *Playing in the dark: Whiteness and the literary imagination*. Harvard University Press.

Omi, M., & Winant, H. (2015). *Racial formation in the United States* (3rd ed.). Routledge.