

UNDERGRADUATE THESIS

**‘FUN AND TRAGIC’: THE PORTRAYAL OF STELLA’S MIMICRY
THROUGH THE ACT OF WHITE-PASSING IN *THE VANISHING HALF*
(2020)**



By

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ENGLISH DEPARTMENT

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SURABAYA

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**Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Sarjana Degree
of English Department Faculty of Humanities Universitas Airlangga**

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2022

DECLARATION

I declare that this undergraduate thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the degree of Sarjana Humaniora (S.Hum) of the English Department Faculty of Humanities Universitas Airlangga is entirely my own work and has been solely the result of my own original research. Hereby, I confirm that:

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Ammarsya Nurshabrina A.

NIM 121811233115

This thesis is dedicated to:

All my beloved ones who
have always been believing and
supporting me. To myself, my
parents, my family, and my dearest
friends

APPROVAL SHEET

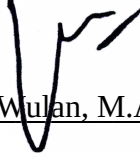
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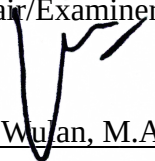
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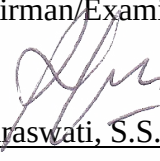
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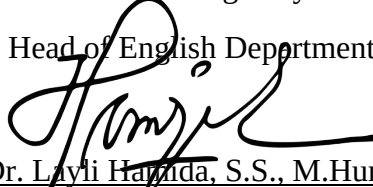


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Surabaya, January 3rd 2022

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*“it’s okay if some things
are always out of reach.*

*if you could carry all the stars
in the palm of your hand,
they wouldn’t be
half as breathtaking.”*

---- Caroline Kaufman

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore the issue of racial passing depicted in *The Vanishing Half* (2020), a historical fiction written by Brit Bennett, through the lens of Homi K. Bhabha's postcolonial theory called mimicry. Questioning the racial relations in the 1950s-1990s between the colonizer and colonized in America and the portrayal of Stella's acts and motivations to pass for white through mimicking white people, the study uncovers the factors influencing Stella's decision to alter her racial identity. After examining the object, the study revealed the complex racial relation between Black and white people during the 1950s-1990s due to the internalization of whiteness as a hegemonic value. Furthermore, the study exposed the factors affecting Stella's decision to pass for white, including colorism, power abuse, and constrained self-exploration. The acts of white-passing in the novel are considered to be a part of mimicry as Stella mimics white people's behaviors, including changing her social status, lifestyle, values, and attitudes. Afterward, the concept of ambivalence and unhomeliness supported the analysis of how Stella's choice influenced the construction of her postcolonial identity. The novel portrayed Stella's acts of white-passing as fun and tragic experience, freed in self-exploration while constrained to embrace her biracial identity.

Keywords: *mimicry, postcolonialism, white-passing*

ABSTRAK

Studi ini bertujuan untuk mencari tahu permasalahan perubahan identitas rasial (*racial passing*) yang digambarkan dalam *The Vanishing Half* (2020), sebuah novel sejarah fiksi karya Brit Bennett, berdasarkan teori mimikri yang dikemukakan oleh Homi K. Bhabha. Mempertanyakan hubungan rasial pada era 1950an-1990an antara para penjajah dan terjajah di Amerika dan penggambaran aksi dan motivasi yang memengaruhi Stella melalui menirukan orang-orang berkulit putih, studi ini mengungkap faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi keputusan Stella untuk mengubah identitas rasialnya. Setelah menganalisis objek, studi menemukan hubungan rasial yang rumit antara orang-orang berkulit hitam dan putih yang disebabkan oleh internalisasi *whiteness* sebagai sebuah nilai hegemonik. Selanjutnya, studi menemukan faktor-faktor yang memengaruhi keputusan Stella untuk menjadi orang berkulit putih, yaitu diskriminasi berdasarkan warna kulit, penyalahgunaan kekuasaan, dan eksplorasi diri yang terkekang. Aksi perubahan identitas rasial menjadi orang berkulit putih dalam novel dapat dikatakan sebagai bagian dari mimikri karena Stella menirukan sifat-sifat orang-orang berkulit putih, seperti mengubah status sosial, gaya hidup, dan nilai dan sikap. Setelah itu, konsep ambivalensi dan *unhomeliness* mendukung pengaruh pilihan Stella dalam pembangunan identitas poskolonialnya. Novel *The Vanishing Half* menggambarkan aksi perubahan identitas rasial menjadi orang berkulit putih sebagai pengalaman yang menyenangkan sekaligus menyedihkan, bebas untuk melakukan eksplorasi diri namun terkekang dalam membanggakan identitas birasialnya.

Kata kunci: mimikri, poskolonial, *white-passing*