

Fragmented Selves: Postcolonial and Postmodern Perspectives on Zadie Smith's *White Teeth*

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Abstract

The present research paper attempts to answer the following question: How does White Teeth reflect the complexities of identity and cultural plurality within the intertwined contexts of postcolonialism and postmodernity? This question is particularly pertinent in the light of the ways in which the novel problematizes the notion of a unified national identity. By foregrounding characters who are caught between multiple cultural allegiances, Smith dismantles the simplistic binaries that have historically supported discourses of race, ethnicity and modernity, binaries that have led to the creation of fragmented selves and hybrid identities in a metropolitan world.

Keywords: Postcolonialism, binarism, postmodernism, multiculturalism, white teeth.

نوات متشظية: رؤى ما بعد استعمارية وما بعد حداثة في رواية الأسنان البيضاء لزيدي سميث

ملخص

تهدف هذه الورقة البحثية إلى الإجابة عن السؤال التالي: كيف تعكس رواية أسنان بيضاء تعقيدات الهوية وتعددية الثقافة في سياقين مختلفين ومتداخلين وهما ما بعد الاستعمار وما بعد الحداثة؟ تكتسب هذه الإشكالية أهميتها في ضوء الكيفية التي تزرع بها الرواية فكرة الهوية الوطنية الموحدة. فمن خلال إبراز شخصيات تعيش في تقاطع ولاءات ثقافية متعددة، تقوم سميث بتفكيك الثنائيات المبسطة التي طالت خطابات العرق والاثنية والحداثة لتبين أن تلك الثنائيات أسهمت في خلق نوات مجزأة وهجينة في عالم مدني ومعاصر.

الكلمات المفتاحية: ما بعد الاستعمار، ازدواجية، ما بعد حداثة، تعدد ثقافات، أسنان بيضاء.

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Introduction:

At its core, *White Teeth* is a narrative about the negotiation of identity in an increasingly globalized and culturally plural society. The novel's multi-layered structure weaves together the histories and destinies of the Jones, Iqbal, and Chalfen families, symbolically representing the tensions between tradition and modernity. In the wake of Britain's imperial legacy, Smith's text emerges as an incisive commentary on the social transformations brought about by decolonization and subsequent waves of migration. As Beukema notes, "the novel interrogates the masculine historical experience, in a postcolonial Britain, where old imperial structures clash with new forms of cultural expression" (Beukema, 2008: 22). This confrontation is not limited to gender politics alone; rather, it extends to broader issues of identity formation and cultural belonging.

The novel is celebrated for its deliberate combination of modern and postmodern narrative strategies. By incorporating intertextual references, irony and a multiplicity of voices, Smith the paradoxes inherent in the experience of being both modern and postmodern. The text challenges the notion of a singular, stable identity by presenting characters whose lives are marked by hybridity and fragmentation. This resonates with contemporary theoretical discourses on identity that reject essentialist views in favor of a more fluid and dynamic understanding of selfhood. In this sense, *White Teeth* does not only contribute to debates within literary studies, but also reflects broader sociocultural shifts in a globalized world. Precisely, the present paper does not aim solely to read the novel as a story of immigrants who try to cope with the new world or to justify their Britishness; at a deeper level, it aims to show that the novel deals with a universal concern, as it tries to reveal that all races downfalls and flaws, and not only those of other races, such as Asians and Indians. So, among the aims and contributions of the paper is that *White Teeth*, even though so often seen as a postcolonial novel concerned with race issues, also represents a universal work through the various themes and concerns it addresses. The chosen theoretical framework of the novel is a connection between postcolonial and postmodern techniques that are merged to show the utility and intersection of both theories. It mainly aims to show that its context is postcolonial while also being grounded in postmodern techniques that help to understand the process of identity transformation.

Furthermore, the novel's exploration of identity is inextricably linked to the impact of postcolonial power dynamics. The cultural disjunction experienced by characters such as Irie Jones is representative of the tensions between inherited colonial legacies and the demands of modern multicultural societies. As discussed in recent scholarship by Melissa Williams, the novel can be read through a postcolonial lens that foregrounds the intersection of race, gender, and education. For these reasons, the paper draws on the most suitable and prominent critics and theories, which better support the analysis of the novel. Hence, it relies on postcolonial and postmodern notions and techniques as complementary theories. Besides, it stresses the importance of multiculturalism as a theory and as a mode of living. Williams argues that "Smith's text interrogates the "mis-education" of its characters, a concept that echoes Carter G. Woodson's critique of historical erasure in educational institutions" (Williams, 2023: 94–113). By exposing the institutional mechanisms that contribute to cultural alienation, the novel highlights the enduring relevance of postcolonial theory in understanding contemporary identity crises. The novel, from a theoretical point of view, tries to rely on both the postcolonial and postmodern theories, not as parallel or opposing theories, but rather because they both add interesting readings and criticism to the novel. Thus, the paper tries to relate and show how both the postmodern techniques, like fragmentation and time, and postcolonial ones, like hybridity, are merged to make the text rich and open to different interpretations. Indeed, showing how fragile and weak some characters are pushes the reader to interpret and analyze hybridity and relate it to the state of characters who are always riven between two worlds; a real one where they try hard to answer who they are, and an imagined one where they seek a nostalgic land and



past. Nevertheless, the paper seeks to study the novel both thematically and stylistically, as it displays some postmodern techniques that alternate with postcolonial ones.

1- Intersections of Postcolonial and Postmodern Themes in Zadie Smith's *White Teeth*: Hybridity, Fragmentation and the Legacy of Imperialism

Although commonly discussed within postcolonial frameworks, the novel also exemplifies key postmodern concerns, most notably, the instability of identity, the fragmented structure of narrative, and the multiplicity of cultural influences. By connecting the legacies of empire with the complexities of modern multicultural existence, Smith's writing embodies an intersection of postcolonial and postmodern norms. This section examines how the novel's exploration of hybridity and identity, its portrayal of multicultural fragmentation, and its reflections on imperial histories unite to produce a rich, multifaceted narrative that speaks to the fluid nature of subjectivity in contemporary societies. In *White Teeth*, postcolonialism and postmodernism intersect through a fragmented narrative that exposes the instability of identity in a multicultural, postimperial Britain. Zadie Smith employs postmodern techniques such as non-linear chronology, shifting perspectives, and ironic tone to destabilize grand narratives of history and nationhood, while simultaneously establishing and foregrounding postcolonial concerns with migration, hybridity, and cultural inheritance. For example, the conflicting issues of Samad Iqbal and his twin sons illustrate how colonial legacies fracture identity; rationalism and secularism are a parody presenting a colonial discourse and Western modernity. This fragmentation is further intensified by the novel's metafictional questioning of scientific determinism in the Future Mouse Project. Thus, Smith does not only juxtapose postcolonial themes with postmodern form; rather, she tries to prove that dislocation and uncertainty central to postmodernism are the very conditions produced by the historical realities of colonialism and its aftermath. Basically, *White Teeth* is a novel about belonging and the construction of self in a world marked by overlapping cultural influences. The lives of characters such as Irie Jones, Millat Iqbal, Samad Iqbal, and Archie Jones reveal how identities are not static or singular; instead, they are assembled from a mosaic of historical, racial and cultural narratives. This multiplicity of influences is central to both postcolonial and postmodern theories. On one hand, postcolonial criticism, drawing on theorists like Edward Said and Homi Bhabha, examines how colonial legacies continue to shape cultural and personal identities. On the other hand, the postmodern theory challenges the notion of a unified, stable self and emphasizes fragmentation, multiple truths, and the constructed nature of narrative. In *White Teeth*, hybridity emerges as the common ground where these theoretical concerns meet, as the novel illustrates both the promise and the conflict inherent in the blending of diverse cultural influences. Similar to this context, we find an interesting comment by Homi Bhabha, saying: "Hybridity is the sign of the productivity of colonial power, its shifting forces and fixities" (Bhabha, 1994: 38). Here the colonial power is not negotiated in terms of violence, but rather how it generates hybrid identities.

Interestingly, the clear interchange of these themes is not accidental. Smith intentionally crafts a narrative that reflects the disjunctive nature of modern multicultural societies. As characters navigate the "in-between" spaces of their cultural pasts and the possibilities of their present, the text subverts conventional narratives of national identity. In doing so, it aligns with both postcolonial demands for the recognition of historical injustice and postmodern calls to embrace the fragmented and contingent nature of truth (Hawkins, 1983: 198).

One of the most salient intersections between postcolonial and postmodern themes in *White Teeth* is its exploration of hybridity and identity. Hybridity, as a concept central to Homi Bhabha's theory, denotes the in-between spaces where cultures intersect and transform one another. In *White Teeth*, characters such as Irie Jones and Millat Iqbal exemplify hybrid identities that arise from the intermingling of different cultural heritages. The state of being caught in between or having a third space is also referred to as being subaltern: "The term subaltern refers to someone who lives in a third space between two cultures" (Grossberg, 1996:



91). Moreover, the term biculturalism, however, differs from hybridity in that a hybrid identity is an amalgam, whereas a 'dual cultural identity' consists of two aspects.

These cases are, in fact, at the very heart of claiming identity to be ever continuous and in progress. As Stuart Hall (1990) argues, identity in the diaspora is a process of continuous transformation. It is "a matter of becoming as well as being, always in flux and never complete" (Hall, 1990: 1). Actually, the diasporic identity involves a negotiation of multiple cultural influences, and individuals often exist in a state of in-betweenness, feeling connected to more than one cultural tradition, yet not fully belonging to any. This can create a sense of hybridity, as discussed by Homi Bhabha (1994), who highlights how diasporic subjects occupy a "third space" where new cultural meanings and identities can emerge.

Irie Jones, the daughter of a Jamaican mother and a British father, symbolizes the very ambiguity that hybrid identity entails. Throughout the novel, Irie wrestles with conflicting expectations: on the one hand, she is expected to conform to a particular notion of Britishness, a construct imbued with the remnants of colonial power; on the other, her mixed heritage forces her to confront alternative cultural values. This tension is not portrayed merely as an internal dilemma, but also as a social phenomenon. As noted by Güven and Aldemir, "hybridity in *White Teeth* contributes to a fragmented yet evolving sense of identity" (Güven, 2025: 94). Irie's experience reveals that hybridity is double-edged: it is both a source of creative possibility and a generator of conflict. The multiplicity within herself, her "double voice" as she alternates between familial and public discourse, reflects the postmodern view of the self as unstable and constructed rather than innate.

Similarly, Millat Iqbal's character is caught in the currents of hybridity. As one of the Iqbal twins, Millat is simultaneously imprisoned by his father's traditional Bangladeshi heritage and exposed to the hybridized reality of modern London. His identity is marked by a constant mediation between the past and the present, a concern that is symbolic of postcolonial disjunction and postmodern fragmentation alike. Whereas hybridity can empower individuals by providing them with multiple cultural resources, it can also induce a crisis of identity when these cultural elements conflict. In Millat's case, his eventual turn toward radicalism may be read as an overreaction to the pressures of belonging neither fully to his inherited culture nor to the modern society he inhabits. This conflict highlights the idea that hybrid identities, while potentially rich and adaptive, also carry inherent tensions that can lead to personal and communal dissonance.

In postcolonial contexts, cultural identity is often fractured by the experience of colonization and the imposition of foreign cultural systems. This leads to a tension between inherited cultural values and the dominant culture in which diasporic individuals find themselves. Characters in *White Teeth* resist these tensions by trying to reconcile their ancestral traditions with the demands of modern Western life.

Furthermore, cultural identity is closely linked to issues of race, ethnicity, religion and language. For instance, in *White Teeth*, Samad Iqbal's obsessive desire to preserve his Bengali-Muslim heritage, symbolized by sending his son Magid back to Bangladesh, reveals how cultural identity can become a source of anxiety and control in the face of perceived cultural erosion.

In his attempt to preserve cultural purity, Samad makes the drastic decision to send one of his twin sons, Magid, back to Bangladesh. Ironically, the result undermines his intention: Magid returns more Westernized and secular than his brother Millat, who remains in England and becomes involved in radical Islam (Z. Smith, 2001: 193). This reversal illustrates Bhabha's concept of hybridity, where cultural meanings are never fully controllable and identities emerge in unpredictable ways.

Samad's failure to enforce a singular cultural identity upon his children underscores the futility of rigid traditionalism in diasporic life. His character, indeed, serves as a critique of



essentialist views of identity and a recognition of the inevitable cultural hybridity that comes with diaspora (Z. Smith, 2001: 193).

In contrast, Irie, the daughter of a Jamaican mother and an English father, represents the next generation of diasporic subjects, those born and raised in Britain, yet disconnected from any single cultural identity. Her journey is marked by a crisis of self-definition, as she struggles with her racial appearance, her mixed heritage, and her position in British society.

Irie's internal conflict is magnified by her attempt to conform to Eurocentric beauty standards, evidenced by her desire to straighten her hair. Her eventual decision to learn about her Jamaican roots reflects Paul Gilroy's notion of diasporic identity as transnational and historical. She realizes that identity is not inherited in a fixed way, but constructed through engagement with history, family and also imagination.

In the novel's conclusion, Irie rejects the binary choices of East versus West, white versus black; she embraces ambiguity instead. She likewise dreams of a future child, fathered by either Millat or Magid, whose identity is open-ended. This dream represents Bhabha's "third space" where a new, unbounded identity can emerge. Irie becomes the embodiment of a hybrid, postcolonial subject who accepts multiplicity as part of her being.

Interestingly, the metaphor of "teeth", which is central to the novel's imagery, provides an additional layer of meaning to the discussion of hybridity. Teeth, which remain white regardless of racial background, serve as a unifying symbol in *White Teeth*. They represent the enduring human traits that persist across cultural divides even as personal identities fracture under the weight of history and social expectation. In this sense, the universal quality of teeth offers a counterpoint to the fragmentation of identity, suggesting that while cultural hybridity can be troubled by conflict, there always remains a common humanity beneath these divisions.

In fact, the intersections of hybridity, fragmentation and the legacy of imperialism in *White Teeth* invite us to reconsider the nature of identity in the contemporary world. By situating its characters in a space where multiple cultural narratives collide, the novel undermines any singular conception of self. Instead, identity is portrayed as a fluid, contested terrain that is continually remade in response to both personal experiences and historical forces.

Among the most important reasons is the great wave of immigration, which led undeniably to the unification and amalgamation of cultures and identities during the postcolonial period, as it shaped a new cultural diversity, giving rise to disagreement over the question of identity. Therefore, the quest for identity has always been among the most central themes that postcolonial writers have addressed.

In fact, the process of developing an identity is an ever-ongoing and ever-flexible one; knowing your origins and your past relieves stress and self-doubt. In this respect, identity is often regarded as never "final" and continues to develop throughout the lifespan. Considering one's identity reduces anxiety and elevates self-esteem.

Although identity seems to be quite personal, it is also collective. When people share common roots, common traits and common historical past, the result is a collective identity with a hidden true self, which Stuart Hall defines as follows: "It can also be said that the cultural identity reflects common historical traces and shares cultural experiences that provide people of the same race with a stable and continuous definition" (Hall, 1990).

As a bitter truth, this happens mainly when countries have experienced previous wars. This situation occurs when the historical past is painful or has deteriorated, as in wars. In a nutshell, the colonial past contributes, directly or indirectly, to shaping modern identities.

Smith's narrative techniques, namely its non-linear chronology, the multiplicity of voices and intertextual references, are in themselves a manifestation of a postmodern aesthetic. Yet these formal innovations are not essentially detached from political realities. They are intimately linked to the postcolonial condition: the idea that the wounds of empire persist in the present and that cultural identities are forever marked by historical disruptions is always there.



Through its use of fragmentation and combination, *White Teeth* shows that truth and identity are not absolute; they are simply shaped through the interplay of divergent narratives. Subsequently, a number of cultural and spatial elements that led to a series of disputes were caused by the colonial era and its attempts to shape and influence colonial and postcolonial identities.

Accordingly, an identity crisis happens when individuals are confronted with conflicting cultural expectations and are unable to reconcile the different influences that shape their sense of being and belonging. In short, identity crises result from the inner voice of doubt and pointlessness.

This synthesis of postcolonial and postmodern theories offers a broad vision of multicultural existence. On the one hand, the novel acknowledges the historical traumas inflicted by colonialism, traumas that continue to shape personal histories and social structures. On the other hand, it celebrates the creative possibilities that emerge from cultural mixing, even as such hybridity entails conflicts and contradictions. In embracing the multiplicity of influences, *White Teeth*, thus, advocates a reimagining of identity that is dynamic, inclusive and resistant to the homogenizing forces of dominant cultures.

Indeed, the intersection of postcolonial and postmodern themes in *White Teeth* is not incidental; it is rather central to the novel's continuing plea. So, its richly textured narrative reflects the multiplicity of experiences in a globalized world, stimulating readers to hold a vision of identity that is as diverse and lively as the society it actually depicts.

2- Postcolonial Legacies: Otherness, Hybridity and Identity Crisis

2-1- Otherness and Identity Crisis:

Among the most captivating themes in *White Teeth* is the examination of otherness and the associated identity crisis experienced by its characters. Smith's narrative locates her protagonists within a broader postcolonial context, wherein individuals endlessly negotiate between their ancestral heritage and the demands of a Western modernity. Characters such as Samad Iqbal and Irie Jones symbolize the tension between the past and the present, facing internal conflicts that reflect broader cultural dissonance.

In the opening sections of the novel, Smith presents a vivid portrayal of the characters' struggles to assert a coherent identity. The sense of alienation that pervades the lives of postcolonial immigrants is not only a function of their racial and cultural differences; it emerges from an internalized notion of inferiority, a legacy of colonial domination. As noted in *Analysis of the Portrayal of the Themes of Otherness and Identity Crisis in Postcolonial Manner in Zadie Smith's Novel "White Teeth"*, the narrative foregrounds the detrimental effects of colonial discourse on the self-perception of marginalized groups (Chaturvedi, Ku, 2024: 4363–4366). Smith's depiction of characters suffering from self-doubt and fragmentation is illustrative of the "othering" process that devalues non-Western cultural identities.

For example, Samad Iqbal's internal conflict is a of a duality that exists within colonized subjects. Torn between his traditional heritage and the pressures of assimilation, Samad's oscillation between pride in his cultural roots and a yearning for the modern comforts of Western life highlights the inherent contradictions of postcolonial existence. His plight is not simply an individual neurosis; it is rather a microcosm of the wider postcolonial experience, a struggle to reconcile an imposed inferiority complex with an enduring cultural identity. As detailed by Chaturvedi et al. in their close reading of the text, Smith employs subtle narrative techniques that expose the psychological turmoil behind such identities.

Furthermore, the novel's structure itself reinforces the theme of identity fragmentation. Smith utilizes a non-linear narrative and employs shifting perspectives to mirror the broken self that many postcolonial subjects experience. By doing so, she does not only reflect the multiplicity of cultural identities but also challenges the idea of a singular, cohesive self. The deliberate stylistic fragmentation in *White Teeth* thereby becomes a metaphor for the disjointed



nature of postcolonial identity, one that resists easy categorization or cultural homogenization into dominant cultural narratives.

2-2- Multiculturalism and Hybridity:

Closely related to the exploration of otherness is the theme of multiculturalism and hybridity, which permeates the text both in form and content. London, as depicted by Smith, is a vibrant microcosm of global cultures, a world where historical legacies and contemporary realities meet. The novel celebrates this hybridity as a dynamic and evolving force that, despite its inherent tensions, also provides opportunities for reinvention and resistance.

Smith's narrative is rich and also with instances that display the beauty and complexity of cultural synthesis. The characters in *White Teeth* often navigate spaces where multiple cultural codes are in constant interplay. Irie Jones, whose very name suggests a bridging of cultural influences, epitomizes the struggle of reconciling a mixed heritage. Her journey toward self-understanding is fraught with both conflict and possibility, as she attempts to forge a path that honors the multiplicity of her origins. As Güven and Aldemir note in their analysis of hybridity and diaspora, the novel positions hybridity as a double-edged phenomenon, one that both complicates identity formation and offers a site for creative negotiation (Güven and Aldemir, 2025).

Moreover, the multicultural landscape of London serves as both a setting and a character in its own right. The urban spaces in *White Teeth* are imbued with the echoes of imperial history and contemporary migration, making the city a palimpsest of cultural influences. Interestingly, Smith's portrayal of London emphasizes the transformative impact of migration: the city is shown as an ever-shifting mosaic where traditional boundaries are blurred, and new identities are constantly being forged. This is particularly evident in the interactions between different ethnic communities, which are depicted not as monolithic groups, but as diverse collections of histories, traditions and aspirations.

However, very remarkably, the act of migration in *White Teeth* is portrayed as both a physical journey and an existential quest. For many of Smith's characters, leaving behind the familiar is an act of both hope and desperation. The search for a new identity in an alien environment is fraught with obstacles, as immigrants are compelled to negotiate between preserving their cultural heritage and adapting to the demands of a modern, multicultural society. As Güven and Aldemir demonstrate again, the psychological and social dimensions of diasporic identity are intricately linked to the process of migration; the tension between cultural retention and assimilation is a recurring motif in the novel. By contrast, other studies have approached *White Teeth* from a socio-historical perspective. Ahmed Flayih Hassan's article, published in the *International Journal of Research*, situates the novel within the context of race, multiculturalism, and religion in Europe. Hassan argues that Smith's narrative serves as both a celebration of multicultural Britain and a critique of the processes of assimilation imposed on immigrant communities. In his work, the interplay between personal identity and national belonging is rigorously examined; he notes that while the novel succeeds in depicting the everyday tensions of multicultural existence, it sometimes falls short of fully engaging with the historical contingencies that produce these tensions (Hassan, 2019: 244–259).

In addition, detailed textual analyses have been offered by Chaturvedi and Dhand in their recent article, which explores the symbolic function of “teeth” as metaphors for legacy, memory, and identity in *White Teeth*. Their study meticulously examines how Smith deploys dental imagery to represent the assimilation and cultural digestion processes that the characters undergo. The authors argue that the “molars” and “canines” in the narrative function not only as symbols of the characters' physical and metaphorical capacity to “chew” history, but also as indicators of the permanence of one's cultural heritage (Chaturvedi, Ku). Although their analysis is commendable for its close reading and innovative symbolism, critics note that it occasionally overemphasizes the role of imagery at the expense of broader socio-political dynamics.



Other scholars have further expanded the critical landscape by focusing on the novel's narrative structure and the representation of multicultural identity. For instance, an essay published in the *Journal of Emerging Technologies and Innovative Research* by Nandhini examines how *White Teeth* functions as a "mosaic narrative" that interweaves multiple temporal and spatial layers to represent a fractured modernity" (Nandhini, 2019: 47–49). Nandhini's work highlights the strengths of Smith's narrative technique, particularly her ability to capture the disjunctive realities of second-generation immigrants. However, the study also points out that this structural complexity sometimes undermines a coherent critical message, as the multiplicity of voices can lead to an over-fragmentation of thematic focus.

Hence, Smith's depiction of diaspora is marked by its sensitivity to the emotional and material realities of displacement. Characters such as Irie Jones exemplify the dilemmas of diasporic existence. Her struggle to forge a coherent identity amid conflicting cultural expectations highlights the broader tensions inherent in the immigrant experience. As Irie navigates between the traditions of her parents and the imperatives of contemporary British society, her journey becomes typical of the diasporic condition, a constant balancing act between heritage and modernity.

London, in *White Teeth*, is more than a mere backdrop; it is a dynamic and living space that reflects the city's diverse cultural influences. The urban landscape is portrayed as a convergence zone where various histories meet, and new cultural forms emerge. This setting plays a crucial role in shaping the characters' identities, as the city itself becomes a metaphor for the fluid and contested nature of belonging. The multicultural fabric of London, with its myriad languages, customs and traditions, challenges the characters to rethink the boundaries of self and community. In this respect, migration is not only an act of physical relocation but also illustrates a transformative process that redefines what it means to truly and assertively belong.

3- Identity Construction between Routes and Roots:

A focal interest in postmodern literature is the instability and constructed nature of identity. In *White Teeth*, identity is not a fixed essence; it is an ever-evolving construct produced through language, history and cultural exchange. The characters' constant negotiation of identity reflects the postmodern claim that the self is multiple, fragmented and contingent upon context and circumstances.

Smith disrupts the notion of a unified self by presenting characters, such as Irie Jones, Archie Jones and Samad Iqbal, who must simultaneously inhabit multiple cultural and historical registers. For instance, Irie Jones's struggle with her mixed heritage epitomizes the postmodern construction of identity. As Melissa Williams observes in her 2023 thesis, the experience of "mis-education" in the academic sphere forces Irie to confront the dissonance between her "old voice" and the demands of an institutionalized, Eurocentric norm (Williams, 2023). This tension highlights how identity is performed and reconstituted in response to conflicting social expectations.

Similarly, Archie Jones's character personifies the postmodern condition by wavering between a desire for reinvention and an anchoring to a past that is continually reinterpreted. His attempt to assert a coherent self, whether through the symbolic act of flipping a coin, or through his reliance on certain cultural markers, is undermined by the omnipresent influence of history and chance. In this respect, Smith's narrative suggests that identity construction is an inherently unstable process, one that is constantly disrupted by the "multiplicity of truths" inherent in modern life.

Moreover, Samad Iqbal's predicament further underlines the postmodern idea that identity is not only built, but also contested. Being psychologically and physically torn between his traditional Bangladeshi heritage and the assimilative pressures of British society, Samad embodies the fragmentation of self that results from cultural hybridity. As noted by Güven and Aldemir in their discussion of diaspora and identity, such hybridity produces "a fragmented yet evolving sense of identity" among immigrant characters. Samad's wavering state between



clinging to a rigid notion of tradition and embracing a more fluid modern self, strongly exemplifies how postmodern subjects are compelled to negotiate their identities in a context marked by both continuity and rupture.

Thus, the construction of identity in *White Teeth* resists any totalizing narrative. Instead, it mirrors the postmodern emphasis on the provisional, performative, and polyphonic nature of the self. The characters' identities are continuously reassembled from a collage of historical memories, cultural signifiers, and personal choices, a process that both reflects and questions the limitations of fixed identities in a globalized, multicultural age. Diasporic identity and cultural identity, hence, do not exist in isolation.

4- Metaphors of Religion and Science in Shaping Identity in *White Teeth*:

The integration of different families in *White Teeth* gives much prominence to the complexities of identity in postcolonial Britain. Among the many issues in the novel is the use of religion and science as powerful metaphors to show how individuals and communities endeavor to define themselves. Instead of portraying religion and science as opposing and contradictory powers, Zadie Smith uses them as parallel ideologies that build identity. Whether through harmony or tension between past and present, the characters deeply serve to illustrate two opposing ideologies. For example, Samad Iqbal, the devout Bangladeshi immigrant, shows the everlasting internal conflict between his religious traditions and the imposed Western values. His fears led him to separate his twins by sending one of them back to his original roots just for the sake of being good and preserving his own tenets. For Samad, Islam is what saves him from the chaos and meaninglessness found in the multicultural British society.

The metaphorical use of religion reveals his anxiety about hybridity and assimilation. Linked to this idea, Bhabha explains that postcolonial identity often resides in the third space, a liminal zone of negotiation between the colonizer and the colonized.

The tension between science and religion in *White Teeth* strongly reflects the characters' struggle with destiny and identity in a multicultural society. It explores how history, culture and beliefs form individual destinies. With the advance of modernity, the traditional beliefs were weakened and challenged by scientific rationalism, which raises various questions, including whether fate is the product of divine will, genetic determinism, or human agency. Therefore, the clash of science and religion is embodied in Samad Iqbal. Through the Future Mouse project, Marcus wants to challenge the idea that genetics and determinism have the last word. The life of the mouse will be genetically determined, thus denying fate. On the other side, Samad, with his Islamic principles, perceives this experience differently; to him, it is a moral threat. These conflicts are so common, especially at schools where many races meet and debate these issues of science and religion. The critic Dominic Head sees that the novel questions the Enlightenment's confidence in scientific rationalism by placing it alongside postcolonial and spiritual perspectives that resist totalizing explanations (Head, 2008: 106). Certainly, the novel uses determinism and the human desire to oppose fate. A very illustrative quote comes from Magid Iqbal, who gets willingly involved in the mouse project: "A Chinese box of a mouse. No other roads, no missed opportunities, no parallel possibilities, no second guessing, no what if not might have beens. Just certainty in its purest form. And what God is then?" (Smith, 2000: 407). Hence, the metaphor of the Chinese box rules out randomness and choice. It embodies a total determinism. Moreover, it brings about a sense of absolute control and clarity in life. These facts contradict his own family's environment and also the anarchy he faces outside.

In fact, those expectations trigger deep questions about God: when fate is eliminated by science, God is also eliminated. In other words, the power to determine fate, which is traditionally linked to God, can now be replaced by science. So, the Future Mouse is the secular form of salvation and omnipotence. The return towards secularism paves the way to moral blindness. As a bitter reality, this clear inclination from Magid towards determinism by programming a total life, scientifically echoes a dangerous idealism.



Despite all this, Smith's vision remains uncertain and vague. As an irony of fate, when the mouse escapes, absurdity and chaos surface again. This irony of fate of the mouse serves to challenge the idea that fate can be controlled by either science or religion. In the end, everyone ends up where they are supposed to be.

Conclusion:

White Teeth represents an innovative work that transcends simple categorizations by intertwining complex layers of postcolonial and postmodern thought. This uniqueness and peculiarity lie in how the novel's narrative operates on multiple levels, engaging with issues of identity, hybridity, fragmentation, and the enduring legacies of imperialism in a way that not only reflects the multifaceted nature of multicultural society, but also challenges the conventions of linear storytelling and singular subjectivity. In its concluding reflections, *White Teeth* emerges as a testament to the transformative potential of literature, one that destabilizes traditional notions of identity while opening new avenues for critical inquiry into the socio-cultural dynamics of the modern world.

At the heart of Smith's narrative is a persistent negotiation of identity. The novel's characters are depicted as fluid, multifarious beings whose sense of self is perpetually changing, shaped by historical forces, cultural intersections and personal experiences. This complex portrayal echoes the postmodern view that identity is not an intrinsic, stable concept, but rather a product of ongoing narrative practices and social discourses. By exposing the inherent instability of identity through its characters, whether it is the ambivalence of Irie Jones or the conflicted allegiances of the Iqbal twins, *White Teeth* challenges the binary oppositions that have long dominated traditional cultural and literary paradigms. In doing so, Smith aligns her work with postcolonial theorists such as Homi Bhabha, who argue that hybridity is a space of both resistance and transformation, a point of intersection where the forces of colonial history encounter the creative energies of the present. Here again lies its contribution to the humanities: by drawing on both postcolonial and postmodern narratives, it shows that identity is something flexible, not a rigid essence that cannot change or move forward.

Moreover, the novel's narrative structure, characterized by fragmentation and non-linearity, mirrors the disjointed realities of contemporary multicultural life. Smith employs a polyphonic style that shatters the illusion of a singular, coherent narrative, inviting readers to engage in an active reconstruction of meaning. This narrative technique is symbolic of postmodern aesthetics, where the multiplicity of voices and perspectives is celebrated rather than suppressed. In fact, the text's fragmentation does not only reflect the separated and often contradictory nature of modern identity, but also challenges the very idea of an objective, unified truth. Through its experimental form, *White Teeth* emphasizes that, in a world marked by overlapping cultural influences and conflicting historical narratives, truth is both decentralized and contingent. This intrinsic uncertainty induces readers to recognize that the construction of identity is as much an act of interpretation as it is a reflection of a lived experience. In a nutshell, past and present experiences collide to shape identities.

Finally, the paper tries to add a different analysis of minority diasporic fiction by not focusing solely on the pains and melancholies of characters who seek to define themselves in migrant societies. It can also be read from a universal perspective, since those downfalls can be experienced by anyone with white teeth. Equally, it can be artistically enjoyed thanks to its playfulness and stylistic value since literature both teaches and entertains.

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