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### Voicing The Unvoiced: An Interplay of Magical Realism and The Other in Hamid's *The Last White Man*

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Original Article

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#### Abstract

Magical realism integrates fantastical elements with realistic settings, which enables the writers to voice the unvoiced marginalized communities and challenge the prevalent narratives. The current study aims to investigate Hamid's *The Last White Man* (2022) from Faris's (2004) perspective of magical realism. The study further aims to explore the role of magical realism in presenting the "Other" in the novel. Fanon's (2008) views about the "Other" are considered to investigate the role of magical realism in presenting the "Other." The study is qualitative, applying a purposive sampling technique for data collection. Greenham's (2018) close reading technique is used for data analysis. The findings of the study illustrate that Hamid's *The Last White Man* depicts all five elements i.e., irreducible elements, strong description of phenomenal, unsettling doubts, merging of realms and disruption of space and identity in the novel. Hamid uses these elements as a useful tool to represent the "Other" and the psychological and social implications associated with the "Other". Other characters (friends, relatives, neighbors, and colleagues) in the novel became enemies with the transformation of color from white to brown. Peace and brotherhood lead to discrimination, injustice, suicide, violence, armed conflict, and war. The study concludes that mere skin color might not be considered the sole criterion for racial supremacy and that all humans are equal irrespective of their color.

#### Introduction

Magical realism is used as a literary tool which blends fantastical elements with realistic settings that allows the writers to criticize social injustices and challenge dominant narratives to give voice to marginalized communities (Slemon, 1988; Faris, 2004; Myrick, 2010; Hakobyan, 2024) and those who have been silenced (Abdullah, 2020). According to Faris (2004), "Magical realism combines realism and fantastical elements so that the marvelous seems to grow organically within the ordinary, blurring the distinction between them" (p. 1). She also asserts that

magical realism is a significant mode of expression globally, especially in postcolonial cultures, because it gives a platform for marginalized voices and traditions within the text. It enables these voices to flourish and create significant literary masterpieces. Similarly, Slemon (1988) proposes that magical realism in literature appears to be closely associated with living on the margins, conveying the concept of resistance to a vast imperial center and its totalizing system.

This genre of magical realism is effective particularly for writers of colors and feminist voices, allowing them to convey their complex identities and histories which are ignored and overlooked, drawing them into the mainstream narratives to make them widely heard and understood in society (Faris, 2002; Gore, 2017; Vogtman, 2023). Faris (2004) notes that because of its unique characteristics, function and narrative style, magical realism creates spaces for empowerment and activism, addressing the themes of oppression and resistance in society. Researchers have conducted studies where they have identified how authors have used magical realism to represent the struggles of oppressions; and social injustices; and have addressed the socio-political struggles and historical traumas of oppressed groups. Arva (2011) and Jansen (2013) investigate that magical realism is used to critique social injustices and political oppression in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, while Conniff (1990) studies historical cycle of violence and exploitation experienced by Latin American societies. Wall (2020) and Thompson (2024) explore how magical realism is employed to highlight and challenge the political and patriarchal oppression, gender inequality and the pursuit of social justice during the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Chile as presented in *The House of Spirits*. Abdullah (2020), Bhardwaj and Menon (2023), and Zhang (2024) point out that magical realism is used as a narrative strategy to address historical traumas such as colonization and traumatic legacy of slavery in *Beloved*.

Faris (2004) states that magical realism has developed in the indeterminate space within colonial encounters and is a place of hybridity. This hybrid nature of magical realism creates a strong sense of difference and otherness in a story. The irreducible aspects in its texts create elements of surprise and unpredictability, focused on destabilizing the established order and authority structures, creating space for new voices to emerge as the mainstream moves forward. She argues that magical realism and the "Other" are closely related elements because the traditional narratives often ignore them or misrepresent it.

'Other,' Staszak (2008) states, is a person who belongs to a marginalized group, is seen as inferior, and may face discrimination from the dominant group. The dominant group is the one that considers their values superior to the values of the marginalized groups. The 'Other' also refers to individuals of non-white culture living in a society viewed as less civilized than the one inhabited by white individuals (Given, 2008). Moreover, the concept of 'Other' refers to individuals or groups, marginalized by imperial discourse, recognized for their difference from the center, and became the subject of expected dominance by the imperial self by the process called as othering (Ashcroft et al., 2013). Crang (2013) describes othering as a process by which identities are established in an unequal relationship. Similarly, Powell and Menendian (2016) define othering as it is a process through which certain groups of people are marginalized and treated unfairly based on their identities such as race, religion, culture, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, disability, sexual orientation or skin tone.

Otherness is a multifaceted term which remained the center of focus across various cultures and disciplines including literature, cultural studies, philosophy, and sociology. It combines the ways in which individuals or societies perceive and defines those who are different from them, leading to the dichotomy of "us" vs "them" or "them" vs "others". According to Ahmad (1992), the concept of otherness came from postcolonial theory which deals with cultures and identities in the light of colonialism. *Orientalism* (1978) by Edward Said shed light on the process of otherness through which the West regarded the East as "Other" to justify their colonial occupation and domination. Thomas-Olalde and Velho (2011) refer to othering as an integral concept of

postcolonial theory and state that it has become an essential for critically evaluate the concept of racism. Otherness distinguishes between the dominant and subjugated things, views and concepts. They said that othering is employed to talk about the racialization and stereotyping. Moreover, Jain (2023) refers to otherness as the result of discursive process by which a dominant in-group (Us, the self) constructs one or many dominant out-groups (Them, Other) by stigmatizing a difference – real or imagined- presented as a negation of identity and thus a motive for potential discrimination.

Mohsin Hamid is a prominent British-Pakistani novelist who has written five novels along with a collection of essays. These include the international bestsellers and booker prize shortlisted *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007) and *Exit West* (2017), as well as *Moth Smoke* (2000), *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia* (2013), and *The Last White Man* (2022). The collection of essays is named as *Discontent and its Civilization* (2014). His books are awarded with various prizes, translated into different languages and adapted for cinema and film. The current study tries to investigate the magical realistic elements as presented by Faris (2004) in Hamid's *The Last White Man* (2022) and the relationship between the Faris (2004) magical realist elements of the novel and the "Others" as proposed by Fanon (2008). The study highlights not only the representation of magical realist elements but also presents an in-depth analysis of how the "Others" are represented with the help of magical realism. A realist situation of subaltern other is taken by Hamid in the novel and is presented in a fantastical way to illustrate how this "Other" is presented in society. Further, the imaginary situation presents the established reasons for discrimination and otherness prevalent in society.

The existing literature on *The Last White Man* illustrates that several researches have been conducted on the novel under study. Chaman et al. (2022) explored the novel to address psycho-social problems faced by black people. Ashraf et al. (2023) had conducted a study through the lens of postmodernism, while Manzoor and Singh (2023) examined the novel through the perspective of racism and identity crises. Zahra et al. (2024) studied it from postcolonial perspective and Mastoi (2024) applied Bhabha's concept of hybridity, mimicry, and ambivalence. A pilot study of the novel, *The Last White Man* (2022) illustrates that magical realist elements exist in the novel. However, Amir et al. (2024) conducted a study in *The Last White Man* (2022) focusing on how the novel is shaped by magic, realism and character metamorphosis. This study utilized a different theoretical model of Faris (1995) and investigated identity issues in the politics of presentation of characters. The current study employs Faris' (2004) new model of magical realism along with Fanon's (2008) concept of the "Other". This research study traces the magical realist elements in the novel and the interplay between the magical realist aspects of the novel and the "Other" presented by Faris (2004) and Fanon (2008) respectively in Hamid's *The Last White Man* (2022).

### **Methodology and Conceptual Framework**

The current study is based on a qualitative research method and purposive sampling technique is used to select the text from the novel. To carry out the study, the selected novel *The Last White Man* is used as a primary source of data collection. The researcher thoroughly read the text of the novel to identify the elements of magical realism and the "Other" through Greenham's (2018) close reading technique. Greenham suggests six contexts of close reading. These contexts include the semantic context, the syntactic context, the thematic context, the iterative or repetition context, the generic context and the adversarial context.

The concept of magical realism as presented by Faris (2004) and the "Other" as proposed by Fanon (2008) together provide a critical lens for analyzing Hamid's *The Last White Man* (2022). This study tries to find out Faris (2004) five elements of magical realism in Hamid's *The Last White Man* (2022) and to explore the role of magical realism in presenting the "Other."

Faris (2004) characterized five elements of magical realism. These elements include; irreducible elements of magic, strong description of a phenomenal world, unsettling doubts, merging of different realms, and disruptions of time, space and identity. Hence, a text containing these elements will be classified as a magical realist text.

According to Fanon (2008), a black man is never accepted as a complete man and is believed to be the "Other" therefore he expresses the desires of the black man "The black man wants to be white." (p. 12). Fanon (2008) also states that "White men consider themselves superior to black men" (p.12) and at another place he says that "a white man in a colony has never felt inferior in any respect.... and it has never occurred to a single black to consider himself superior to a member of the white minority" (p.92-93). Additionally, Fanon (2008) states that "there is no forgiveness when one who claims a superiority falls below the standard" (p. 25).

According to Fanon (2008), the process of othering is both physical and psychological where the society considers an identity as strange and unsafe and hence it justifies hating them. He also states that "Hate is not inborn; it must be constantly cultivated, to be brought into being, in conflict with recognized guilt complexes. Hate demands existence and he who hates must show his hate in appropriate actions and behavior". Moreover, Fanon (2008) claims that Otherness is socially constructed which relies on race. Fanon (2008) further states that this biasness and rejection renders the sense of inferiority complex in the "Others". This inferiority complex leads to the social alienation of marginalized people. This conceptual basis in the novel showcases the racial changes and the resultant responses, provides for deep understanding.

### **Analysis and Discussion**

This section comprises of analysis and discussion of the data collected through Greenham's (2018) close reading technique from Hamid's "*The Last White Man*" to answer these questions that what aspects of Faris' magical realism does exist in Mohsin Hamid's "*The Last White Man*" and what role does magical realism play in the presentation of the "Other" in the novel under study.

### **Irreducible Element in *The Last White Man***

An irreducible element refers to an occurrence that cannot be explained by the fundamental principles of the universe, including logic, conventional wisdom, or established knowledge. As a result, readers struggle to interpret the available evidence, making it challenging to determine the true nature of events and characters in such narratives (Faris, 2004).

Now, considering this element of magical realism in the context of the novel, *The Last White Man* (2022), the following instances suggest its presence in the novel. The irreducible element alters the characters' identities and marks them as "Other" in the narrative.

In *The Last White Man*, irreducible element can be seen when the main character, Anders, wakes up one morning and sees himself transformed into dark color. This line from *The Last White Man*, "One morning Anders, a white man, woke up to find he had turned a deep and undeniable brown" (Hamid, 2022, p.9), exhibits the presence of an irreducible element of magical realism because turning Anders, the protagonist, from white color to brown color is illogical in nature. This change of color from white to brown marks Anders the "Other" in the narrative as he is not a white man anymore and according to the explanation of the "Other" it is normally used for marginalized people or groups. The term "Other" as explained by Given (2008) typically refers to an individual of non-white culture living in a society viewed as less civilized than the society inhabited by white individuals. Hence, the narrative suggests that, in addition to presenting the irreducible element, its impact is also evident in the emergence of the "Other," embodied by Anders.

According to Faris (2004), irreducible elements that are fascinatingly embedded within the realistic settings draw our attention to the central issues in a text (Faris, 2004; Rehman, Hussain, Khan, & Ullah, 2022). The irreducible element in *The Last White Man* refers to the transformation

of Anders skin color allows Hamid to explore the concept of the “Other” in the text. As Anders' skin suddenly shifts from white to a distinct brown, it exposes the ways in which society perceives and reacts to those deemed as “Other.” According to Fanon (2008), the process of othering is physical as well as psychological. When individuals fall from their dominant status and become the “Other,” the society justifies itself by ostracizing them, calling them strange, unsafe and hence it validates hating them. As Anders changed color results in the loss of his dominant status, and he faces the injustices of the society. This transformation serves as a powerful reflection of racial bias and the deep-seated prejudices linked to skin color.

In the same manner, the conversation between Oona and her mother pinpoints the irreducible element of magical realism. Her mother mentioned that people were changing. When Oona questioned who she meant, her mother explained that it was happening everywhere, emphasizing that it was their “Our people” (Hamid, 2022, p.21). It is observed in the response of Oona's mother in which “Our people” stands for the white people that they change all over the town. Similarly, reports emerge from around the country that white people are changed to dark color. The reports are initially disregarded and mocked “but later picked up by reliable voices, as a question to be confirmed, being confirmed, apparently happening” (Hamid, 2022, p.29). The characters mocking and disregarding reports about the change of people from white to brown shows that change is illogical in nature. The phrase “apparently happening” suggests the existence of irreducible elements i.e. people metamorphose into brown color from white color.

The change of color is like a pandemic in the novel rapidly affecting individuals and disrupting the social fabric. “Anders wandered online, and in town it seemed people were continuing to change, white people becoming dark” (Hamid, 2022, p.65). News of these changes circulates swiftly through mainstream and social media, drawing widespread attention and fueling public anxiety. The novel presents this phenomenon as both uncontrollable and inevitable, reinforcing the idea that no external force can halt the shift from white to dark. In the same way, Anders notices a continuous change as more and more people in the town are beyond human control. “In town sporadic bursts of violence persisted, but people continued to change, more and more, no matter what anyone did” (Hamid, 2022, p.74). The fear and hostility that arise mirror real-world instances of racial discrimination and ethnic violence.

Fanon (2008) is of the view that when the decline of a person of dominant status occurs to a less dominant status, the person is liable to be sidelined by society. In the context of the novel, those who were once considered equal members of society are now excluded, persecuted, and even killed, not because of a change in their character or actions, but simply due to an uncontrollable transformation of their physical appearance. This reflects how deeply ingrained racial biases can escalate into extreme violence, even when the fundamental humanity of individuals remains unchanged.

The unexplainable transformation that begins with Anders and spreads to the entire town ultimately concludes with Oona's mother, marking a complete shift in the novel's exploration of identity, belonging, and societal constructs. “Oona's mother was among the last in town to change, and there was dread in it for her” (Hamid, 2022, p.102). She is the last one in the town to change from white to dark color and this change of color brings on fear in her. The dread of Oona's mother highlights the loss of the privileged status of being white. Oona's mother holds a racist view in *The Last White Man* and the fear comes from that deep-rooted prejudice against people with dark color. The word “dread” also shows the human responses to an irreducible transformation, like a person who goes to sleep one way and wakes up completely changed the next day.

### **A Strong Description of Phenomenal World in *The Last White Man***

The second characteristic of magical realism is its detailed portrayal of the tangible world. According to Faris (2004), this element represents the realistic aspect in a magical realist literature, setting it apart from fantasy and allegory. A strong depiction of the phenomenal world involves a

rich and vivid depiction of everyday life. Within this realm, some events align with reality, supported by sensory details and explainable through natural laws. At the same time, it also encompasses magical occurrences that defy logic, traditional beliefs, and commonly accepted knowledge (Faris, 2004).

The setting of the novel is realistic in nature and the transformation of the characters to dark color, is described in everyday realistic world. The term “everyday world” recounts our routines and refers to things such as eating, sleeping, household chores and interaction with loved ones, in the normal tangible world that is perceived through the senses.

Now, considering this attribute of magical realism in the context of *The Last White Man* the following description of the text suggests that the irreducible element occurred in a realistically detailed setting where the relationships, struggles and norms look familiar. The setting of the novel is in an unnamed town where ordinary and extraordinary events take place.

In *The Last White Man*, Mohsin Hamid employs magical realism by introducing an extraordinary event—Anders waking up with a completely different skin color—within a world governed by the familiar laws of reality. According to Faris’s (2004) framework of magical realism, one of its key characteristics is the presence of a phenomenal world. It means that the narrative remains anchored in a setting that follows the natural rules of existence. This can be seen when Anders wakes up, reaches for his phone, checking it and looking in the mirror, highlighting a normal and routine action.

The writer establishes a realistic and ordinary setting by portraying the occupation of the characters in a straightforward and clear manner. The sentence, "Anders worked at a gym and Oona taught yoga" (Hamid, 2022, p.19), presents them as characters that partake in ordinary, mundane occupations in the community. The gym and yoga center are physical, recognizable sites where individuals take part in physical exercise and well-being activities, thus establishing the feeling of normalcy in the novel. Similarly, Anders's father's occupation is established by the sentence, "Anders's father was a construction foreman" (Hamid, 2022, p.26), which also establishes a realistic setting. His occupation is an indication of hard work and responsibility, an ordinary thing with individuals who work in similar lines.

Walking is another simple activity of a common tangible world such as narrated by the author “Oona and Anders went for a walk” (Hamid, 2022, p.42) and “walking alongside a stream” (Hamid, 2022, p.43) add to a sensory element of the phenomenal world. Also, the scene where Anders prepares breakfast, describes a common household environment “Anders prepared breakfast and Oona took pleasure in watching him cook.” (Hamid, 2022, p.60). Oona enjoys watching Anders prepare breakfast, hence, illustrating human emotions and connections that are essential to the phenomenal world. “On the drive back the sun was shining as though nothing had happened and there was no snow on the ground and there were hints of green here and there and it was a normal day that could have been almost a nice day” (Hamid, 2022, p.106). The inclusion of natural elements enhances the authenticity of the narrative. The above passages describe the picturesque normal day of the ordinary world.

The above passages collectively construct a “Phenomenal World” where the characters’ descriptions, dialogues, routines, professions, activities, events and ordinary experiences are vividly depicted. The authenticity of the “Phenomenal World” is enhanced through the inclusion of natural elements in the narrative.

This element of phenomenal world also illustrates how the irreducible element, transformation of characters to dark color, becomes part of the everyday and how society reacts to the transformed individuals in *The Last White Man*, and marks their status as the “Other.”

The following instances show societal reactions in the phenomenal world when characters are made “Others” through an irreducible element and how the irreducible element becomes part of everyday life.

These texts illustrate the societal reaction toward those who are perceived as the “Other” and marginalized in a phenomenal world. “In the parking lot of the grocery store he saw someone look at him, then look away, and it happened again in the dairy aisle” (Hamid, 2022, p.13). Anders experiences a flicker of distaste and hostility twice in the parking lot and dairy aisle from people around him, highlighting the societal discomfort toward those who are different. “He recognized the clerk who scanned his purchases but the clerk did not recognize him... he did not acknowledge Anders’s mumbled thanks and goodbye” (Hamid, 2022, p.13). The clerk of the grocery store also treats him with indifference who fails to recognize him and does not acknowledge Anders’ thanks and goodbye. This indifference shows a type of social invisibility that is often faced by the “Others” and marginalized individuals in everyday world. The passage also reflects that Anders perceives these reactions in an ordinary setting of a grocery store due to his transformation that underscores his status as “Other.” These instances from the novel also indicates the presence of Fanon’s (2008) view of communal hatred towards the “Other.” Fanon argues that communal hatred is not instinctive but socially constructed which can be observed in the context of the novel.

These lines “his boss looked him over” and said, “I would have killed myself.” As he sees Anders change color, and upon listening he shrugs, unsure how to reply, as his boss adds, “If it was me” (Hamid, 2022, p.23). These words highlight the community’s reaction to the extraordinary transformation. These remarks of his boss about preferring death over transformation illustrate the extreme prejudice and devaluation of the “Other.”

Similarly, as explained by Fanon (2008), societal hatred can be seen against the marginalized and ostracized individuals, exercised through its actions. They are forced to leave those spaces where the dominant class or the white people live considering the dark skinned individual as impure. He also pointed out their desire to become ‘white’ (2008, p.12), highlighting the miseries of a being dark and the person is ready to become white at the cost of his identity. This is reflected in these lines by Hamid (2022) where the protagonist witnesses this hatred against the black individuals as “Anders had heard that the militants had begun to clear people out, dark people, running them out of town,” (p.69). The hostile and violent reactions towards the transformed individuals in the narrative, who are now perceived as the “Other” are echoed here. The forced evacuation of dark-skinned individuals from the town reveals the underlying hatred and fears that exist within the society. The forced clearing out of the dark-skinned from their homes and community exhibits the societal desire to maintain homogeneity and purity, which comes from the fear of the “Other.”

The above instances describe the extraordinary transformation of the characters from white to dark color, blended into the everyday world, which leads to the altered societal reactions and shows their marginalized status as the “Other.” The societal reactions range from hostility to indifference, and emphasizes the challenges experienced by those who are perceived as different and marginalized.

### **Unsettling Doubts in *The Last White Man***

The third element of magical realism is unsettling doubts. Unsettling doubts refer to the reader's hesitation before identifying an irreducible element as truly irreducible. This uncertainty arises when they attempt to reconcile two seemingly contradictory events. The issue of belief plays a crucial role, as the narrative presents both a familiar, realistic world-where events align with natural laws and an extraordinary, magical realm that challenges those laws (Faris, 2004).

The following instances in *The Last White Man* suggest that readers hesitate when trying to understand two contradictory events and classify the irreducible element as truly irreducible, leading to unsettling doubts.

The unexplainable and sudden transformation of Anders' skin color brings out a sense of hesitation and doubtfulness for the readers “One morning Anders, a white man, woke up to find he

had turned a deep and undeniable brown" (Hamid, 2022, p.9). This phenomena of change of color from white to brown raises a question of how a white man transforms into brown man without any logical and scientific explanations. The readers wonder whether it is a dream or reality and this state of in between creates a sense of uncertainty and doubt. The phrase "slippery halfway place between dreams and wakefulness" (Hamid, 2002, p.9) pinpoints to a dreamy situation when Anders finds himself in an elusive state of something which might be a mere illusion, a trick played by the early light or mental artifact. In *The Last White Man*, the reader likewise begins to have some uneasy concerns. Readers find it confusing when a tone shifts from white to a darker shade. The readers start to wonder how the whole town might alter for no apparent cause. This illusive state makes it difficult for readers to distinguish whether Anders' transformation is rooted in reality or is a product of his subconscious. Similarly, this idea is echoed by Faris, who argues that the readers experience doubt and hesitation when interpreting magical happenings in the story, questioning whether they are the character's dream, hallucination or miracles. Although magical realist events may seem like they are from a dream, they are not dreams in reality, rather the text invites the readers to interpret them as dreams and simultaneously forbid us to categorize them as dreams, causing hesitation (Faris, 2004).

The unsettling doubts are obvious in this segment of the novel:

Anders's boss had said he would have killed himself, and the following week a man in town did just that, ..., a shooting heard but not seen by a neighbor.... the dark body lying there an intruder, shot with his own gun after a struggle.... but the dark man and the white man were the same. (Hamid, 2022, p.39)

The above passage generates unsettling doubts by presenting a paradoxical event, one where the same person is both the victim and the shooter. This event defies logical reasoning, leaving the readers grappling with uncertainty as there is lack of clear explanation for the event. The ambiguity of the incidence, specifically the vague details surrounding the transformation and struggle, further deepens the sense of unease.

This defining trait of the unsettling doubt indicates the presence of "Other" by adding vagueness, obscurity and indecision about the transformation of color which is an irreducible element. In the novel, the transformation of white to black is the reason that pushes characters towards otherness, upsetting the deeper understanding of the discourse. Similarly, the societal reaction and interaction with the transformed characters further intensifies the situation of insecurity. Additionally, the characters also respond differently to their own transformation and their identification as "Other" furthering the uncertainty in the narrative. The overall result is that an atmosphere of estrangement and sidelining prevail encouraging the readers to reevaluate their preconceptions and the social implications on individual treated as the "Other".

### **Merging Realms in *The Last White Man***

The fourth characteristic of magical realism is the seamless blending or convergence of two distinct realms within a narrative. These realms often consist of an extraordinary, magical dimension that intertwines with the ordinary, everyday reality. In magical realist literature, the boundaries between these worlds blur, allowing the magical to permeate the real. This fusion creates a storytelling style where one realm naturally flows into the other, forming a continuous and all-encompassing narrative experience (Faris, 2004).

The following instances in the novel, *The Last White Man*, highlight the merging of two different realms in the narrative. These distinct realms are the realms of white and black people. The merging of these two realms starts with the Anders transformation, continues as more and more white people change into dark color, and unification of two realms completes with Anders' father's death, as no white man remains in the narrative after him.

“One morning Anders, a white man, woke up to find he had turned a deep and undeniable brown” (Hamid, 2022, p.9). The text serves as a fundamental instant in the narrative because the merging process of the two realms of dark and white kicks off with Anders transformation to a dark skinned individual from a white man. This change sets the stage for the creation of two distinct realms and introduces the extraordinary into the ordinary world. The change of Anders’s color unsettles the conventional boundaries between the white world and the dark world people and creates an immediate and significant convergence of these realms.

As the narrative moves forward, more and more white people change into dark people and the gradual merging continues also in the gym where Anders works “he was almost excited to hear that a long-standing client of the gym has changed.... now Anders would not be the only one” (Hamid, 2022, p.40). In the gym, first “a long-standing client” transforms and then more clients transform into dark people. The gym once an exclusive space for white people, now accommodates a blends of both white and dark skinned individuals “a gym that had been almost a whites-only gym, almost, now had not one dark man present, nor two, being Anders and, in the evenings, the cleaning guy, but often three, or even four” (Hamid, 2022, p.56). The encroachment of magical realm progress within ordinary realms “no matter what anyone did” (Hamid, 2022, p.74).

The merging of the dark and white realm completes the narrative with the transformation of Oona’s mother. “Oona’s mother was among the last in town to change, and there was dread in it for her,” (Hamid, 2022, p.102). She is the last white person in the town who changes into dark color. The death of Anders’s pale father marks the complete unification of two realms. After Anders’s father’s burial there is no white person in the town. The white world is completely dissolved into the dark world where life continues in the dark world.

The merging of realms in *The Last White Man* represents the “Other” by highlighting instances of unity, empathy and acceptance. In the narrative, as the merging continues and more characters begin to undergo the change in skin color and experience the injustices faced by the “Other,” they begin to adjust and feel sympathy for other characters and open up for unity.

Initially, Oona feels discomfort and unease when she faces Anders after transformation “as it happened he was in the bathroom, so she found herself having to wait, uneasy, regardless” (Hamid, 2022, p.18). She is afraid to provide reassurance and hesitates because she struggles to accept new identity. But, when she sees someone on television “that they were interviewing someone who had stopped being white after a while stepped out and phoned Anders” (Hamid, 2022, p.29). Oona’s reaction to news on television reflects the merging of realms and her decision to reach out to Anders illustrates solidarity and empathy with those who have the “Other”.

Similarly, Anders’s boss's initial attitude towards Anders is unsupportive. Anders’s boss responds with extreme prejudice when he sees him for the first time after transformation, saying that “I would have killed myself. If it was me” (Hamid, 2022, p.23). His boss’s response highlights the societal hostility towards the “Other.” However, after his own transformation, his attitude changes significantly. When Anders visits to “see his boss at the gym and his boss was very dark,” (Hamid, 2022, p.99) he finds him broken and wounded. This change results in a more sympathetic and supportive response from the boss, who, previously harsh, now shows care for Anders and wishes him and his father good luck. This shift serves as an example of merging realms, where empathy is nurtured and boundaries between the dominant group and the “Other” is broken down by personal experience with transformation.

The transformation of Anders also changes his perspective towards other characters. Initially, his attitude towards the dark cleaning guy is superficial and “he treats the cleaning guy like a puppy, a dog that you give a couple pats to, and call out good boy” (Hamid, 2022, p.44). However, after Anders goes through his own change and becomes the “Other,” his attitude toward the cleaning guy changes and he starts to see him in a new light. Anders starts to realize the cleaning guy’s individuality and thinks about him if “he has a family, back where he came from, or

was he alone, and why had Anders never asked him these things.” (Hamid, 2022, p.44) Similarly, when a fire damages the gym, Anders’ first thought is “of the cleaning guy, and whether he should call him, and see if he was safe” (Hamid, 2022, p.65). These concerns signify a deeper shift in Anders priorities after transformation. His transformation and his subsequent change in attitude toward the cleaning guy at the gym presents the merging of realms and the changing representation of the “Other.”

### **Disruption of Space and Identity in *The Last White Man***

Fifthly, the study emphasizes how magical realism not only distorts our understanding of time and space but also threatens our sense of self. Hamid (2022) skillfully constructs two distinct realms of past and present as well as ideas about identity. In the magical realist text, the conventional understanding of time, space and identity are disrupted, as the text challenges these commonly held concepts. The author creates a narrative that goes beyond our expectation by introducing irreducible elements, prompting readers to question the conventional understanding of concepts and encouraging them to reconsider their perception of the world (Faris, 2004).

In *The Last White Man*, the sense of identity and space are disrupted through the introduction of irreducible elements in the narrative. The author introduces an irreducible element in the narrative and disrupts the identities of the characters from white to dark color and marks them “Others” in the narrative. This disruption creates a sense of alienation and displacement, because the characters’ losses their former identities and needs to navigate their new reality. The characters struggle to accept their new identities and the reactions of those around them reflect the vulnerable status of the “Other,” that are constantly questioned and marginalized.

Anders’ identity is disrupted with the transformation which marks the irreducible element in the novel. At first, he does not believe that his physical appearance has changed and struggles to recognize himself “Anders raised his hand and swung his reflection into place before his eyes. It was not of Anders he recognized” (Hamid, 2022, p.10). Even the mobile phone algorithm that once identified Anders, now fails to recognize him “when he questioned whether it was entirely in his imagination and test this by taking a picture and placing it in a digital album, the algorithm that had, in the past, unfailingly suggested his name, so sure, so reliable, could not identify him” (Hamid, 2022, p.11). The transformation also makes it difficult for others who know him well, to accept and recognize his identity “people who knew him no longer knew him” (Hamid, 2022, p.24). Even Oona, Anders girlfriend, did not recognize him when she comes for the first time after Anders transformation and is in a shock when he appears in front of her “when he emerged she was taken aback, not merely because he was darker, but because he was no longer recognizably himself, beyond being of the same size and shape” (Hamid, 2022, p.18). Oona’s reaction to Anders’ transformation is shocking as she recognizes him as a different person and anyone who sees him would think the same. Anders compares his disrupted identity with “a sea creature that should not exist” (Hamid, 2022, p.12).

These lines “The gym was increasingly tense, and men who had known each other for years now acted like they did not know each other, or worse, disliked each other, bore a grudge,” (Hamid, 2022, p.56) illustrate the effect of transformation on social identities and relationships, showing how people struggle to recognize one another despite having known each other for years.

Likewise, other characters’ identities are also disrupted in the narrative. Oona’s mother identity is disrupted and she is the last one in the town to change and “there was dread in it for her” (Hamid, 2022, p.102). The disruption of her physical appearance also disrupts her sense of self. Oona’s mother refuses to see people and becomes stunned and quiet.

Magical realism not only disrupts our sense of identity but our sense of space is well. Initially, the novel depicts a relatively normal existence where people are free to live, but as the characters undergo a transformation from white to dark-skinned. The researcher observes that

people start to hide themselves, and the riots and forced migration from the city ensue. There emerges a disruption in their identities which leads to the disruption of space as well. At first in the novel, the town is quiet and people are free to live their life peacefully. When identities alter, then riots begin, people start to hide themselves at homes and dark people are forced to leave the town. Due to the disruption of space, the familiar environment becomes unwelcoming and hostile, turning into a site of alienation.

“The mood in town was changing, more rapidly than its complexion... the mood, yes, the mood was changing, and the shelves of the stores were bare, and at night the roads were more abandoned” (Hamid, 2022, p.40). The change in mood of town reflects a disruption of space. In the above passage, the phrase “the mood in town was changing” foreshadows the upcoming riot in the town. The riots in town arise because of the irreducible element in the narrative. The forced evacuation of dark people from town highlights spatial disruption that leads to “violence in town, a brawl here, a shooting there” (Hamid, 2022, p.49). The irreducible element disrupts the identities of characters from white to dark color as a result “militant come out to clear dark people out of town” (Hamid, 2022, p.69). The violence disrupts the public space and creates the environment of town unsafe and dangerous due to which people stay home.

The above passages reveal the disruption of space in the narrative. The mood of the town is changed where riots begin and militants come out to evacuate dark people from town that leads to disruption of personal, social and physical spaces. Because of the disruption of spaces, familiar environments become unwelcoming and hostile, highlighting the “Other” marginalization.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the above discussion and analysis, the researcher concludes that Hamid’s *The Last White Man* provides voice to the unvoiced. It is mainly due to the magical realist technique that the author depicted how people become racist with the change of color only. The friends, neighbors, colleagues, relatives, and people of the same village all of a sudden become the “Others” because they become brown from white. Transformation of color leads to “Other” further resulting in the issues of racism, discrimination, injustice, conflict, and violence. Othering has not affected the psyche of the people in the novel but has also resulted in widespread societal issues. Due to ‘Othering’ the main character Anders suffers from constant internal conflict i.e., his constant hysteria, alienation, paranoia, and a sense of inferiority. On the other hand, this ‘Othering’ also results in various kinds of challenges at individual and societal level including marginalization, discrimination, hostility, exclusion, suicide, physical violence, and large scale armed conflict. Thus, these symbolically lead to racial divides and “Othering.” The analysis also revealed that magical realism was a useful tool in presenting the issues of racism and the “Other” which could have not been otherwise illustrated. Not only the challenges associated with “Othering” were revealed through this theoretical perspective but also the author’s message of a peaceful coexistence and interracial harmony as transformation or metamorphosis is no more an odd phenomenon as we move to the end of the novel. To sum up, all humans are equal and they should not be discriminated against because of their skin color.

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