

Journal of Sociology & Cultural Research Review (JSCRR)

Available Online: <https://jscrr.edu.com.pk>

Print ISSN: [3007-3103](#) Online ISSN: [3007-3111](#)

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

**ERASING THE SELF: IDENTIFYING RACIAL PASSING IN
BENNETT'S THE VANISHING HALF**

Ama Tul Rehman

Mphil Scholar (English Literature), The University of Lahore, Sargodha Campus

Asad Mehmood

Lecturer in English, The University of Lahore, Sargodha Campus

Dr. Wajid Riaz

Assistant Professor, The University of Lahore, Sargodha Campus

Abstract

*This article examines the issue of racial passing in Brit Bennett's novel *The Vanishing Half* (2020) which tackles the intricacies of racial identity and persecution in a multicultural society. This study attempts to shed light on how characters deal with racial prejudice and the effects of their decisions by using an analysis based on passing theory. The story centres on twin sisters Stella and Desiree as they negotiate their identities in the face of institutional racism and social norms. While Desiree celebrates her Black identity, Stella's choice to pass as a white lady underlines the psychological and societal ramifications of colourism. The findings of the research aid in comprehending the larger conversation about race, identity, and the long-lasting effects of past injustices experienced by marginalised groups. Ultimately, this piece highlights Bennett's story's importance in modern African American literature and its critique of racial hierarchy.*

Keywords: *Racial Passing, Brit Bennett's Novel, The Vanishing Half, Racial Identity, Multicultural Society*

Introduction

Brit Bennett is an African American writer. Like many other coloured writers, such as Toni Morrison and Chinua Achebe, she described the problems that a coloured individual must face in a multicultural and multiracial society. Being a woman, she is aware of the problems that specially coloured woman must face in a racist society. In an interview with Margaret Hargrove, she explained the purpose of writing her novel was to explore the issues people face because of being labelled as being coloured. She explained that colourism is a problem that affects everyone, not just members of the Black community. It's evident that hundreds of years of White supremacy and Whiteness-prioritization have

contributed to it; it doesn't simply happen naturally in Black communities. "I thus want to avoid pathologising this group. That was the first step. Secondly, I did not want colourism to be seen as only a matter of internal conflict or as this character with dark skin believes. This is what this... That's not how I wanted it to turn out. Therefore, I believe that what piqued my attention was simply how it was expressed and felt, as well as Jude's experience growing up in this environment where both said and unspoken things exist but which she can still pick up on. Furthermore, the way she keeps it with her even after moving on from this spot to ultimately attend college and live in these other places is something that she thinks about over and over as she gets older. I was thinking about the discussions I overheard when I was a youngster regarding colour and how, in my opinion, such discussions are often linked to shame—the humiliation that individuals experience for possessing what is seen as the incorrect skin tone or body type" (Hargrove, 2020).

The novel is set in the 1950s. It is the story of two generations who were facing racial oppression and trying to avoid it at any cost. Britt Bennett starts the story with two twin sisters who live in a separate town named Mallard. This town has been constructed exclusively for coloured people. The concept of living in a separate town because of racial issues is agonizing to think about. The people living here are fair-skinned, as they have been called light people in the novel. However, they face racial discrimination. This novel covers some of the many contexts and reasons why individuals sometimes feel compelled to live as someone different from their beginnings, as well as the enduring impact of the past on a person's actions, wants, and expectations.

The father of twins is killed cold-blooded by white people before the twins. Consequently, they are pushed into a ditch of financial adversity. Their mother does odd jobs to keep both ends meet. The twins also work at the mansions of white people. Stella, one of the twins, wants to attend college, but the financial condition of her family does not allow her to do so. Desiree, the second of the pair, is a free soul. Nevertheless, she also feels caged in his dull life of moping the floor of white people's houses. One night, both decide to leave their home. They pack their bags and leave for the city to pursue their goals. The institutional and cultural racism presses them to take the extreme step.

In the city, they do ordinary jobs and earn barely enough to keep themselves alive. They live in a dirty, dripping apartment and sleep on rags, but they are happy because they feel somewhat of the racial oppression that they faced in their life in their hometown. Fortunately, Stella has applied for a job as the personal secretary of a businessman and has been appointed. The irony in this incident is that she is misunderstood as a white woman by her employers. Here comes what is one of the focus points of our study: passing. She also pretends to be a white woman to seek the job and then never looks back to her real identity until startled by a shocking incident.

Stella passes to be a white woman with no family. She says that she has no blood relative alive. Leaving her sister Desiree alone, she marries her employer and lives the peaceful life of a white lady. On the other hand, Desiree marries the blackest person she finds and gives birth to a daughter. After many years of toxic marital life, she also leaves her husband unnoticed and returns home. She starts working in a bar. Her daughter Jude is blue-black and is bullied wherever she goes. Her mother tries to soothe her by saying that everything is all right, but inwardly, she knows that her daughter will have to face the consequences of being from the wrong race, i.e., coloured.

Jude starts living with a transgender person who is always struggling to conceal his breasts. That is another example of passing. He tries to look like a man and makes a romance with Jude but never allows her to enter his pants or touch his chest. However, both love each other. One night, Jude comes across her aunt, Stella, and recognizes her because she looks exactly like her mother, being a twin. She tells her daughter, a theatre actress, that her mother is a dark woman from Mallard. She asks her mother, Stella, about it, but she does not give any satisfactory answer. Afterwards, Jude himself meets her aunt Stella and tells her about her family. It is after almost two decades that she returns to Mallard to beg her sister Desiree to ask Jude not to ruin her family life by disclosing the secret of her family background. She spends just one night in her ancestral home and returns. Later, Adele, the mother of twins, dies, and Jude rushes home to attend her funeral.

In this way, the life of two generations of dark people has been discussed in the novel with the dominant theme of racism and racial oppression. Some of the characters shun their racial identity

throughout their life. On the other hand, those who cannot or do not pass their identity face the music and lead a miserable life. Their racial identity haunts them throughout their lives. They are denied some basic human rights just because they belong to a racial group that is called dark and is not considered equal to the white. They are called coloured collectively against the white race. Britt Bennett has described the hardships of coloured communities in a multicultural society such as the USA.

By applying the passing theory on Bennett's, *The Vanishing Half* (2020), it relates closely to the character of Stella, who imitates a white woman to gain respect and a higher place in society. She hides her real identity and uses her false identity to gain her desires and goals in society and life. By employing a passing theory on analysis of *The Vanishing Half* (2020), the research could contribute to the conservation of the ways in English literature challenging racism, multiculturalism and identity crisis faced by black people and minorities globally.

Objectives

To highlight the role of passing to tackle racial issues in *The Vanishing Half* (2020).

To explore the effectiveness of the passing mechanism.

Questions

How do the characters in *The Vanishing Half* (2020) use passing to tackle racial discrimination?

To what extent do they succeed in passing and how does it change their lives?

Literature Review

1.4.1 Race and Racism

Race is a concept central in our concerned novel. Race is a group of people having similar physical characteristics such as hair colour or eye shape. According to Smedley (1998), race is defined as a category of people who share certain inherited physical characteristics, such as skin colour, facial features, and stature. In racist societies, some social characteristics are also attached to racial groups, which create stigmas. Those races are then discriminated based on stigmas. In racist societies, racial groups are put into a hierarchy and considered superior or inferior and are dealt with accordingly. According to Grosfoguel (2004), racialization is the process through which groups – frequently the dominant ones – use cultural and/or biological features/criteria to

construct a hierarchy of superiority and inferiority among collective social factors. Racialization, in relation to the U.S. being a racialized society, delineates social relations in America which in turn becomes a racial construction used to identify races with a spectrum from 'white' to 'black'.

Apart from the effects of racialization in white societies, as has been depicted in *The Vanishing Half* (2020) by Brit Bennett, this concept of racialization on the part of white people is also related to the colonial practices carried by them. The white people introduced the concept of 'others' while calling themselves 'us'. Whoever was not 'white' fell in the category of 'other' and was considered inferior and treated as a second-class human being. According to Quijano,

“Racism and ethnicization were initially produced in the Americas and then expanded to the rest of the colonial world as the foundation of the specific power relations between Europe and the populations of the rest of the world... Since then, in the intersubjective relations and in the social practices of power, there emerged, on the one hand, the idea that non-Europeans have a biological structure not only different from Europeans; but, above all, belonging to an ‘inferior’ level or type.” Quijano (2013)

It is under this social pressure that people feel the need to pass for the superior or the privileged group. The same had been done by the main female characters of *The Vanishing Half* (2020). Stella had to pass for white to gain the privileges that were denied to dark people. Researchers have also this tendency in American society. A study was carried out by Fernandes (2017) in which he interviewed 4 participants who passed to be white. Two out of the four participants admitted that they had to pass to be white in order to fit in society. They wanted it for non-identification when dealing with strangers.

Fanon (1952) also reveals how white people consider black people inferior and how the negativity, ugliness and immorality are attached to black colour and all the virtues and civilization are attached to whiteness. They measure the colour of skin from the parameter of the colour of their own kind. When white colour becomes the parameter, white civilization and white morality also become the parameter for others.

In *The Vanishing Half* (2020) the problem of white and black colour is not limited just to colour. It is about social status and

power politics. As depicted by Brit Bennett, Dark or black people were considered an inferior race. They were discriminated against in every walk of life. They become a victim of exceptional treatment and are denied equal rights. According to Baldwin

“Whiteness is a dangerous concept. It is not about skin colour. It is not even about race. It is about the wilful blindness used to justify white supremacy. It is about using moral rhetoric to defend exploitation, racism, mass murder, reigns of terror and the crimes of empire.” Baldwin (2016)

Research Methodology

The research is a text-based study in which the text of the novel *The Vanishing Half* (2020) by Britt Bennett is the main data set that has been analysed. Being an interpretive type of research, the researcher has analysed the text of the novel by using the theoretical framework of two theories: Passing theory given by Crenshaw and intersectionality theory given by Goffman. The whole text has been analysed by using passing theory and intersectionality theory.

Passing Theory

The term 'passing' is borrowed and inspired from the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) community and refers to a person who is perceived by others as having a particular identity/gender or cisgender regardless of how the individual in question identifies (Ritchie, 2018). Passing can be seen on various levels in society. It can be observed for trivial things as well as serious issues. At a coffee shop, you may see an illiterate person holding a newspaper before him in a way that he is reading it. At a fast-food point, you may see someone ordering food by looking at the pictures rather than the menu. In the same way, dying hair is also a sort of passing. Wearing heels to look taller is also an act of passing at some level, though a milder one. Wearing expensive clothes to give the impression of being from a higher social class is an act of passing. Even one can pass in his choice of words in his day-to-day communication using the vocabulary that is used by upper-class people. Therefore, if we observe keenly, we can see people pass all around us.

According to Goffman (1963), "the management of undisclosed discrediting information about self" is called passing. He identified four types of passing, which are used by stigmatized individuals to pass for someone else. The first method is 'dissociation', where the

person pretends not to be part of a stigmatized group to avoid discrimination and consequences. This can be done by dressing nicely, establishing a library, carrying a magazine, or acting like straight people. The second method is 'omission', where the passer omits information to avoid being considered part of a stigmatized group. This occurs when there are two parties involved in an interaction: the interactant and the respondent. The third method is 'mutual pretence', where both parties know the truth but avoid discussing it. This is called 'counterfeit secrecy', where the interactant knows about the passer's stigma but doesn't disclose it. This creates a bond of mutual trust or respect. The fourth type is 'playing with the audience', where the passer plays mind games and deals with the audience psychologically. This technique is called 'minstrelization', where the stigmatized person ingratiate the bad qualities imputed to their group, consolidating a life situation into a clownish role. The people using this technique do not try hard to conceal the stigma but instead inculcate the signs or habits attributed to their group, putting the audience in a defensive position by showing off what is supposed to be concealed.

Data Analysis

The text of the novel *The Vanishing Half* (2020) by Brit Bennett is the primary data set that has been analysed in this study. The focus of this research has been on the text, which has been analysed and interpreted to answer the research questions. In this section of the study, the chunks from the original text have been given and discussed to gain insight into the psyche of characters, how their identities affected their life and how they decided to pass to be a part of the white race.

1.7.1 Passing: A Smart Way to Better Life

The mentality of people regarding the act of passing can be seen when the dark boy Early is hired by Sam to find Desiree. He came to Mallard and had a chat about the Vignes family. When talking about Stella, the other man says that she thinks she is living "real fine like a white lady" in the city thinking that she is white now.

"You know her sister run off, get to thinkin she white now." "Oh yeah," the old man said. "Out there livin real fine like a white lady" (Bennett, 2020, p. 33).

The remark shows jealousy mixed with a longing for a better life. The man seems to idealise the life led by white people. Therefore, he calls her life a fine life like the white ladies live. This shows that

for black people, the life led by white people was the ideal life. It also reflects the consequences of passing. The man calls her life to be fine, like a white lady, which means that the act of passing earned her a higher place in society, and it proved to be the right decision on her part.

Passing for white was a decision which was forced on her, and the likes of her, by society. Britt Bennett has given an account of the circumstances in which Stella had to choose to pass for white. When people from a particular race or community are denied opportunities to thrive and are deprived of their rights, they are likely to think of disguising themselves as a member of the class which has rights and privileges. They are left with no choice but to be a part of a group or community which is powerful and privileged. Bennett describes it so:

"It wasn't lying, she told Stella. How was it her fault if they thought she was white when they hired her" (Bennett, 2020, p. 38)?

The twin girls went to the city, but their life was tough, and they were on the verge of starving. Stella was fit for the job of typist. But the only hurdle was her being coloured. She would not have been hired if anyone had found out that she was a coloured girl. This shows the disadvantages of being a part of a marginal race. Had she been white, she would not have faced any difficulty in finding a job. But being coloured created problems for her. It was in this condition that she decided to conceal her race and pass for white.

As it was not her first exposure to the outer world where blacks were discriminated against, it was not her first time to pass for whites. She already did it on a small scale. Adele Vignes has given a hint about Stella's passing in this line. She tells Desiree that it was not the first time Stella passed for white. She used to do it in Mallard.

"It wasn't her first time," she said. "Ma'am?" "Being white," her mother said. "New Orleans was just her chance to do it for real" (Bennett, 2020, p. 43).

She tried successfully passing in Mallard when she was a child. She visited the museum when it was not a Negro Day. Again, like separate-coloured wards in hospitals, like white sections in trains, separate Negro days for the black people to visit the museum was a humiliation to the whole race. There is not a grain of logic in

letting some people visit the museum for just one day based on their colour and letting other people visit the museum for the whole week, again due to their colour. Yet so were the rules and regulations. In the presence of such rules and regulations, the only solution left is the one adopted by Stella: passing. She says that there was nothing about being white but boldness. By adopting boldness, one can effectively pass for white because white people are bold. Their boldness is the result of the confidence that is produced by the sense of superiority that they start feeling and experiencing from the day of their birth.

Although she was light, she was from the black people, and she would often have felt the need to pass for white. Her mother knew it. That is why she says that this is just the time she got a chance to pass for white in real. It also shows the social pressure on black people how, even light-skinned people, were not given equal opportunities in society and they were bound to earn them by means of passing. If light-skinned people were so tormented in society, what would be the extent of discrimination that black people would face?

Bennett also gives an account of the people of Mallard who passed to be white in the past. These are the trivial acts of passing which were performed more for fun than serious passing: A man who boarded the 'white section' of the train and confirmed her whiteness by speaking French. At first, separate sections for black and white refer to the distinction that was maintained between the two races. It is humiliating in itself but it was the way American society worked. A lady passing for white to get a teaching certificate is another spectacle of injustice and inequality. Someone got more pay because he was mistaken for white. These incidents are small, but Brit Bennett has very effectively portrayed the picture of a racially prejudiced society where one has to be white or at least pass for white to get his rights.

At her museum adventure, she passed for white and enjoyed her visit, but it was the Negro guard who recognised her. She had the same fear in her mind even after decades had passed. She was afraid of being recognised by a Negro. That is why she got extremely panicky when a black family was about to shift into their neighbourhood. She tried her best to restrain them from shifting to their locality. Passing is easy, but maintaining it demands constant vigilance and care.

Bennett talks about the act of passing on the part of Stella. In her view, it was an obvious decision.

“She had become white because it was practical, so practical that, at the time, her decision seemed laughably obvious. Why wouldn’t you be white if you could be? Remaining what you were or becoming something new, it was all a choice, anyway you looked at it. She had just made the rational decision” (Bennett, 2020, p. 138).

Keeping in mind the level of racism and racial discrimination in American society, she seems justified in passing. There are two options: to be what you are or to pass for white. By choosing the former, you are destined to be maltreated and discriminated against throughout your life. You would lead your life struggling to be considered equal to white people. You would never get the respect that a human being deserves. Anywhere you go, you would be taken as a second-class citizen. On the other hand, by choosing later, you get a superior place and high status in society. You would be respected everywhere. Being a part of the privileged class would assure safety, respect, superiority and power for you. In these circumstances, the decision to pass is justified on pragmatic, rational and utilitarian grounds.

1.7.2 The Dilemma of Passing: Gains and Losses

The main conflict of the novel is the outcomes of passing. In the act of passing, the hardest part is to keep up the countenance and avoid the revelation of reality. If one is light-skinned with straight, wavy hair, one can pass to be white, but the most difficult part is to behave like white people. The act of passing is not merely about claiming to be white; it includes the complete personality shift from one paradigm to the other. One must become white inwardly to pass for white. That is why Desiree remembers many instances in which people passed for whites and got caught. But as Adele Vignes said this was not the first time she passed for white, Stella did it with so much perfection as she was well versed in it. She adopted the complete behaviour and outlook of white people, along with the resentment they had for the blacks. She played her role quite perfectly.

“She’d never spoken kindly of a Negro. But Stella wouldn’t even hire coloured help for the house.... She was jumpy around Negroes, like a child who’d been bit by a dog” (Bennett, 2020, p. 90).

After passing as white, she spoke harshly about the black people. She shunned black people and avoided hiring them for work. She felt uncomfortable seeing black people and tried not to have any interaction with them. There are many possible reasons for her silly behaviour regarding blacks. First, she played the role of a white lady with a heart. She acted with so much perfection that she almost made herself believe that she was a white lady who should avoid black people. Secondly, although she was leading a successful married life as a white lady, yet there was an insecurity in her mind which was quite natural to her: the insecurity of being recognised and caught. It was for this fear, too, that she tried to avoid any interaction with black people.

To lie is part and parcel of passing. Passing is all about lying and Stella had to do it, all through her life, even to her husband and her beloved daughter Kennedy. It was only once in her life that she honestly told her daughter that her hometown was Mallard. Otherwise, she told everyone that her people are all dead and she does not remember much about them.

“It’s just a little place called Mallard, darling,” she said. “It’s nothing like Los Angeles.” She’d been, for the first and final time..... and beyond that, she would barely talk about her childhood at all” (Bennett, 2020, p. 93).

She avoided talking about her past and her husband, thinking not to traumatise her by talking about her past and her (dead) people, and never insisted on scratching her background. He was a nice man with a clear countenance and a pure heart. He gave everything he had to her without even knowing her background. Stella, too, loved her family, and it was for the love of her family that she completely adopted the outlook of a white lady and forgot her people as if they were dead in real. Every great piece of acting demands originality. Passing is no different than acting, which has to be done with a real-like perfection. Stella did so, to bind together her family forever.

Some lies are essential for the collective best. If we exclude some necessary and much needed lies, our lives will dash to the ground in a moment. Sometimes things are not so in the start as they get with the course of time. Stella meant no bad when she passed for white: she did so just to get a job to avoid starvation in a city where the twin sister knew no one. Later on, life made its own way, and she ended up in the house of Blake as her wife. Now, it

became essential for her to keep up the countenance. She lied for the whole of her life about her family and that they were all dead.

“But where is she?” “Gone,” she said. “My family is gone.” She’d told Blake the same lie years ago in New Orleans:
“Mommy doesn’t like talking about her family,” he murmured. “It makes her sad.” “But why?” “Because. They aren’t here anymore. So don’t ask her anything else, okay?”

The act of passing brought some betterment to her life, but it took away a lot, which was priceless. She had to exchange one family for the other. She lost her twin sister, whom she considered her half. She lost her mother, her people and her town. In return, she got a caring husband, a lovely daughter and a luxurious life. There are always many aspects of a situation, and the debate about profits and losses never ends. She also chose her course of life by passing as white, and the rest of her life was mainly decided by this decision.

Stella had some insecurity, as had already been discovered, in her mind. That is why she shunned the presence of other people. She avoided the black people for fear of being recognised by them.

“Even after all these years, she still felt nervous around white women, running out of small talk as soon as she opened her mouth.... But she felt safe like this, locked away” (Bennett, 2020, p. 97).

The same was the reason for her avoiding the gatherings of white people too. She was a plant, uprooted from her place, and now no soil perfectly suited her. She always feared to be discovered. Her act of passing gave her a lot but took away herself from the real her. Her life became fake. Lifelong prevention is tiresome, but she had no way out of it. If she had discovered or disclosed her reality herself, her family would have been torn apart, which she could not tolerate. She tried very hard to keep it joined.

Brit Bennett very artistically connects the problems of passing faced by Stella with racial discrimination and disadvantages. She wants to blame the racist white people for what a passer has to face, and she does so in a very logical way. All the problems of Stella's life would have been solved on the other side of just one "if". "If she had been white" was the master key to all her problems which she unfortunately did not get.

“No white men dragging her daddy from the porch. No laundry baskets filling the living room..... Maybe she could have been the

type of girl his mother wanted him to marry.” (Bennett, 2020, p. 104).

The life of passing has its own setbacks. It offers no way out, not a respectable one, at least. That is why life after passing has its own dilemmas and complications. The passer is under constant psychological pressure. He feels guilty of treachery, and his conscience pricks him to reveal his identity, but he cannot because the revelation means an end to his second identity, after the first, which he has renounced willingly. She could tell the truth, she thought, but there was no single truth anymore. She’d lived a life split between two women—each real, each a lie” (Bennett, 2020, p. 161).

Stella, too, passes through this phase. She wanted to tell the truth about herself, but it would have worsened the situation. The revelation of her identity would have put a question mark on everything. Her life would have become a scam, a dream, a theatrical act, a joke. It would also have pushed her daughter into the unfathomable ditch of identity crisis. Her husband would also be shocked to have led a life with a woman whom he did not know at all. She had two women inside her who belonged to two different families from two different races. Each of her two lives was a bubble that would have blasted on the revelation of truth.

The passer makes his life uneasy, but besides, he gives an identity crisis to his offspring, too. One glimpse of the identity crisis and what the revelation of the identity of her mother was about to bring upon her can be seen when Jude happens to call Kennedy a Negro. She is infuriated upon being called a Negro and readily resorts to the identity of her father.

“My father’s white, you know. And you don’t get to show up and tell me what I am” (Bennett, 2020, p. 182).

But one drop rule was very cruel, according to which she could not have been called white, having a mother from black people. It would have turned her life upside down. That is why she reacts furiously to Jude on the question of her being a Negro from her mother's side.

Britt Bennett has summed up the whole philosophy of passing as white in just one line. Desiree and Stella had a conversation when they met in Mallard after decades. Her passing was the topic of discussion. When Desiree asks her about how she did it, she says that she liked how she was with Blake. When Desiree asked white,

Stella said free which Desiree said were the same things. Freedom and whiteness have been described to be synonymous by Britt Bennett in an artistic manner. This is the whole story of passing for white. In such a racist society as the United States, freedom is a luxury only available to white people. Black people are bound in several invisible chains of discrimination, prejudices and disadvantages. One who is free must be white and every white person would surely be free. There is no other way to gain social freedom and an equal place in society than either giving birth to white folks or passing for white. Stella took the bold step and experienced the free life of a white lady but at the cost of her family, roots and identity.

Conclusion

This research study was carried out to explore racial passing in *The Vanishing Half* (2020) by Britt Bennett. There are two characters that pass in the novel: Stella passes for white while Reese, the boyfriend of Jude, passes to be male, who originally was a transgender. As this study is related to racial passing, the focus of the analysis had been on the act of passing by Stella. She was about to be denied a job opportunity because of her being coloured. At that moment, she passes to be white and secures her job. Afterwards, she had to permanently adopt this identity when she married her employer, Blake. She used passing to get rid of poverty and social inequality. She used passing in her childhood to enter the museum on the day when only white people were allowed inside. But as a grown woman, she used passing to experience the life of white people.

The second question was about the level of success in passing and its effects on the lives of the characters that passed to be white. The study answers this question in the form of an analysis of the life and character of Stella. She passed to be white: a successful passing apparently, but the real answer to this question lies in another question: what success is. If passing to be white and leading a free and privileged life of a white lady with a happy family is a success, then her passing was a success. But if the inner insecurities, guilt and nostalgia are taken into consideration, then her passing was a failure. On one hand, she gained a lot by passing: everything that a poor black country girl could have dreamed of. From this angle, her passing seems successful. On the other hand, she lost her family, her home, her people, her identity and her past. She was

like an uprooted plant which was planted at a new place, but the new soil did not seem suitable to it. She was a misfit as a white lady and led all her life under the fear of being discovered. From this perspective, her passing was a failure. Calling her passing a success or a failure depends upon the perspective of the reader. It proved to be a success and a failure at the same time. It was an exchange of problems: physical for the psychological ones, common for the corporate ones.

References

- Akbar, H., Ahmad, M., & Mehmood, S. (2021). Intricateness of Identity and Race: A Racist Study of Brit Bennet's Novel *The Vanishing Half*. *Pakistan Social Sciences Review*, 5(4), 348-357.
- Baldwin, J. (2013). *The fire next time*. Vintage.
- Bennett, B. (2020). *The Vanishing Half* (2020). New York: Riverhead Books.
- Fanon, F. (1952). *Black Skin, White Masks*. London: Paladin.
- Fernandes, C. A. (2017). *Unpacking 'La Mochila' of Latino White Privilege: Relationships Among White Privilege, Color Blind Attitudes, and Internalized Racism Among Latinos* (Doctoral dissertation, Northeastern University).
- Goffman, E. (1963). *Embarrassment and social organization*.
- Grosfoguel, R. (2004). Race and ethnicity or racialized ethnicities? Identities within global coloniality. *Ethnicities*, 4(3), 315-336.
- Hargrove, M. (2020, June 3). Brit Bennett's 'The vanishing half' tackles race, colorism, and identity. Audible Blog. <https://www.audible.com/blog/brit-bennetts-the-vanishing-half-tackles-race-colorism-and-identity>
- Hurston, Z, N. (1937). *Their Eyes were Watching God*.
- Larsen, N. (1929). *Passing*. New York, USA: Negro University Press.
- Morgado, M. G. (2022). Colorism, Passing for White, and Intertextuality in Brit Bennett's *The Vanishing Half*: Rewriting African American Women's Literary Tradition. *Babel-AFIAL: Aspectos de Filología Inglesa e Alema*, (31), 73-96.
- Morrison, T. (1970). *The Bluest Eye*.
- Morrison, T. (1973). *Sula*.
- Quijano, A. (2013). The paradoxes of colonial/modernity. In Andre Gunder Frank and *Global Development* (pp. 120-141). Routledge.

- Ritchie, A. (2018). On 'Passing' in the Transgender Community. *The Gay & Lesbian Review Worldwide*, 25(1), 5-6.
- Smedley, A. (1998). " Race" and the construction of human identity. *American anthropologist*, 100(3), 690-702.

JSCRR