



ADVANCE SOCIAL SCIENCE ARCHIVE JOURNAL

Available Online: <https://assajournal.com>

Vol. 04 No. 01. July-September 2025. Page#.2091-2111

Print ISSN: [3006-2497](#) Online ISSN: [3006-2500](#)

Platform & Workflow by: [Open Journal Systems](#)

<https://doi.org/10.55966/assaj.2025.4.1.0114>



The Underlying Causes of False Images of Hyper-reality and Consumerism as Presented in the Characters of the Novel “The Last White Man” by Mohsin Hamid

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Abstract

The research analyzes the underlying causes of false images of Hyper-reality and consumerism in The Last White Man (2021). In the modern age, people of different backgrounds and communities have different set beliefs in which they depend upon. The Last White Man is not about community but people, the characteristic that has been portrayed by Mohsin Hamid is immensely detailed where the set of their beliefs are reflected throughout the text. The selected novel depicts the idea of transformation in which the main character of the novel transforms into a black skinned man. The set of belief and the people according to the world presented in the novel are off the view that black skinned color is not same as us. The other characters and the main character have been portrayed as white before they change their skin color. The belief that is set within their

mind frame instigates them to decline the transformation. The characters, in the selected novel, reflect the idea of hyperreality proposed by Jean Baudrillard in 1981 in which he says that “reality does not exist, it has been replaced by signs and symbols that makes it difficult to differentiate with reality” (Baudrillard, 1981). The research proposes a deep insight into the characters, imagery, signs and symbols of the selected text written by Hamid. The study explored the elements of fake signs and symbols within the reality as proposed by Jean Baudrillard in his theory.

Keywords: *Hyperreality, Consumerism, Capitalism, Transformation, Signs, Symbols, Reality, Baudrillard, Black, White*

Introduction

This research investigates the idea of hyperreality and consumerism that is presented by Jean Baudrillard in his book *Simulacra & Simulation*. Baudrillard has criticized the post-modern world where the images, signs and symbols are produced in such a way that it is very difficult to differentiate between real and fake. It can be interpreted as the concept that Hamid has tried to portray in his book. “The term *hyperrealism* was, however, initially coined in the 960s, as the European term for *superrealism* or *photorealism*” (Battcock 1975).

This research focuses on hyperreality following the idea of consumerism in a post modern terrain. Mohsin Hamid’s novel *The Last White Man* will be examined by employing the paradigm of hyperreality presented by Jean Baudrillard in the book *Simulacra and Simulation* (1981). The idea of consumerism presented by Baudrillard has been adopted along with the idea of hyperreality. In the latest novel of Hamid, he has tried to portray the consumerist world that is highly influenced by the idea that consumer is controlling them. The racial discrimination in the selected novel is an example of how consumerist world is being split. People are under control of consumerist world because the idea of race and discrimination is initiated by the capitalistic world. “It is a perpetual hyperreal cycle where we are constantly buying into consumerism in order to assimilate with the rest of society, giving worth to things that would otherwise be meaningless.” The consumer world has lost its worth due to unreasonable trust upon products rather than them; meanwhile, it affects the thought process in the society.

The idea of hyperreality that has been revolving around this research which is hyperreality is taken from the idea of consumerism and capitalism that is a leading phenomenon of the society in contemporary era. People are promoting this idea of consumerism that let people decide the status of anything particular. The concept of consumerism let people believe that there is a certain comparison between products in this world. The consumerism that takes place in a specific place such as American society is known as hyperrealism. The idea of hyperrealism creates an ambiance that different products have different worth and they are comparable, thus, it also creates an idea in the minds of the people that not only products but people themselves are comparable. Hyperreality is a concept describing consumerism in the society. People have started to buy this idea of consumerism by accepting the products labeling them as brands. These brands are not mere creation of consumer society but it is an expression of acceptance by people that they are very much manipulated by this entire idea. Jean Baudrillard has criticized this idea and presented the concept of hyperreality. The idea within the society that not only sees products and brands as consumerism but it is also implemented on human beings. The comparison of brands and people creates a sense of winning within the minds of people. The human beings are very much influenced by the idea of consumerism and are trying to beat each other. There are set standards in the society that prevails and human beings are caught in it. They are trying their best to look superior in the terms of status, that is how the scenario of comparison and contrast can be seen in the text *The Last White Man* by Hamid in which characters are afraid of races. The superiority of white people can be seen in the whole text that is the representation of racial discrimination as well. The contemporary society is constantly buying the idea of consumerism to assimilate with the society to compare the products with each other that otherwise makes no sense.

The consumer society is constantly evolving; the minds of human beings are also growing towards products and labels with the passage of time and creating difficulties for mankind to survive in this world. The worth of human beings and the time they utilize to know a person or a new thing in this world are unfortunately controlled by the ready-made ideas. The American or any society in this world for manipulating the minds into something unrealistic is biggest problem

that this world is facing these days but likewise they are aware of the fact that this is affecting their relationship with humans and creating infinite trouble for people. The characters of *The Last White Man* have hugely affected the mindset of readers towards black race. The fake sign and symbols of hyperreality not only explores how this simulation is affecting their minds but also sees what are the possible solutions to make this situation work and to make everything equal as they deserve. Baudrillard criticizes capitalism to such extent that he has called it fake for people to believe in such idea.

The idea of consumerism that is being improvised by Jean Baudrillard explains that the modern world is becoming a victim of capitalistic society. "Consumerism or late capitalism is an extension of his idea of hyperreal" (Baudrillard, 1992). Baudrillard gives deep insight into how consumer world actually works. By his idea of hyperreality, he has presented an overview of how this system works. Baudrillard looks at the postmodern society with the perspective of simulations which deny the existence of reality and hyper reality. Baudrillard is off the view that everything in this world is a simulation and people are living in this simulation without even knowing it. There are fake signs and symbols that have been it into this world t make people confuse about their own existence, likewise, Hamid has portrayed bunch of the characters that are confused about their own identity and a change that has made their lives troublesome. The criticism is that, the characters have not lost their bodies or health they have just transformed into darker persons but it has affected the lifestyle of the people. Baudrillard has presented the very concepts that unravel the unknown happening of this world that are leaving big impacts on the minds of the people. The characters in Hamid's novel are frightened an afraid to accept their transformation throughout the novel. Referring to the views of Baudrillard, we can see the outcome of living in a modern world with capitalistic approach. This research explores the answer of the question where it identifies that how the characters portray the development of false images in the society that has been shown in the novel beyond reality and consumerism. The idea of hyperreality focuses on the psychological and mental health of people in the society that has been disturbed by the constant manipulation of consumer. The people in this world or

specifically characters in the novel are presenting the mental health of an average person, caught by the idea of consumerism.

Objective

1. To trace the false images of Hyperreality and consumerism as presented in the characters of the novel *The Last White Man*.

Research Questions

1. How do the characters portray the development of false images of a world beyond reality and consumerism in the selected novel *The Last White Man*?

Review of Literature

Jean Baudrillard is credited with the theory's inception, and the idea is still relevant today, Exploring the consumer world around the globe as well as on the fiction of Hamid, a research article "*You Are Here: Mapping the World System of Mohsin Hamid's Fiction*" (Hattori, 2018) was published, pointing out the facts that how Hamid's literature revolves around consumer society from one place to another. Specifically talking about America and the places Hamid portrays very much align to each other in terms of consumerism and capitalism. The research article contains an analysis of Hamid's four fictions that gives us insight about how worldly people can be. Researcher has specifically used this term to put emphasis on Hamid's criticism towards consumer society. At first, he has talked about the perception of Leerom Medovoi, who says "Hamid's work belongs to a body of literature that "is not so much of or by, but for Americans"—which he terms "world-system literature". The insight to the fiction of Hamid in mentioned research not only discusses the capitalism but also the geopolitical portrayal in different places. The researcher has done literary as well as geopolitical analysis. The mentioned study looks deep into the written expression of Hamid where he tries to portray a map of the through literature with different stories and characters. It studies the biographical and geographical context in the works of Hamid including four of his novels. The aforementioned research has an explained analysis of imperialism and capitalism within the fiction of Hamid, how he has presented an outlook of capitalistic

society, mainly about America. The four novels that this research covers are, *Moth Smoke*, *How to Get Filthy Rich in Asia*, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and *Exit West*. The literary analysis is about the setting of each novel, how Hamid has portrayed a glimpse of a map. It also studies the perception of reader and the thoughts of readers from different origins and countries. Hamid writes for everyone but the meaning that readers take from his fictions is mostly different. He represents a dynamic and powerful assumption about a specific situation that reader can modify according to his own perception. There is one part of this research study that connects it with proposed study, the exploration of imperialism and capitalism in Hamid's work is very much relevant to the proposed idea but is presented in a different way. This study investigates the capitalism and superstructure within the fiction of Hamid. The study focuses that Hamid's work symbolizes and criticizes the structure that focuses people to believe in power and that too only about specific places like America. Hamid's work is a criticism to American society more often because the outlook and that character representation in Hamid's work seems American. The novels by Hamid might be seen as a continuous story about the decline of American hegemony. This hegemonic trend can be tracked. The mentioned research article talks about capitalism in Hamid's work but that is just a shot chapter that is not similar to the idea that has been presented. Researcher here talks about the outlook and geographical context whereas the proposed study explores consumerism and hyperreality.

The concept of racism is an offshoot of capitalism where human beings are constantly buying this idea of being best and worst in terms of skin color. In the text that analyzes to interpret and find the fake signs and symbols within this text that is an influence of consumer society. Hamid has not only talked about racism but also how these ideas are affecting human minds and they are becoming mentally weak. The specific text that this research is exploring portrays characters with weak mindset about the idea of superiority and inferiority because they are in fact member of the same society who has the mindset of judging people over their skin color. The text is a criticism towards discrimination whether of color or humans. Consumerism is a very intense idea

of creating hatred among people who do not know each other but will judge keeping the idea of superiority in their minds. The minds of the people are manipulated in such a way that they are unable to differentiate between real and fake and that is the whole debate about. The hyperreality blurs this line in human minds and they start to see fake things as real. To exemplify, we can talk about pair of sunglasses or pair of shoes that are ordinary but in consumerist society if they have been labeled as some extravagant brand they would suddenly be expensive and superior. This is the idea that consumer society has produced and it is just within the minds of people because they are living in simulation. Baudrillard sees this situation as simulation of human minds in which the idea of capitalism has been integrated and is forcing people to think the way consumer world want them to think. The author of *The Last White Man* has written many novels and few of them were a criticism to American society because he was living in America at the time of 9/11. One of his novels is a criticism towards American people towards Muslims after 9/11 incident. Hamid writes about the possible hardships that an average person has to face living in America and if he is specifically Muslim than it would be totally difficult for him to survive in America. Hamid's constant criticism towards America and its people make reader to think that his latest novel is also a criticism towards American policies and the propaganda they are trying to woven in minds of the people. America, being the biggest power, can easily manipulate the minds of the people and that's what they are doing. The character of Andres actually represents the mind of an American who has certainly been believing in all these ideas.. Andres is scared to reveal his transformed identity before world because the idea of hatred for those people is already installed in his mind. The people that have been portrayed in the text are showing what we expect from bunch of people if world can turn black. The idea of already knowing what's well and what's bad is one element that consumer society spreads among people. There is no difference between products and human beings, both are treated same way. People of consumer society are blind enough to see this difference where their superiority has been questioned by the idea of skin color, language or ethnicity. Being black or white, being rich or poor, are just some standards set by consumer world and people are so happy to buy this idea.

Research Methodology

This research is mainly a qualitative research. Qualitative research involves collecting and analyzing data then processes it to interpret to understand the meaning, concepts or experiences. The research explores the meaning from selected text that implements the theoretical framework of Hyperreality by Jean Baudrillard. The approach of the proposed research study is textual analysis or content analysis. Textual analysis is a broad term to be explained as a tool but it mainly works as a tool to interpret the communication and text. Textual analysis is used as a tool in which the study determines the meaning of signs and symbols as presented in the theory of hyperreality. Content analysis, whereas, is also a form of textual analysis in which research seeks to find the interpretation of selected text and chunks of it. The primary source for this research is *The Last White Man* by Hamid in 2021 right after pandemic hit the world. There is so much similarity of global pandemic and the pandemic presented in Hamid's text

Analysis

This part of the analysis covers the concept of hyperreality that is applied on the primary text *The Last White Man* by Hamid. Hamid has explained the transformation of the skin through the characters and has portrayed the imagery of their skin texture. The transformation that took place in the text is not only related to skin color but it has also changed the entire outlook of the people. The main characters Anders who is protagonist of the play goes through this change at the first place. The town that got affected by this transformation had to go through a lot of suffering. The concept of hyperreality presented by Baudrillard is an image of the contemporary world where modernity has over taken everything. "Hyperreality is seen as a condition in which what is real and what is fiction are seamlessly blended together so that there is no clear distinction where one ends and other begins!" (Baudrillard, 1981) The concept that became a talk of the town in 1981 was proposed by Baudrillard the concept was inspired by the concept of Marxism and it was originated from the idea of capitalism where consumer society is taking benefit if working class. After industrialization, the working class became the prominent class of the society but later in modern era the consumer society took over them. The products and

brands became the popular element of the society. There are set standards of the society in which they talk about particular brands. Hyperreality is paradigm that describes the cultural difference of different communities. Baudrillard argues that the contemporary world is manipulated and created version of reality that includes signs and symbols. Baudrillard might be talking about the people living in this society having different cultural connotations. The current world is a combination of different products and people who are being manipulated by the consumer society. The world has been changed into a capitalistic world where people are known not by names or designation but being a product they play different roles in the society. Similarly, in *The Last White Man* the division of these people a products can be seen where people are reacting over a dilemma that is created by the society. It can be taken as a natural disaster or a natural phenomenon that happened like a pandemic for all the people but the reactions of the people for this specific condition is way harsher than it's expected.

The transformation that can happen to anyone can be seen as a crime in this particular text written by Mohsin Hamid. Hamid has unraveled the deadly truths of the society that people are not ready to accept or even that if they exist. The condition of the world that can be seen in the text is particularly associated with the idea of hyperreality presented by Jean Baudrillard. Baudrillard presents the idea of reality as something that is being created by false signs and symbols. *The Last White Man* clearly depicts the societal norms and traditions that have come from the idea of hyperreality. Baudrillard's idea of hyperreality was heavily influenced by phenomenology, semiotics, and Marshall McLuhan. Baudrillard and Eco explained that it is "the unlimited existence of "hyperreal" numbers or "non-standard realms", infinite and infinitesimal, which cluster about assumedly fixed or real numbers and factor through transference differentials." (Baudrillard, 1981) The characterization and portrayal of images in the primary text unravels the concept of hyperreality. The behavior of the characters and the mental capacity of them have been presented in the novel. There are various images that depict their transformation and skin color. The novel also portrays the reaction of the character over the issue that can be called as hyperreal. The reason of the condition that has been presented through the novel is unknown, whereas, the mental capability of the characters to accept the

reality was seen very low. In the particular concept of hyperreality that has been applied on the text showcases the implications of manipulation on the real things that has now turned out to be false things. The collection of these manipulated versions of images has created a sense of hyperreality in which most of the people believe and they are living in this simulation where a real thing looks real but is definitely not real. The novel portrays various conditions with human body as well as mind. It is difficult to interpret whether the skin condition of characters is portrayed as image or the mental facets of them. It is being portrayed that characters are behaving abnormally throughout this whole incident and there have been no patience level. The hatred for a specific skin color and the capacity to accept the reality can be seen rarely in the characters. The hatred is increasing to the extent where people want to kill their own selves. The characters especially the main characters already believe that he might have committed a crime and now he has to face the world with this skin color.

The criticism towards black community is depicted but if the situation is seen according to the perspective of Baudrillard, the images and signs depict the very concept of simulation. The society is presented as harsh and impatient. There is no kindness that can be found in this novel. The experiences and incidents in the novel are based upon the idea of simulacrum. Anders, the main characters sees this whole situation as a curse. The society that sees a particular condition as curse is a product of capitalism. Concept of consumerism is also active in this novel, the characters including their mental capacity, the imagery and the whole scenario convinces reader it to be hyperreal. Hyperreality has been inspired by the idea of consumerism, in fact, Baudrillard proposed this idea when the idea of consumerism was presented. The hyperrealism in the whole novel makes it postmodern novel because the modernity in the characters is visible.

The analysis progresses as the false images beyond reality and consumerism is located. In the novel, *The Last White Man*, there are lot images of hyperreality that is visible. Hamid has drawn a picture of simulacrum through the characters and the scenarios that has been presented in the novel. As per previous analysis, the time and space that is absent throughout the novel makes the situation hyperreal because the absurdity of characters and situation can be interpreted as hyperreality of the novel. Additionally, the concept of consumerism is included because of the

idea of hyperreality. Baudrillard presented this idea in the inspiration of consumerism. Hyperreality is a combination of consumerism and capitalism. The characters and situations in the novel portray the capitalistic society whether characters have been manipulated to believe and live according to the set standards of society. The symbols, signs and images presented through the characters and situation is analyzed as following:

1. Characters	Components of hyperreality: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spectacle, • Performativity, • Representation, • Materiality of objects, • non-existing reality, simulations.
2. Plot	
3. Situation	
4. Setting	

Components of hyperreality

Characters

The images and symbols that can be portrayed as elements of hyperreality that also reflect the idea of consumerism. Hamid has used these signs time and again that makes the whole situation looks like a simulation. The situation can be interpreted as a simulation of mind or the situation is hyperreal and characters are reacting over it. "He did this to assert his control over the situation, to compel reality to return through sheer strength of mind, or because running would have frightened him more" (Hamid, 2021, p.01). The above mentioned line from the novel *The Last White Man* depicts the mental capacity of the main character Anders. In the very beginning it was told that he woke up as a different person and it is impossible for him to accept the fact that he is no more among whites. As a white person, Anders is in a state of disappointment as well as surprise after this sudden change in his appearance. He is trying to control, this situation because it is getting out of his hands to make him believe that has is going to be among black. He is compelling the reality to become his strength about the situation he is going through. As per concept of Baudrillard, the images are made in such a way that is difficult for a person to

distinguish between them. Similarly, the appearance of Anders can be seen as an image in a simulation presented in a novel. A sudden change in appearance is an impossibility that has been presented as possibility. Hamid has reflected the hatred of black as well as a concept where reality doesn't seem real to a reader. As far as characters of the novel are concerned, they are already going through a condition that has made them mentally absent and they are unable to think about any other thing. All the characters are finding a solution to this problem. Initially, Anders become victim of this condition but later all the characters become black. The contrast among pale black and white continues as the skin color start to change in the whole city. Anders feels helpless in this situation and is unable to believe if it is real. He is so ill after knowing the fact that now he has been transformed into a black guy that he thinks of running from this situation rather accepting and facing it. It shows the potential of the characters to face the reality. The whole scenario is about a concept of simulation that makes it hyperreal.

The imagery and symbols that are seamlessly blended into reality are reflected through the characters and their reaction over the situation. In another incident where the appearance of Anders has been presented and it doesn't look like a real appearance. The representation of his appearance rather looks false image portrayed by Hamid. "The color of his toenails, the muscles of his calves, and, stripping, frantic, his penis unremarkable his size and in heft, unremarkable except in not being his, and therefore bizarre, beyond acceptance, like an idea creature that should not exist" (Hamid, 2021, p.03) the appearance of Anders as described by Hamid doesn't seem real. The use of word "unremarkable" twice makes it clear that the transformation Anders is going through is real but something more than real. It can be interpreted as hyperreal. The shape of his toe nails and his body structure has also transformed in a very weird manner. No one can describe how this appearance took place and what the possible reasons behind this transformation are. Anders is in a state of shock where not only his skin color but his features have also changed. He has to go out in the world and face them with this appearance now. His transformation is the main part of the storyline and afterwards the whole society changes their skin color and features makes it near to the idea of hyperreal. Baudrillard argues that the reality does not exist only its representation can be seen which is not true. Reality is somewhere else

on the things we see are mere simulation or a mental facet. The transformation Anders undergoes has changes the way he thinks about society, moreover, he actually gets to know what a person can do it he transforms into a most hatred being according to the society. The societal norms do not allow him to be excited about new appearance rather it scares him. According to the idea of Baudrillard, the reality is distributed in false images and signs. Anders could behave differently if he was transformed into someone else or a better version of himself but becoming a black person has shattered big dreams and changed is life entirely. These are the symbols that can be interpreted as to make situation hyperreal. In reality such images and symbols do not exists. Hamid has portrayed wider pictures in his novel that doesn't look like reality.

In the continuous criticism towards the false imagery that are convincing the readers to see the incidents, characters and situation as hyperreal, there are many instances in the book where the characters are confused about their identities and they are not ready to accept who they are. The main character named Anders is constantly complaining about this sudden change and he is not accepting this fact. The reality, sometimes, is broken into pieces and characters are the missing part of the story they complete the story and reader gets to know it but in this novel, the characters are themselves confused about the whole situation. "He looked like another person, not just another person, but a different kind of a person, utterly different, and that anyone saw him would think the same" (Hamid, 2021, p.08). In the lines mentioned above, the situation is going towards confusion where characters are unaware of their own identity. According to the concept of hyperreality, the images are blurred that it is difficult to understand what is real and what is not. The similar situation can be seen in this novel where characters are not accepting the images of reality and making is obvious that it doesn't look like a reality. Anders thinks his whole self has been changed into someone else and now it's very difficult for him to rely on his own self. The lack of trust on the characters and the anxiety that can be felt in the sense of the characters are more terrifying than the actual situation. There is a sense of disturbance and depression within this transformation. The transformation gives off an idea of a situation that is more or less than real. This situation can be, according to Baudrillard is hyperreality.

Plot

The plot of *The Last White Man* is built upon confusion and unknowingness. The storyline revolves round Anders and his transformation and later it is converted to the other members of the town. The town is becoming black and people can't diagnose the reason behind this sudden change. The skin color that is mostly hated in the town has become the color of the town. The disturbing fact that the characters want to kill themselves so they don't have to face the embarrassment out of this sudden change in themselves. The identities of the characters are unknown and confused, whereas, reader of the novel can also think about various interpretations after reading it. "It was a usual sort of thing, this time about white people suddenly not being white" (Hamid, 2021, p.10) The characters including mother of Oona, Anders and Oona, they are going through a hard time after the transformation of Anders and suddenly they get to know about the condition of the whole town who is changing its color. The people from different areas are changing their color. Most of them are white but they are losing their whiteness and becoming black. Oona's mother is worried about the town and tells Oona about this condition of the people. The change in the skin color is a shocking aspect of this story where not only one but other people from the town are changing themselves. Oona's is worried about her own self more than others. Oona's mother is seeing the situation that is creating tension among them. Baudrillard has talked about the replicas of reality that can be seen in the form of hyperreality. The usually thing is unusual in the novel where people are turning black for no reason and can't accept it.

Hyperreality, in semiotics and postmodernism, is an inability of consciousness to distinguish reality from a simulation of reality, especially in technologically advanced postmodern societies (Baudrillard, 1981). The world or a town that has been portrayed in the novel by Hamid seems unreal. The time and space is absent throughout, as discussed in previous analysis. The unusual happening and unknown facts makes is more inclined towards an "unreal" scenario. "Crossing the bridge and the mighty water and seeing the tall buildings, it was as though she was entering another world, and becoming another Oona" (Hamid, 2021, p.15) The feelings of the character who is girlfriend of the main character has a certain feeling about this unusual happening in the

town, she is disturbed by the fact that the changes that she is encountering can be happen to herself as well or we can interpret it as something she finds hard to believe. After the sudden change in her boyfriend she is terrified of her life and she is not seeing herself as an old Oona. The concept of “change” that has been presented by Hamid tells the reader that this transformation has not only changed the life of Anders but it also affects the life of Oona. She is thinking about being in another world where things are different. This is where hyperreality can be found because the world that has been described is different from real world and somewhere the characters are also realizing that they are stepping into another world.

Setting

The element of violence can be seen in the text where people are rushing towards a safer place where nobody judges them. In the entire text, the intense fear can be seen within the characters are getting afraid of being black and is constantly running away from it. The book of Baudrillard that is *Simulacra & Simulations*, the argument about domain-idols has been displayed. “Plato divides in two of the domain of image idols: on one hand there are copies icon, on the other hand there are simulacra phantasms” (Baudrillard. 1981). An unending debate that can be observed throughout the concept of Baudrillard and in the text of Hamid that people of various communities that are known and unknown have divided the domains differently that makes them think differently to each other. In the text, the characters are off the view that being black is either a crime or a cruel thing to have, whereas, the characters with lighter skin tone are enjoying their lives having the sense of superiority. “There were flare-ups of violence in the town, a brawl here, a shooting there, and the mayor repeatedly called for calm, but militants had begun to appear on the streets.(Hamid, 2021, p.29). In these lines, it can be observed that people went berserk after this incident. The transformation of skin color became a major talk of the town where people are running to save their lives. The town had a lot of violence towards each other that is because of notion of hatred among each other. People were trying to accept the fact that such accidents can happen but a few among them were unable to understand the incident and kept spreading hatred among one another. The argument of Plato discussed in the Baudrillard’s book

is definitely giving a hint towards destruction among masses when the idols are being presented like this.

The term real is composed in opposition to that which is encompassed by the symbolic and the imaginary according to the concept of Lacan. The imaginary notions as depicted in the text can display the anger and fear of the people who believes in “unreal” and continue to target people who are unaware of these simulations. “Substantial violence was happening, and said that if there was violence it was because they were paid aggressors on the other side”(Hamid, 2021, p.41). One of the characters in the text that is Oona’s mother resisted the violence and told others that the aggressors are trying to kill black people as they were paid. The hatred among them was increasing back and forth. Oona’s mother thinks that all the people who are being aggressive in this situation are the paid people who have hatred inside their heads and minds. Undoubtedly, the people creating the situation of violence are symbolic and imaginary as depicted by Lacan. The concept of hyperreality can be seen in these people by the way they are trying to spread fear among one another. The fear of being black was rapidly growing.

There is a certain crisis that is being represented with the idea of hyperreality where it is said that the representation means a lot in terms of the expression and meaning of the incident or the characters. In his book *The Lost Dimensions*, Paul Virillo’s argues that the use of media has changed the representation of certain images and objects that changes the meaning of these images entirely. He says, “Modern media technology have created a crisis of representation where the distinction between near and far, object and image have imploded”. (p.112) in this argument, it is made clear that humanity has created set of rules for various categories in which people also fall. The categorization of being good and bad was a debate long ago and is still ongoing. In the text presented by Hamid it has been portrayed that characters have certain boundaries and standards towards the shape and body of an individual. “He was not sent either, and he did have certain impulses relating to the color of people’s skin, which is to be fair were common, especially when he had been young” (Hamid, 2021, p.42). In the mentioned lines, it can be argued that the characters of the text are having some standard of beauty and skin color that is acceptable according to them. The character that has been presented with these lines is

Oona's father who is girlfriend of the protagonist. In his point of view, a young person should be having fair skin color. He thinks that the beauty lies within the skin tone of the person that is presenting a collective thought of whole town who has gone crazy after the transformation of black. The people are unable to accept a transformation that goes beyond their set of beauty standard. The hyperreality is all about having an image in your mind that is created by society but is not real.

These ethereal qualities of hyperreality mean drastic revision for media theory surrounding the spectacle. The concept of hyperreality is based upon several elements from which "spectacle" is one. This concept was famously articulated by Guy Debord in 1977 who has argued that spectacle is becoming central to capitalist modes of reproduction. (p.24) Baudrillard in his book explains how media is becoming an integral part of turning the world into hyperreal. He says that entire web of human making activities has been transformed into symbolic exchange of empty signs. The notion of hyperreality among the characters of the town is unknown, yet, they believe upon the facts and images that have been presented in front of them. Consequently, the belief or disbelief of such concepts creates a sense of hyperreality among communities. "In the morning, the power went out and the house was gloomy with curtain drawn and no lights, but still there was illumination enough to see". (Hamid, 2021, p.45) in this specific scene, the situation of the town has been presented where unrealistic things were happening, a sudden power cut and a sense of gloominess depicts the mood of the people of the town who has been in anger throughout their transformation and about the people who could not resist the fact that the town is turning into something they never expected. The sudden change in the town and a deadly scene throughout the accident is giving a sense of emptiness and the representation of the empty images and scenery creates a hyperreal situation within the text.

Situation

According to Fredric Jameson in 1990, "Mass reproduction of simulacra, creating a world with an unreal and a free floating absence of the referent". The referent here means the reality that has been replicated into something new to create a sense of simulacra. The simulation within this world that create an unreal scenario is because there is an absence of the reality throughout

the modern world, the people nowadays follow what is not known in real or does not even exist in real but is believed to be a standard for a non-existing idea. In the text, the concept of simulation has been providing where time and again people are contrasting the black and white. "There were dark hosts mixed in with the white hosts, and they were awkward with each other" (Hamid, 2021, p.52). The sense of hatred among people was increasing as the characters of the text are contrasting the skin color of the characters in the situations that has been provided. With the contrast and compare, the sense of simulacra can be hinted because people are not thinking with their own mind but they want to believe on the facts provided by world. In this scene, a TV show that got off aired due to the critical situation of the town goes on air again and people can clearly see the difference between some hosts who were white before and now has turned black. After encountering the situation in the town, people must understand the transformation that is happening throughout the novel but they do not want to help each other and they keep on comparing whites and blacks.

The other important intersection of hyperreality is "performativity" in which people are being checked on how they perform while living in such condition. "The performance of the character is not so unique while living in the modern world but it makes it different when living on hyperreal conditions and environment. Social performance is the copy that instantaneously reproduces itself by being viewed thus disseminated to others who will potentially incorporate the performative actions into their own technologies of self" (Baudrillard, 1981). The characters that are moving in hyperreal environment have a different sense of belonging which they cannot differentiate from a person who knows his real identity. Meanwhile, the characters of *The Last White Man* are observing others on the basis of their skin color and making their own scenarios about their existence and identity. The sense of superiority comes within the sense of performativity that includes the behavior of an individual. "Oona's mother was among the last in town to change, and there was a dread in it for her, and also pride, a sense she had done her best and held on longer than most" (Hamid, 2021, p.66). The behavior of individual inquires about their own existence in a hyperreal world where he thinks he is superior or inferior as per the standards of the false world whereas their identity only exists somewhere in the reality that is

unknown to them. Oona's mother is behaving as if she is superior to those who have changed their skin color but she has not changed her skin color that makes her prideful about her existence. Oona's mother is portraying the idea of superiority among the characters that are white and yet has not changed.

Findings and Discussion

This research study has examined the components and elements of hyperreality on the selected novel. *The Last White Man* by Hamid is his recent work in which he has highlighted many true aspects of human life focusing on hardships of a modern man. Hamid has tried to portray a modern world with the help of this novel. The significance of this study was to elaborate the contributions of Hamid in a literary world to enhance the knowledge of a modern world for literature readers. Hamid has time and again wrote literature pieces to enhance one of the concepts in a modern time, in fact, this novel was another attempt to make it clearer according to this research study. Hamid has portrayed the characters of modern society with so many elements of hyperreality which was highlighted in this study. This study has explored the very features of hyperreality with the help of proposed elements and components of it. The key factor in this research was to propagate an idea that was not analyzed before. The idea of simulation and hyperreality along with consumerism was analyzed in this research that was not done before. Hamid has highlighted a few aspects in this novel but the aspect of hyperreality was analyzed in this research study. The importance of this concept to be applied in this novel was to enhance the elements of a modern man who is facing hardships in a modern world. This study highlights the challenges faced by a modern man. In the selected novel, no time and space has been mentioned specifically that makes it more ambiguous to understand, thus, this study has analyzed the key factors and points to understand this text more clearly. The components that are analyzed in this research study are portraying different interpretations regarding the selected text. The characterization of Hamid has been analyzed too to make it easier for a reader. This research study has pinpointed the various aspects of the novel that is not clear as we read them. This study has explored the elements of modern world in this study where characters are expressing the challenges they have been facing throughout the storyline of the novel.

Hyperreality as a concept of a modern world is by far more interesting because it leads a reader to get to know about reality that was not revealed before. The novel has its own essence and style of portrayal, whereas, it can be interpreted differently. The research study has explored different concepts that can be found in the novel. This study is only limited to the idea of hyperreality and consumerism that are part of modern world but this novel can be studied from different angles.

Conclusion

This research study has explored the elements of hyperreality by implementing the key factors and features of the concept as presented by Jean Baudrillard. The concept of hyperreality has been aligned with the idea of consumerism in this study. The characters and scenes have been analyzed by the help of textual analysis that was the major tool for this research. It is a qualitative research. This research study is based upon a concept of post-modern element and the challenges a modern man faces. The study has explored the various expressions in the book by applying a theoretical framework onto it.

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