

Tracing the Transformative Issues of Post-Colonial Man Through Mohsin Hamid's "The Last White Man"

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Abstract

*The study aims to provide a postcolonial analysis of Mohsin Hamid's novel *The Last White Man* (2022) employed by Homi K. Bhabha's concept of hybridity, mimicry, and ambivalence in the book "The Location of Culture" (1994) as a theoretical framework. The narrative unfolds in a world marked by such complex issues of identity crisis, culture hybridity, racism, colonial legacies, etc. Hamid focuses on examining the drastic change of characters without acknowledging why it occurs. The research study is significant in postcolonial literature by tracing the transformative issues in the postcolonial narrative with a global perspective. Thus, the study utilizes a non-empirical research method and textual analysis technique in the selected text from the theoretical framework of Bhabha's "hybridity" (1994), which describes the emergence of new cultural forms from multiculturalism. Further, the difficulties that arise from attempting to let go of one's colonial history and embrace a new identity are revealed by Bhabha's "mimicry" (1994). Examining the conflicting emotions white men face exemplifies Bhabha's concept of "ambivalence" (1994). Subsequently, Hamid probes the third space, an ambiguous and in-between space where cultures intersect and produce new meanings. Finally, the findings are based on the characters confronting questions of identity negotiating and engaging with the complex interplay of rapidly changing new worlds and meanings. In *The Last White Man*, the white man attempts to fit in and adapt to the majority culture.*

Keywords: Postcolonialism, Hybridity, Ambivalence, Mohsin Hamid, The Last White Man.

Introduction

The present study examines Mohsin Hamid's latest novel, *The Last White Man*, with the postcolonial perspective of Homi K. Bhabha's hybridity, mimicry, and ambivalence (1994). The story starts with a white man, Anders, who transforms overnight for no reason. Others view him differently as a result of his white transformation into darkness. He is confused and unrecognizable to himself. He worries about what his coworkers at the gym and his beloved Oona think of him. The only two characters are mentioned in the book by their names, Anders and Oona, whereas all other characters, as well as the location and period, are anonymous. Throughout the novel, Anders investigates the implications of the rapidly increasing number of white people turning brown for their environment. Being a brown person alters Anders and others around;

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subsequently, it does cause those of us who identify as brown to doubt who we are. What distinguishes being white from being dark? Such questions are raised throughout the book in a parallel and experiential way through the relationships that Anders and Oona eventually have with their parents, themselves, and each other. When Anders gets brown, he doesn't recognize himself; he feels embarrassed and uneasy, while Oona is captivated by the brownness. Hamid emphasizes that a darker tone suggests disruption and confusion, much like the times we live in, and that we must consider its implications. The book's storyline is modest, yet it profoundly affects how one views himself or how others see them as the *Other*. Hamid has, thus, a touch of such pain of identity crisis and emotional conflicts throughout the novel. It is a hallmark adaptability for white people to cope with the white longings and accept new brown identities.

Study Objectives

Postcolonial issues remain the central attention of many writers, researchers, critics, and theorists. Therefore, the study has paved the way for postcolonial problems in Hamid's *The Last White Man*, which revolves around the nucleus of an identity crisis. The study focuses to trace the threefold objective from Bhabha's perspectives:

1. To analyze the issues of identity crisis in the characters of *The Last White Man*.
2. To examine the role of mimicry in power dynamics in the novel.
3. To present the reason behind the characters' conflicting emotions in the selected text.

Research Questions

1. How do the issues of hybridity manifest by Anders and Oona with the blending of different cultural elements, experiences, and identities?
2. How has mimicry been used to survive for the characters in colonized settings?
3. What is the reason behind Anders and Oona's conflicting emotions in the postcolonial world?

Study Rationale

The study traces the transformative issue of postcolonial man through the postcolonial narratives; it aims to discover individuals' complex experiences and problems as they navigate legacy and colonialism through a critical analysis of Hamid's novel. The research article seeks to uncover the transformative matters that shape colonial conditions, including identity, culture, race, power, and survival. Untimely, this study provides insights into how postcolonial men can negotiate their identities, challenge dominant discourses, and imagine new possibilities for themselves and their communities.

Literature Review

Postcolonial literature is a rich and varied collection of work addressing colonialism's nuanced impact. It highlights the postcolonial world's quest for identity and survival. This review of the larger postcolonial discourse examines the main ideas, writers, and literary works of Pakistani postcolonial literature. Post-colonialism is a critical reaction to the historical and ongoing repercussions of colonialism. Recently, Zubair et al. (2023) research examines postcolonial issues in Mohsin Hamid's novel *Moth Smoke*, focusing on the characters' ambivalence, cultural hybridity, mimicry, and identity crisis. The novel portrays Pakistani society as influenced by Western values, cultural rifts, and weak moral codes. The wealthy characters, like Ozi and Mumtaz, pursue individualistic lifestyles, while Pakistani characters, like Murad, use English to hide their low origin. This hybridity leads to mimicry and Daru's downfall.

Farahbakhsh and Sheykhan (2018) examine Homi Bhabha's concept of ambivalence in J. M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*, focusing on how it reveals colonial authority. The study analyzes the character David's behavior and relationships, revealing ambivalence's destabilizing effect on colonial authority and revealing uncertainties within colonial powers. Portrayal on the writings of Césaire's "Discourse on Colonialism" (1955) and Fanon's "The Wretched of the Earth" (1961) probed the cultural and psychological effects of colonial authority. Notably, "Orientalism," by Edward Said in 1978, explored how the West created the East as the "other," perpetuating power disparities. Postcolonial Identity, which dates back to 1947 when it was still a part of British India, is essential to consider. In "The State of Martial Rule" (1990), Ayesha Jalal analyzed the origins of postcolonial Pakistan, the effects of British colonialism, and the independence movements. Moreover, the postcolonial novel "Midnight's Children" by Salman Rushdie (1981) inspired the concept of hybrid identities. Saleem Sinai, the main character in Rushdie's book, represents the blending of cultures and histories and reflects the complexity of postcolonial nations. The association of cultures and the pursuit of a unique postcolonial identity are demonstrated in this piece.

The conflict between native cultures and colonial influences is symbolized by the critical issue of language identity in Pakistani postcolonial literature. The themes of language, culture, and individuality in identity within a postcolonial framework are well-defined in "Ice-Candy Man" (1988) by Bapsi Sidhwa and "Burnt Shadows" (2009) by Kamila Shamsie. Moreover, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's "Decolonising the Mind" (1986) is an important work examining language usage's political and cultural consequences. Ngũgĩ emphasized the importance of language in forming identity and fending against colonial influence in her advocacy for the decolonization of language. The traumatic 1947 partition event, which split India and Pakistan, is a significant theme in Pakistani postcolonial writings. A timeless short story that explores the insanity and craziness of partition and highlights the long-lasting effects of that historical event is "Toba Tek Singh" (1955) by Saadat Hasan Manto. "The Wretched of the Earth" by Frantz Fanon (1961) is a classic text that addressed the psychological and sociological components of colonial tyranny. Fanon's observations into power dynamics and the need for national liberation movements continue to affect postcolonial literary discussions.

Postcolonial recommended themes of displacement and diaspora are an eye example investigated in "The Reluctant Fundamentalist" by Mohsin Hamid (2007), which tells the tale of a Pakistani man's experiences living in the US post 9/11. In a society gone global, Hamid examined questions of identity, cultural adjustment, and postcolonial tensions. In addition, V.S. Naipaul's "A Bend in the River" (1979) provides insight into cultural dislocation and relocation. Undoubtedly, diaspora literature is essential to postcolonial studies. Naipaul's book, designed to highlight postcolonial Africa, further examined people's difficulties and confusion when adjusting to new cultural environments.

Postcolonialism and feminism meet at the intersection of women's voices and the lives of Pakistani women. Through the perspectives of Bina Shah's "A Season for Martyrs" (2014) and Kamila Shamsie's "Kartography" (2002), it addresses themes of gender, power, and cultural expectations in a postcolonial society. Furthermore, the essential works "Things Fall Apart" by Chinua Achebe (1958) and "The Joys of Motherhood" by Buchi Emecheta (1979) both deal with gender and patriarchy in postcolonial settings. Significant contributions to the nexus of feminism and post-colonialism are made by Emecheta's examination of women's experiences in Nigeria and Achebe's depiction of Igbo society.

In addition, Daniyal Mueenuddin's "In Other Rooms, Other Wonders" (2009) explored the profound impact of military rule and conflicts on Pakistan's postcolonial experience. The book offered a mosaic of interconnected stories that shed light on the social and economic disparities that underlie the nation's military-dominated society.

Both Mohsin Hamid's "Moth Smoke" (2000) and Nadeem Aslam's "The Blind Man's Garden" (2013) demonstrated how religious identity shapes the postcolonial narrative. Nevertheless, the books merely discuss Pakistani secularism and fanaticism, followed by different questions of identity and ideology. The works of writers from postcolonial regions attest to the continuing legacy of colonialism and the tenacity of postcolonial voices.

The above literature of previous studies is a few examples of postcolonial works from a different point of view. Hence, the present study examines Hamid's latest novel, "*The Last White Man*," from the Postcolonial perspective of Homi K. Bhabha's hybridity, mimicry, and ambivalence.

Research Methodology

This research study employs a non-empirical method to provide a deeper understanding of a topic, discussion, and results based on theoretical exploration, conceptual analysis, and philosophical inquiry (Smith & Noble, 2014). This study analyzes the postcolonial issue of hybridity, mimicry, and ambivalence in the characters of *The Last White Man*. The textual analysis technique and close reading tool are used to interpret the original text through the lens of Homi K. Bhabha's Postcolonial theory, considering the threefold objective related to hybridity, mimicry, and ambivalence.

Theoretic Framework

The term "hybridity," initiated by Homi K. Bhabha, is the mixture of different cultures. It is a relationship between colonizers and colonized people that emphasizes their mutual production of subjectivities and dependency. Bhabha's "Third Space of Enunciation" is the setting in which all cultural assertions and systems are created (Bhabha, 1994, 37). The fact that this Third Space's productive potential has a colonial or postcolonial origin is crucial. Since the inscription of culture's hybridity, rather than the exoticism of multiculturalism or the plurality of cultures, paves the way for the conceptualization of worldwide culture, one must be willing to venture into that unfamiliar zone (Bhabha, 1994, 38). To critique colonial ideologies and power, Bhabha creates the cliché of imitation. He discusses how colonial discourses have cultivated the idea that mimicry is a psychological construct used by colonized people to become obedient to their rulers by adopting habits similar to those of the colonizers.

Bhabha has further analyzed mimicry as a discursive process, saying that "what they all share is an excess or slippage produced by the ambivalence of mimicry (almost the same, but not quite) that fixes the colonial subject as a 'partial' presence and does more than just 'rupture' the discourse." I refer to "partial" as both "incomplete" and "virtual." The authoritarian discourse imposes limitations or prohibitions on the emergence of the 'colonial.'" For colonial appropriation to be successful, there must be an abundance of improper objects to guarantee its strategic failure and make replication both threatening and resembling (Bhabha, 1994, 123). Bhabha wrote about the ambiguity of colonial discourse in the context of Culture. As stated by Bhabha (1994), "the objective of colonial discourse is to interpret the colonized as a population of degenerate types based on racial origin, to justify conquest and to establish systems of administration and instruction" (Bhabha, 1994, 70). However, he is of the view that ambivalence as a crucial cliché to convey the "necessary deformation and displacement of all sites of discrimination and

domination" (Bhabha, 1994, 112). Hernandez (2010) claims that Bhabha's critique of colonial discourse is based on the concept of ambivalence (Bhabha, 1994, 39). The textual analysis of the novel is mainly based on the above theoretical exploration of Bhabha's *The Location of Culture* (1994). By incorporating Bhabha's theories, the Study can examine and analyze how the author represents these concepts in the postcolonial context, challenge traditional notions of identity, race, and culture, and provide a deeper understanding of postcolonial identity, culture, and power dynamics.

Textual Analysis

The textual analysis is based on the selected text, *The Last White Man* (2022), which explores the postcolonial issues faced by the protagonist, Anders. He is a white man; evaluate his character from white to dark over a night. The examination is based on Bhabha's concern for Hybridity, mimicry, and ambivalence. The study's main objective is to trace the postcolonial issues of hybridity, mimicry, ambivalence, loss of identity, and the war that starts between whiteness and darkness. The hallmark question of existence and one's identity is being challenged, and the world around it chases up the exhaustion felt by the characters. Undoubtedly, Hamid is increasingly concerned about the identity crisis in a dystopian world. However, this study primarily examines the ironic issue of post-colonialism and its impact on shaping minds. A journey from white to brown is Hamid's novel's most illusionary and ambiguous Hamid's. Subsequently, the textual evidence is quoted for data analysis and interpretation, even though this study studies the theoretical framework based on postcolonial research. It does not locate all the postcolonial aspects but investigates the limited objectives. Therefore, only theoretical premises are used to analyze the novel's original text. This study relates to the postcolonial study of the third-world writer and his postcolonial writings. Further, future researchers are suggested to work on postcolonial problems of the postmodern world from different dimensions, such as cognitive estrangement, otherness, racism, dystopia, and optimism, if applicable.

It studies the unstoppable impact of western culture and how it addresses people's minds through fiction. To address the issues of identity crisis, *The Last White Man* is eventually on top merit. Hamid's exploration of the essence of Hybridity started in his first novel, *Moth Smoke*, through Ozi and Mumtaz's characters pursuing their studies in New York, and it affected their individualistic touch of identity. Zubair et al. (2023) concerning *Moth Smoke's* novel now, Hamid deliberately discusses post-colonialism issues, such as Hybridity and ambivalence. If we consider his last book, *Exit West*, from a postcolonial perspective, the central notion highlights the refugee crisis through Saeed and Nadia's characters.

Hybridity

Bhabha's on Hybridity vividly refers to blending different cultural elements, experiences, and identities when two or more cultures interact. In the context of Hamid's novel, the way Anders and Oona manifest their identities in the book can be examined. Throughout the novel, they experience conflicts related to their mixed backgrounds from now and then; in the end, they resolve this problem, hence longing for their white identity. Anders is the eye character in the novel, who is unrecognizable after his transformation; he is, then, no longer connected to him:

"Ande" waited for an undoing, undoing that did not come, and the hours passed. And then he realized that he had been robbed, that he was the victim of a crime. The horror of which only grew, that crime that had taken everything from him. Now, how could he say he was Anders, be Anders now?" and " He wanted to kill the

colored man who confronted him in his home, to extinguish the life animating this other other, to know nothing standing but himself" (Hamid, 2022, p. 05).

Why the transition is horrifying for Anders, the question of an identity crisis as he is no longer facing himself and supposed to kill himself, is because of the pain of the horrifying dark identity he is facing. However, when Anders discovers a pandemic of changelings, he becomes less hostile. The formerly white people eventually include Oona, his girlfriend who teaches yoga, her prejudiced mother, and everyone who was born white. Could Anders have a more Nordic name? Initially, neither he nor the white people around him accept it; it is uncertain for him to find himself with the transition of the color change as the pandemic changes color and people, "People who knew him now no longer knew him" (Ibid, p. 14) Anders is the victim of dual identity. Psychological duplicity leads him to struggle with his original identity, the consequence of reassuring that they are exact, that he is part of them, and that they are part of him. He should also ensure that he is no Other and adopt the behavior of others. But, his body speaks far from his colonized mind because his sense of being observed is ambitious because of his split personality and frustration. He has to duplicate the echoes of being other and what they performed; he imitates to perform more and less. But something he did know.

"He wanted to believe that somehow he would change back or be fixed, but he already doubted and did not believe. He then questioned whether it was entirely his imagination and assured by taking his picture and trying to locate him in the original album. The algorithm that had in the past consistently suggested his name, so sure, so reliable, could not identify him" (Ibid, p. 05).

He is entirely out of his box and unable to understand why it happens, but he wants to escape from whatever has happened. According to Bhabha, in the development of identity, one has to face all the obstacles in the light; Ander's struggle to fix himself is far beyond. He has to face the crisis in himself and unstoppable questioning from himself. "Which" means he has to go and face the world" (Ibid, p. 06). There is no way for Anders to escape from his identity: "Moving on his small place when he could not stand to remain a minute longer where he was, but there was no escaping Anders, for Anders, That day" (Ibid, p. 06). He saw himself transformed without acknowledging why it happened to him. As Bhabhas aligned, the "Third Space of enunciation" is "the setting where all cultural assertions and systems are created (Bhabha, 1994, p. 37). Anders hereto belongs to the third world space where he does not escape from reality made in the third world countries; hence, he has to live in the dive circumstances to pay himself back to his identity once he had lost. "The" eyes meeting, neither in friendliness nor hostility but just as people's meet, as people, and this happened Anders would glance away" (Hamid, 2022, p. 15). He feels the treatment of third space and being otherness.

As Anders grows his new identity, their relationship also grows, with "Oona" having sex. It had been different other than that. Still, this time, they both saw each other. The sex was gradual, unhurried, naked sex, once-for-twice grinning sex, with its urgencies evident, its frowns, and its expression of pain, and their performance was naturalness. In their attempt, they came closer, closer than they had come before" (Ibid, p. 33). Previously, they didn't pt each other, and Oona left him in the middle, but the second time, they have sex with compassion and adaptability, and they finally accept the change.

Mimicry

Bhabha's analysis of the interactions between colonizers and colonized people highlights the subjectivities and dependencies that are mutually produced (Bhabha, 1994, p. 34). Bhabha's

operation of mimicry highlights the imitation or replication of dominant colonial Culture by the colonized. Hamid's approach to mimicry can be analyzed regarding the power dynamics of a whitish color. When Anders's changing behavior, he tells Anders and calls him and says, "Better be dying; if you don't, you don't" (Hamid, 2022, p. 06); this power dynamic is the alarm of colonial legacies, which paved the question of identity.

The way mimicry is adapted for survival in the colonized world is highlighted by Oona's mother views and her doubtful concern about their (White) people when she said: "People are changing," "All over," "Over peoples" (Ibid, p. 13) In this context, characters are concerned about the third world people, those who fought for the identity and survival, still wondering about changing their identity. Characters exclusively use mimicry to challenge or deconstruct the colonial power structure; Hamid mimics the flux of his fictional world. "Ande," said he was not the same person for sure; he started by realizing under the surface it was still him, who else could it be, but it was not that simple, and the way people act around you changes from what and who you are, Oona said she understood that it was like learning a foreign language and when you tried to speak a foreign language. It isn't easy to read and write it correctly. You might lose your sense of humor, no matter how hard you tried, you cannot be as funny as you used to be, and then they both laughed, and Anders said, I understood you, yes that's exactly it" (Ibid, p. 27). The foreign language is used as a tool for their survival, and Hamid's character exemplify their identity with the foreign language; they are changed but cannot be changed the way it is. However, the use of mimicry for foreign languages indicates the power and adaptability of language as a form of survival.

Even if it is not working, you must still learn and excel. Regarding mimicry as a discursive process, Bhabha argues that what unites them all is an excess or slippage resulting from the ambivalence of mimicry (which is nearly the same, but not relatively), which sets the colonial subject as a 'partial' presence and does more than simply 'rupture' the discourse. "Partial" means to me both "incomplete" and "virtual" (Bha" ha, 1994, p. 123) Foreign language has had a colonial impact, and being colonized, mimicry is used to mimic the colonizers. Their little acts of subversion impact the dynamics between the colonized and the colonizer. Colonial legacy is reflected in the characters' cries and impacts their identities and relationships.

Ambivalence

According to Bhabha, ambivalence refers to the simultaneous attraction and repulsion of colonial subjects towards the postcolonial power. In the text, ambivalence is seen in various ways: "And "e considered the possibility that they felt the dead because not everyone did. He reasoned that some people tried to avoid thinking about the dead and hide from them, but Anders and Oona did not follow this course of action; instead, they felt the dead on a daily and hourly basis while going about their lives, and this was important to them" (Hamid, 2022, p. 65). In Bhabha's opinion ambivalence is an essential cliché for portraying the "necessary" modification and relocation of all sites of discrimination and domination (Bhabha, 1994, p. 112). The intent effect of whiteness is drilled into the colonized mindset to relocate the identity; a man should be white color, and it has significance in a multicultural and multiracial society. Anders has a confused personality and is psychologically desperate. Neither this nor that is the most essential thing Anders has explored in his new identity.

Ander and Oona were both of not any dark people bathed in a bar-colored light and trying to find their footing in a situation so familiar and so strange; Oona wondered whether it was really the case or whether people simply looked uncomfortable whenever they thought they were crazy and

perhaps everyone looked the same as they always did the same just dark" (Hamid, 2022, p. 70). Anders and Conflicting emotions arise due to their identity being questioned.

To resolve this issue of identity, Bhabha believes that Hybridity, mimicry, and ambivalence are the gateway to a stable identity. All the characters untimely own their new and stable identity but are nostalgic for their whiteness. Like other children born in the generation that followed the shift, Oona and Ander's character have no notion or recollection of being white.

Findings

The significant findings are the study on hybridity, mimicry, and ambivalence, which are the critical terms initiated by Bhabha in postcolonial literature; therefore, the postcolonial aspects apply to professional work. Hamid has dwelled to see Ander's and all his life in a hybrid spectrum. Homi K. Bhabha's theory of Hybridity, mimicry, and ambivalence is relevant to studying Mohsin Hamid's *Last White Man*. Hybridity refers to blending cultures, identities, and languages, while mimicry involves colonial subjects imitating dominant cultures. Ambivalence, on the other hand, refers to the coexistence of contradictory emotions or identities. By incorporating Bhabha's theories, the study can analyze how Hamid's novels represent these concepts in the postcolonial context, challenges traditional notions of identity, race, and culture, and provides a deeper understanding of postcolonial identity, culture, and power dynamics.

Hybridity occurs when a colonized person adopts two different cultures. He has faced a dual identity of white and dark; it is a painful transition in his life; it is not merely a transition but a period of quest for his identity. How a white man suffers and feels the brutal laws of a colorless colonized world destabilize him. He has an on-off relationship with his childhood friend Oona, a yoga teacher who has lived a tragic family life. Ander's tone shift alters the monotonous routine of the couple's being together. Initially, there is violence. From Anders: "He felt that the man of color who was confronting him inside his home deserved to die." The manager informs him that if it had happened to him, he would have committed suicide. Later, Oona's mother was shocked to learn that her daughter is seeing a dark-skinned man and finds comfort in depressingly extreme right-wing groups on the internet. Hamid's adoption of the repetition technique creates a sense of ambiguity in the characters. In this case, ambivalence can be seen through both characters, Anders and Oona.

In his first three novels, Hamid was known for his conventional pleasures, such as crime, violence, adultery, and distinctive characters. However, his latest work, "Exit" West, introduces flat-footed fabulism, where characters magically escape civil war and join migrant communities in London and California. However, in "The Last White Man," Hamid's newfound inclination to spare characters from serious trouble rises to an aesthetic principle, with the characters doing plenty of "Gazi" g, "wo "d" ring, and "real" zing, but "not much doing. The novel ends with Anders and Oona having a daughter, and all white people have turned brown, making life seem less bad. Hamid refines to highlight the dystopian world of dark people and their identity at risk. While this may be where earthlings and organisms might desirably go, it may not be what readers might desirably read. Hamid has comforted his characters by keeping them and ensuring they return home feeling like they have accomplished something. Although "The Last White Man" wants the best for them and all of us, it is difficult to envision such a joyful ending. Beyond only challenging our poisonous imaginations, "The Last White Man" also seeks to undermine established ideas about fiction. According to Hamid, the book was motivated by his "deep" sense of loss of "his own "part" al whiteness" after 9/11, which had previously given him unrestricted access to a top-notch education, lucrative employment, freedom of movement, and other benefits.

Conclusion

To summarize the present study, Hamid's novels *The Last White Man* has offered compelling explorations of postcolonial issues faced by the characters Anders and Oona—the study of the complex dynamics of hybrid identities by analyzing the characters and themes. The role of mimicry in power negotiations and the pervasive ambivalence of the colonial past are objectively located—Hamid's sense of identity crisis aligned with Bhabha's as it is a robust theoretical framework that helps understand the multifaceted challenges that postcolonial individuals encounter as they navigate their place in a rapidly evolving world.

The study understudies captivating the postcolonial literature through different writers to address the nuances of postcolonial experiences and challenges with the continued relevance of the postcolonial theory. The study reinforces the idea that the impact of colonialism exceeds far beyond the colonial past. By engaging the postcolonial issues of hybridity, mimicry, and ambivalence, Hamid prompts readers to reflect on the postcolonial existence, offering valuable insights into the ongoing struggle for self-identity of Sanders and Oona marked by the shadows of the past.

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