

THE GREY IMPRESSIONS OF IDENTITY CRISES ON SECOND GENERATION IMMIGRANTS' SELVES: A POSTCOLONIAL STUDY OF ZADIE SMITH'S WHITE TEETH

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Abstract

The present study examines diasporic identity crises experienced by second-generation immigrants in *White Teeth* by exploring how these crises are intergenerationally transmitted. Drawing on the Homi K. Bhabha's concept of Third Space, the current study interprets the framework as a lived experience of the second-generation immigrant characters who are caught between the pull of their parental cultural heritage and the assimilative pressures of British society, rendering them unable to fully define the sense of self. The paper materializes the theoretical notion of liminality which Bhabha terms as Third Space through the second-generation characters Irie, Majid, and Millat. Using an interpretive qualitative approach, the study analyzes the lives of children of World War II veterans and elaborates on the struggles to negotiate identity and social acceptance from their childhood to adulthood, drawing on events and encounters that shaped their perspective towards identity. Although, the characters initially attempt to assimilate into the dominating British culture either by mimicry or adopting British social mannerism, ultimately ends up building a hybrid, liminal identity that reflects neither complete Britishness nor the pure ancestral culture. The study highlights the novel's significance as a post-colonial literary excerpt that navigates the complexities of identity creation within the complex topography of multicultural Britain. The conclusion presents that these second-generation characters exhibit Third Space, understanding individual identities as fluid, ever evolving, always negotiable, and situated in an ongoing process of becoming instead of a stable and fixed identity.

INTRODUCTION

Zadie Smith uses the concept of diaspora as a base for weaving her story around Bangladeshi and

Jamaican diasporic families. The word diaspora is derived from the Greek word "diaspeirein" which means to scatter, initially used for exiled people

like the Jews from their homeland Jerusalem. concept of "diaspora," with its origins in the Greek word initially described the forced dispersal of populations like the Jews. Presently this term is used for people who live outside of their homelands, in other countries, either for a better lifestyle or some other reason(Tölölyan, 1991).

The diasporic condition hybridizes the diasporic people, hybridity is the product of amalgamation of host and migrant cultures. This blending of cultures is a complex process which occurs in a liminal space somewhere on the borderline of both cultures, the Third Space(Kokot et al., 2016). Homi K. Bhabha's Third Space is an interstitial space of cultural encounter in which the colonizer and the colonized negotiate, producing hybridity in culture(Bhandari, 2022).

Consider two cultures not as separate islands but as two rivers flowing side by side, the site where the water of these rivers mixes together and new cultures, new identities are formed, that is the Third Space. Third Space is not a place of conflict but a place of resolution, a place where cultures meet and co-exist in harmony. Bhabha's Third Space eliminates the concept of binaries and forms a hybrid identity to bridge the gap between self and the other.

White Teeth(Smith, 2000) is set in the post-World War II Britain around the characters from different cultural backgrounds, three families; the Jones family, the Iqbal family, and the Chalfen family are its main characters. The Iqbal family comprises of Samad Iqbal, a WWII veteran, and his wife Ihsana- Bangladeshi Muslims who now live in Britain as part of the diaspora. They have two sons Magid and Millat. Then comes the Jones family, Archie Jones a proud Englishman, a WWII veteran, is married to a Jamaican woman, Clara, they have a beautiful daughter, Irie. The Chalfens are a middle-class English family, Marcus Chalfen is a scientist his family comprises of his wife, Joyce and their son Joshua. The Iqbal family symbolizes the immigrant conditions and search of identity especially the sons Magid and Millat. The Jones family is a microcosm of the larger multicultural society of London where different cultures coexist, and their daughter Irie is a representative of hybrid identity. The Chalfens, however, represent the

colonial element still alive in post-colonial societies.

The story of White Teeth centers on the interactions among the family members of these three families. The children of these families attend the same school and grow up together. This school becomes a literal physical third space where children from different cultural backgrounds interact and develop their identities. The children are caught between the expectations of their parents and the norms of British society, being Anglicized at school while having to follow their cultural norms at home sowing the seeds of hybridity in their identity.

The postcolonial dilemma and ambivalence grow in the children grow as they mature and navigate their identity in multicultural society. Magid renames himself Mark, which stirs fears in Samad that his children will lose their ancestral heritage. He plans to send them back to Bangladesh to protect his children from the "corrupting" influence of the British society but due a lack of funds he can only send one and he decides that Magid is that lucky kid.

Samad Iqbal pious and "culturally whole" from outside has a fractured identity and his romantic relation with his children's symbolizes the inescapable strains of the postcolonial condition. While he preaches religion and purity on the outside, he secretly drinks and commits adultery; this shows the struggle of immigrants in navigating between their own culture and the capitalist society.

The identity crises of the children intensify as they enter young adulthood, each steering through the third space in a different way. Irie Jones, becomes conscious about her curly hair, she feels like her appearance doesn't fit her surroundings, she straightens her hair and changes her dressing, symbolically rejecting her Jamaican heritage. Yet, she faces critique for this transformation which shows that belonging cannot be achieved through adaptation. While she is working with Marcus Chalfen, a well recorded family lineage of the Chalfen family catches her attention and she feels the absence of such roots in her own life. She reconnects with her grandmother and finds out

about her Afro-Caribbean which she finds pride in.

Samad's decision to preserve his cultural identity through Magid whom he sends to Bangladesh bears ironic results. He returns to England as a rationalist, a strong supporter of western ideals, and distant from the Islamic roots Samad wanted him to adopt. Millat, on the other hand, joins a radical Islamist group named KEVIN (Keepers of the Eternal and Victorious Islamic Nation).

This cultural enigma highlights the postcolonial fact that identity is never fixed or certain. Samad Iqbal blames Britain for taking his Children's cultural heritage away but the son raised in Bangladesh, his homeland rejected tradition and religion, and the son raised in Britain accepted it in its most radical form.

Marcus Chalfen's "Future Mouse" project is the center stage for the novel's climax. All the characters and storylines coincide at the projects' unveiling where a conflict erupts and the future mouse escapes symbolizing the triumph of chance and hybridity over rigid structure.

Zadie Smith closes *White Teeth* on a profoundly hybrid note that resonates with Homi Bhabha's concept of the third space. Throughout the novel, Zadie Smith built the narrative which makes the reader believe that identity is never fixed but always in flux, contested, and negotiated between tradition and modernity, East and West, religion and secularism. This becomes most visible in the second generation: Irie, Magid, Millat, and Joshua, all of whom inhabit this in-between cultural space. But the conclusion makes hybridity almost literal, Irie, having engaged in relationships with both Millat and Magid, discovers she is pregnant with twins, their paternity left ambiguous. This uncertainty destabilizes the very idea of "pure" lineage or tradition and embodies the messiness of cultural intermixture. As Irie embraces her pregnancy and future, the novel suggests that the next generation will not belong to one culture or another but to a space in-between, hybrid, unpredictable, and continuously reshaped.

By titling the novel *White Teeth*, Smith gestures toward the one thing all humans share regardless of their backgrounds: teeth that are universally white. This choice underscores that beneath

cultural, religious, and ethnic differences lie in shared humanity. At the same time, "white teeth" become a metaphor for the unknown, uncertain, in-between future that the younger generation inhabits. It suggests that identity in the so-called postcolonial era will not be pure or singular but rather marked by the very hybridity and ambivalence that define the third space.

Thesis Statement

This paper argues that Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* offers a systematic view on the complexities of the postcolonial condition by focusing on the second generation's experience with hybridity in Homi K. Bhabha's "Third Space." This novel portrays third space as an integral part of the everyday lives of characters like Magid, Millat, and Irie. The struggles of these characters with their identity are not a result of their desire to return to their ancestral roots but to navigate their existence in multicultural Britain. Through these characters Zadie Smith signifies Third Space as a reality in second generation immigrants. The argument of this paper is similar to the case Zadie Smith advocates in the novel with an addition that Third Space is not just a site of cultural clash but a place where new identities are forged.

Ultimately, Smith's narrative in the novel reflects Bhabha's concept of Third Space as it presents identity not as a fixed concept, not as a destination but a continuously evolving, forever changing process of becoming (Stuart Hall).

Research Questions

1. How does *White Teeth* reflect second-generation immigrant's struggle for identity in post-colonial Britain?
2. What is the role of hybridity and ambivalence in shaping self-perception and sense of belonging of *White Teeth*'s characters?

Objectives

1. To examine how *White Teeth* reflects second-generation identity struggles in a postcolonial Britain through Bhabha's "Third Space" lens.

2. To analyze the role of hybridity and ambivalence in shaping self-perception and sense of belonging of White Teeth's characters.

Significance of Study

The significance of this study lies in its attempt to transform Homi K. Bhabha's Third Space (Bhandari, 2022) from an abstract concept to a tangible analytical reality by examining the everyday experiences of second-generation immigrant characters in White Teeth. The study discusses the negotiation of the second-generation characters' identity between their ancestral tradition and the British influence in the Third Space and reveals that the identity formation in post-colonial world is not static but fluid, continuously evolving and in state of becoming. This research portrays Third Space as a physical, emotional and cultural manifestation of a socially lived experience of characters like Irie, Magid, and Millat during their quest for identity. Furthermore, the study contributes to the understanding of identity and selfhood of second-generation immigrants in the contemporary post-colonial multicultural societies as legitimate and valuable expression of multicultural life instead of perceiving hybrid identities as deviant and culturally "in-between" and urges the readers to accept and validate these hybrids identities emerged in the Third Space. White Teeth is an early version of today's debates about identity, nationalism, and multiculturalism and it remains culturally relevant to this day. The paper argues that the core concept of the novel about inclusivity is still relevant and it declares white teeth as a literary map to navigate the dilemma of identity in the postcolonial conditions.

Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research design for critical analysis of White Teeth (Smith, 2000), it focuses on the elements of hybridity in the novel while focusing on Smith's literary interpretation of Bhabha's Third Space. A detailed interpretation of White Teeth, this study examines depictions of identity, culture, diaspora, cultural conflict, and hybridity through the characters of the second-generation immigrants in the novel, characters

such as Irie, Millat, and Magid are viewed through postcolonial theoretical lenses. This scholarly effort weaves a complex theoretical web around these characters of the novel and are supported by other theoretical frameworks like, the concept of become and becoming by Stuart Hall, Ideological State Apparatus (ISA) by Louis Althusser, and Bhabha's unhomey home. Through these frameworks a narrative is formed where the Third Space is viewed as a place of cultural interaction instead of conflict.

Literature Review

Zadie Smith's White Teeth (2000) has attracted significant scholarly attention since its publication, particularly its portrayal of multicultural Britain and the diasporic struggles of immigrant families. The text has been analyzed by critics through various approaches which include post-colonial theory and hybridity and identity crisis and politics and linguistic diversity and linguistic analysis and gender studies and magical realism and racism and globalization and the other academic fields. Smith's work shows how people experience postcolonial metropolitan life because different cultural elements and their migration and their sense of belonging create tension.

The most complete understanding of White Teeth comes from the research which has been conducted on the work, but Zadie Smith provides the most complete understanding through her interview with O'Grady which she conducted in 2002. Smith describes White Teeth in her interview as a novel which explores the significant impact of historical trauma and the difficulties faced by second-generation immigrants who must navigate their mixed cultural backgrounds. The characters' genealogies carry "a full historical and cultural weight" which controls their present-day behavior according to Smith's response to Grady's question during the interview. She presents history as the source of trauma, the traumatic effect of colonialism and the horrific legacy of war and destruction that has been carved in the minds of colonial subjects is passed down to their future generations, making this generational trauma a necessary part of their lives, an inherited war. This reflection by Smith herself presents the novel

fundamentally about inheritance and its discontent, where she meticulously unveils the paradoxical nature of familial and cultural roots which provide continuity but also become a source of identity constraint.

Smith opposes the popular opinion that reclaiming ancestral roots or cultural lineage leads to resolving the conflict of one's identity but insists on the view that true freedom or self-knowledge is achieved through coining one's own identity. This criticism becomes relevant to the second-generation experience when we gaze towards the characters in *White Teeth* and their struggles, when Magid, Millat, and Irie, even after knowing their heritage, are unable to discover their identity. Smith's views resonate Stuart Hall's concept of *Become and Becoming*, where the first generation take the concept of identity from their roots, while the concept of identity for the second generation is a process affected by displacement, identity, and colonial past.

Simultaneously, Smith shares her view on the nature of identity as an interconnected phenomenon, which she supports by a quote from the poet Don Patterson "everything is in everything else". This view resembles Homi K. Bhabha's concept of the third space, where cultural meanings are produced in the interstices between original heritage and host culture. The second-generation characters in *White Teeth* portray the signs of this hybridity, they do not accept either of the cultures as their own but navigate their identity in a middle space between both cultures (which Bhabha calls the third space). Through the indecisive nature of Irie Smith further elaborates the theme of indeterminacy, which is extended by the nature of the novel's ending. The ambiguous paternity of Irie's child becomes a metaphor for the hybrid and unsettled future of multicultural Britain. Smith confesses that the tension of the novel was so great it was impossible for her to resolve it fully and that she deliberately left it unresolved. The same applies to her characters and to the second-generation immigrants in general as they can never fully recover their identity, they can never return to full purity neither can they assimilate fully into British culture. Instead, their identities remain

ambivalent, indeterminate, and continuously in process.

Building upon Zadie Smith's own reflections on *White Teeth*, it is important to explore how the subsequent critics have extended and analyzed the novel through the post-colonial lens. One of the compelling contributions in this regard is Laura Moss's essay "The Politics of Everyday Hybridity: Zadie Smith's *White Teeth*" (2003), published in *Wasafiri*, which critiques the view that Smith's novel represents a "post-postcolonial", as she writes "real spark of the book is not post-colonial, but post-post-colonial."

Etim, Eyoh (2019) attempts to define post-postcolonialism as "a forward-looking, inward-looking, and soul-searching framework, which is mostly concerned with re-defining, re-assessing, re-examining, re-evaluating and re-positioning Africa's postcolonial discourses." The reviewer in *The Economist* states that the basis of claiming this novel post-postcolonial is that unlike the post-colonial writings which are a kind of fixated on history, "the post-post-colonial 'couldn't give an f-word' for it, the reviewer states." But Moss (Moss, 2003) thinks contrary to it, She regards "Smith as the part of a generation of writers who have written about hybridity encompassing racial, cultural, and linguistic, as part of the practice of everyday life." Moss says that the characters carry the "stinking shit of the past" with them, an evocative phrase from Smith's own text that encapsulates the persistence of colonial and familial trauma. For Moss, the immigrant and their descendants cannot escape their history "Because this is the other thing about immigrants (refugees, emigres, travelers): they cannot escape their history any more than you yourself can lose your shadow." underscoring the novel's insistence that the past continuously shapes the hybrid identities of contemporary Britain.

Moss's central argument revolves around the notion of "everyday hybridity." She is of the view that hybridity is not a crisis but an everyday phenomenon in the lives of postcolonial societies. She views Smith's portrayal of North London with its mixed culture and the amalgamation of different languages, religions, and foods as evidence to the fact that hybridity was integrated

into fabric of London's society. Despite portraying hybridity as a common everyday practice, Moss avoids celebrating it; she understands the struggles associated with being a hybrid and leading a complex life. She argues that the novel neither celebrates nor criticizes Hybridity rather it represents the life within this liminal Third Space. Moss's reading also engages with the ambivalent coexistence of racism and cosmopolitanism in modern Britain. She juxtaposes the playground scene, where children of multiple ethnicities Isaac Leung, Danny Rahman, Quang O'Rourke, Irie Jones play together, against the persistent undercurrent of fear, prejudice, and violence in the surrounding adult world. Moss shows that this comparison exists to present two different aspects of "ordinary hybridity" which serves as a symbol of progress while it simultaneously displays ongoing exclusion. The hybridity that Smith depicts is not the harmonious "melting pot" imagined by liberal multiculturalism, but a contested everyday practice in which inclusion and alienation coexist. The novel's humor and realism thus become political tools what Moss terms the "poetics and politics of everyday hybridity" revealing how cultural mixture is simultaneously normalized and problematized within the postcolonial metropolis (Moss, 2003).

(Norbayeva, 2025) explores the themes of hybridity and identity crisis in Zadie Smith's works like *White Teeth*, *NW*, and *The Autograph Man*, employing Homi K. Bhabha's third space for the analysis of the characters. She remarks that Smith's characters' identities are 'unevenly stitched patchwork identities.' According to her we are living in a world of globalization where geography is no longer a barrier, different cultures can cross-contaminate each other, resulting in the complication of the very concept of 'Identity.' The inhabitants struggle to construct a settled self, identity for the hybrids does not remain fixed, rather it becomes something they attempt to find in continuous encounters of cultures, traditions, religions, values etc. Nasiba asserts that Smith's works do not explore hybridity as an ideal condition, but rather as an emotionally charged and psychologically straining experience, rooted in an indifferent so-called post-colonial world. While the paper comments that multicultural or multi-

ethnic settings such as Northwest London do function as microcosms of global hybridity promising diversity, Smith also unveils the tension of collision among different cultures, ethnicities, rituals (third space) and rigidity (resistance to embrace 'others') that persists beneath the surface. The factor that makes this paper stand out amongst other scholarly studies is its assessment of Zadie Smith's criticism of the "myth of return", the nostalgic belief of immigrants that they can return to a pure, original culture. Samad Iqbal portrays this idea efficiently through his struggles of preserving his cultural heritage and traditional values. His plan to send his sons back to Bangladesh ironically backfires, Magid who he sends back to Bangladesh to reconnect with his roots becomes an Anglicized secular individual. This failure showcases the permanent nature of hybridity, the permanent creation of Third Space and the cyclic nature of culture.

(Norbayeva, 2025) also emphasizes the masterful use of language in *White Teeth* by Zadie Smith, which acts as a key factor in shaping her fiction. Characters in the novel use a vast variety of dialects, accents, and linguistic registers depending on their societal contexts. This flexible use of language not only reflects hybrid cultural identities of these characters but also represents the struggles they face within. In *White Teeth*, Jamaican Patois, Asian-inflected English, Cockney slang, and Standard English are masterfully employed by Smith and this rich linguistic tapestry illustrates the multilingual framework of modern London.

(Khan et al., 2025) their paper, "Exploring the Impact of Hybridity on Cultural Identity and Belonging in Zadie Smith's Novel *White Teeth*", discuss how the effect of Englishness on immigrants is portrayed by Zadie Smith in *White Teeth*. They argue that Smith complicates the traditional views of belonging and origin when she shows the clash of African, Asian, and British cultures and how it results in hybridity. This group of researchers declare this novel as "a reflection on evolving identity within a pluralistic society" as it is not a simple retelling of immigration stories.

This paper views *White Teeth* through the lens of center and periphery concept by Jacques Derrida. In the novel the shift in native values through the

influence of the immigrants challenges the long-held notion that West is the center of civilization. The idea of “pure” English identity in a multicultural society like London becomes obsolete, London is a boiling pot of cultures, ethnicities, and social classes where everything mixes. The children that are brought up in a society like this are hybrid regardless of their ethnicity or cultural heritage.

Thasleema, M.A., Khaan, A.A., (2021). in their paper “Delineation of Diaspora in Zadie Smith’s Novel *White Teeth*” highlight the diasporic overviews portrayed in *White Teeth*. The autobiographical feature of the novel brings a sense of global appreciation, as it makes this fictional work sound like a lived experience. The diasporic element can be seen throughout the story in the relationships between characters, particularly the second generation.

The paper further explores how immigrants remain torn between their wishes and fulfillment, their home and host cultures, and between their desire for adaptation and the fear of disintegration. It describes *White Teeth* as a closely knitted saga of three families, representing three races, religions, and cultural backgrounds, all residing in London. Smith’s own multicultural background enables her to portray modern West London as a vibrant racial hodgepodge with colorful displays. Smith in her novel talks about burning issues like identity crises, displacement, assimilation, cultural integration, racial hatred, and rootlessness. She effectively in her pedantic and stylistic way depicts the life of immigrants living in multicultural and multiracial London which has always been her tea. The paper also talks about the different approaches employed by first and second-generation immigrants towards identity problems and subject of belonging.

Additionally, the paper’s quote (Haque, 2004) remarks regarding the novel as a work that belongs to the corpus of Post-colonial Diasporic Literature. Haque observes that the novel arranges its characters in a non-hierarchical way, keeping none at the center but instead creating multiple micro-centers throughout the novel. By doing so, Smith compares and contrasts the actions of each character, from Irie’s synthetic hair and Samad’s

struggles to Clara’s spiritual shifts and the Chalfens’ scientific obsessions. By presenting all these events in a non-judgmental manner, the novel masters plurality and diversity in a world marked by a mass hegira of people and cultures.

Zadie Smith’s *White Teeth: The Interpellation of the Colonial Subject in Multicultural Britain*(Bağlama, 2019) approaches the text through a Marxist-postcolonial lens, introducing the concept of “double alienation” to describe the layered estrangement experienced by immigrants and their descendants in post-war Britain. According to Bağlama, “Smith’s novel vividly captures the chaotic, fragmented, and alienated world of multicultural London, where individuals are caught between the economic alienation of capitalist modernity and the psychological alienation born of colonial history.”

In addition to this, characters in *White Teeth* go back and forth between rebellion and conformity, between stability and conflict, they indulge in the acts of mimicry (Bhabha, 1984) and adopt various escape mechanisms(Bağlama, 2019) but these actions negate the very purpose of their struggles as they fall into the same pit of subordination they strive to escape.

Bağlama's concept of "double alienation" connects directly to Homi Bhabha's Third Space theory which shows how hybrid identities develop through cultural conflicts and negotiations between different cultures. The colonial subject in *White Teeth* is doubly displaced: first, as a member of the working class within capitalist modernity, and second, as an ethnic other within the ideological apparatus of the postcolonial metropolis. Bağlama’s synthesis of Marxist materialism with postcolonial identity politics thus clarifies how Smith’s London operates as a site of ideological interpellation, in which the immigrant subject is hailed into selfhood through the languages and institutions of the colonial center. This interpellation produces what Stuart Hall terms an identity of becoming rather than being a self perpetually in motion, never entirely at home in either the inherited past or the assimilated present(Matthews, 2013).

With this ample body of literature and the extensive research already conducted on *White*

Teeth, the present study opens a different perspective on Zadie Smith's portrayal of identity, experience, and belonging in multicultural Britain. The current study specifically focuses on how second-generation immigrants particularly Millat, Irie, and Majid navigate their diasporic backgrounds as they search for and negotiate their own identities. It also examines the experiences they have had throughout their lives from childhood into adulthood and how the novel ultimately concludes their approach to their mixed or diasporic identities as second-generation immigrants.

Analysis and Discussion

In *White Teeth* (Smith, 2000) cultures are not portrayed as separate entities but a mixture, imagine London as a piece of cloth made of different cultures i.e. African, Asian, and British as threads of different colors, when these are knit closely onto that cloth they produce a whole new design a whole new society, London's society. These cultures coincide, interact, and negotiate in an isolated space, this liminal space that exists outside any cultural boundary is Homi K. Bhabha's Third Space (Bhandari, 2022).

In the novel, there are two interpretations of the institute of school, first as a microcosm of the society of London, a literal third space where children of the immigrants learn to navigate the complexities of their hybrid identities. The second interpretation is based on Louis Althusser's view of institutes like schools as an Ideological State Apparatus, according to him the institutions in a capitalist society are factories of creating functional parts for the consumerist system (Althusser, 2007). This concept can be seen in its full effect during the parent teacher meeting, where Samad's outburst symbolizes his frustration towards blatant neglect of Islamic culture and traditions. He doesn't just criticize the curriculum decided by the school but fights for his culture's revival and survival single handedly.

As the story proceeds, the children encounter more events who realize them of their diasporic background. For the harvest festival, students are sent out to the local residents to collect some donations. Irie, Magid, and Millat visit an elderly

Englishman, Mr. Hamilton. He invites them for tea, the innocent children offer them the stuff they had including apples, chickpeas, and coconuts, but Mr. Hamilton excuses for his teeth that he can't chew and starts inquiring about their brushing habits. Then, based on this seemingly usual tooth brushing habit, Mr. Hamilton exposes them his long held English colonial prejudices and racial hierarchies.

"One sometimes forgets the significance of one's teeth. We're not like the lower animals – teeth replaced regularly and all that – we're of the mammals, you see. 'But like all things, the business has two sides. Clean white teeth are not always wise, now are they? Par exemplum: when I was in the Congo, the only way I could identify the nigger was by the whiteness of his teeth." (Smith, 2000, p. 127)

Mr. Hamilton dehumanizes them in his ever-genteel demeanor by recalling them how the people like "them" were differentiated from "us" (English) imposing his racial and cultural superiority. The statement makes the children uncomfortable and unsettled so Millat attempt to defend their identity, 'My dad was in the war. He played for England.' Hamilton mocks him, responding, 'Well, boy, do you mean the football team or the army?' Mr. Hamilton pretends to misunderstand Millat reference to the English army, dismisses him with patronizing smile. Then, he further adds:

"There were certainly no wogs as I remember, no... no Pakistanis... what would we have fed them? 'Quite out of the question. I could not possibly have stomached that rich food. No Pakistanis. As for the poor Brits, they had enough on their hands with us old Queens..." (Smith, 2000, p. 128)

Majid also endorses Millat, but Hamilton seems in no mood to listen to them. While the children were narrating the stories of their fathers fighting for England, Mr. Hamilton keeps repeating the phrase, "when your teeth rot...." not giving chance to children to share their half of the story. The scene captures the painful confrontation between the immigrant children and a native Englishman filled with layered humiliation and exclusion.

In *White Teeth* Zadie Smith argues that Third Space is not a temporary condition but a permanent and inescapable reality of the modern

world. She explores this narrative through continuous rejection of conformist ideas in the novel. She portrays this negation through the character of Samad Iqbal and his enforcement of his native culture on the twins. In Samad's action we can see his desire to preserve his culture and somehow reverse the corruption that has eroded his cultural values; he is chasing the "myth of return". There is an ironic turn of events however, Magid who he sent to Bangladesh to be closer to his roots and become a good Muslim, grew up to be an Anglicized man while Millat who grew in the free and flexible London Society joined an Islamist Extremist Group (K.E.V.I.N.). Samad's futile efforts to easternize his sons cause them to be imperfect opposites of each other; these halves symbolize the two extremes of the cultural dispute. Through this case smith showcases the resilience of hybrid identity towards forced influences and its impermeability towards hard core ideologies.

Samad was a man burdened by guilt, desire, nostalgia, financial instability, and moral dilemma, he feared God, yet he drank whiskey, he preached purity, yet he fornicated with the music teacher, he linked his lineage to the great revolutionary Bhagat Singh but had also served in the British Army. He ineffectively tries to instill eastern values in his sons, and they keep drifting away, the more he tries to hold them to their roots the more they sprout into Britishness and Hybridity. He fails to pass on his culture to his children, he fails in keeping his values alive, he cannot go back to his homeland, nor can he fully assimilate into British identity.

"We are split people. For myself, half of me wishes to sit quietly with legs crossed, letting the things that are beyond my control wash over me. But the other half wants to fight a holy war. Jihad!" (Smith, 2000, p. 133)

Samad's third space is a continuous battlefield where his pride in his native culture clashes with the crushing burden of British culture.

"These days, it feels to me like you make a devil's pact when you walk into this country. You hand over your passport at the check-in, you get stamped, you want to make a little money, get yourself started... but you mean to go back! Who would want to stay? Cold, wet, miserable; terrible food, dreadful newspapers - who

would want to stay? In a place where you are never welcomed, only tolerated. Just tolerated. Like you are an animal finally house-trained." (Smith, 2000, p. 299)

This internal strife makes him a bitter man and due to his conformist ideas, his household is the epicenter of hybridity for his children, his overwhelming expectations cause his sons to feel alienated in their own household. Samad's household can be viewed as Homi K. Bhabha's "unhomely home", outside the house his sons have to face racism and prejudice from the whites and at their home they face comments like Little Englishman. They feel alienated outside as well as inside their house; their home is not a place of retreat or comfort for them but a site of conflict, continuous tiresome conflict. Samad associates identity as static confirmed object (being) while for his sons it is different, it is continuously evolving and changing (becoming). Alsana breaks Samad's idealistic thinking with ruthless pragmatism.

"It's still easier to find the correct Hoover bag than to find one pure person, one pure faith, on the globe." (Smith, 2000, p. 175)

With all this going on, each child, Irie, Millat, and Majid's quest for identity narrates different stories.

Each of them was grappling with identity crisis and hybridity inherently transcended from their parents in one way or the other. Talking about Millat, who from childhood always was inclined towards Western culture. An instance from his childhood, when he was asked which music he like with presumption he would say his Bangali cultural or traditional music, he replies: "Bo-orn to ruun! Da da da daaaa! Bruce Springsteen, Miss! Da da da da daaaa! Baby, we were bo-orn." His adolescence was the same, he was street gangster always chasing blondes, into tobacco and marijuana, in-short he was an epitome of American gangster culture. He was simply called "trouble." Then, his sudden involvement in KEVIN, an Islamic extremist group is indigestible. Smith unravels this internal schism that Millat's transformation from a carefree liberal youth to an extremist is a dubious matter. Magid's inclination and eventual inclusion in KEVIN can be viewed with two different lenses, one that he went back to his roots and became an extremist, the other that

it could be more of a product of western influence. He himself was confused:

"As far back as I can remember, I always wanted to be a gangster." "As far back as I can remember, I always wanted to be a Muslim." (Smith, 2000, p. 326)

These two statements were always rolling in his sub-conscious, pointing that his adaptation of radical Islamic group is not pure cultural stance rather it is a construct of his influence of western gangster cinema. Though he was pretending himself a faithful and devoted member of KEVIN, in reality he embodies a gangster archetype, he always carries with him the white handkerchief, a dice, and long camel jacket which he knew were haram in the faith he was professing. Also, his anger, Smith notes is not, *the righteous anger of a man of God, but the seething, violent anger of a gangster, a juvenile delinquent, determined to prove himself, determined to run the clan, determined to beat the rest. And if the game was God, if the game was a fight against the West, against the presumptions of Western science, against his brother or Marcus Chalfen, he was determined to win it.*

Millat's fragmented personality, his confusion of gangster vs. Muslim, psychological turmoil is all product of his incomplete acceptance from both his home- and host-culture.

Majid holds a completely different story. The twin brother sent to Bangladesh to become a true representator of his culture come out English more than Englishes themselves. Magid becomes so indulged in his efforts to become British that he completely denounces his origins, abandons his culture, his new identity is not a negotiation between his original identity and the British cultural influence, but he completely assimilates himself in the British culture. This can clearly be observed through his mannerism when he returns to England. As Alsana shares with Irie:

'I don't recognize him,' after he had spent a few days at home. 'There is something peculiar about him. Samad says this is some clone, this is not an Iqbal. One hardly likes to touch him. His teeth, he brushes them six times a day. His underwear, he irons them. It is like sitting down to breakfast with David Niven' (Smith, 2000, p. 310)

His actions like continuous teeth brushing and wearing ironed underwear are evident of his mimicry of British to a deep personal level. His role as clone of the British at its highest can be viewed through his decision of becoming Marcus Chalfen's assistant where he translates Chalfen's thoughts into sophisticated English and this way becomes the mouthpiece of colonialism. He becomes so much British, so much assimilated into Britishness that he even directs Chalfen on how to sit, speak, and move properly, this demonstrates the ultimate success of the Ideological State Apparatuses that he becomes not a part of the Western Culture but a living example of the success of its "methods of civilization".

"If Channel 4 News wanted an interview, Magid explained how to sit, how to move one's hands, how to incline one's head. All this from a boy who had spent the greater proportion of his life in the Chittagong Hills, without television or newspapers. (Smith, 2000, p. 312)

Irie's journey further exemplifies this chaotic process of finding one's identity in a host land. Her initial, profound dissatisfaction with her own body features, her curly hair portrays the harsh reality of direct internalization of racist beauty standards. As discussed by Nasiba in her study along with the myth of return where she juxtapose the reality of Samad Iqbal's twins clinging to the two extremist sides while navigating their identity, Nasiba presents the case of Irie Jones, who was initially attempting to take over the British racist beauty standard, even she was ready to endure the pain cost to assimilate into the white beauty standards. Her loss of her own hair and impalntinh someone else's hair was okay as long as it was mimicking her as English woman (Norbayeva, 2025).

"There was England, a gigantic mirror, and there was Irie, without reflection. A stranger in a stranger land." (Smith, 2000, p. 197)

In her attempt to acquire English-dictated beauty standards, she visits P.K parlor to get dead straight hair. Andrea, the woman working the parlor unknowingly puts too much ammonia on her head which burns her hair. And when Irie complains about the pain, Andrea scornfully

responded “Life hurts, beauty hurts.” (Smith, 2000, p. 205)

This act of hair straightening underpins Irie’s attempt to assimilate in the British culture, this is the phase where she is still navigating her identity, traversing the third space, in between confusion and clarity.

“Five and a half hours later, thanks to an arduous operation that involved plaiting somebody else’s hair in small sections to Irie’s own two inches and sealing it with glue, Irie Jones had a full head of long, straight, reddish-black hair.” (Smith, 2000, p. 208-209)

Similarly, Irie changing her dialect and accent, oscillating between Jamaican Patois and Standard English based on who she is speaking to symbolizes her lack of linguistic conformity. After some time when she starts working with the Chalfens and discovers their record of family lineage, she feels the need to know her heritage to find a cultural footing.

“No fiction, no myths, no lies, no tangled webs - this is how Irie imagined her homeland. Because homeland is one of the magical fantasy words like unicorn and soul and infinity that have now passed into language.” (Smith, 2000, p. 295)

Events like Irie’s discovery of her grandmother’s colonial identity, her ambiguous future, and the confusion in the paternity of his child lead her to discover her identity or what fragments she can discover. Her discovery of identity is the most powerful and the most effective of all the three main characters, it is a true representation of the impossibility of rediscovering hybrid identity. The novel’s culmination with Irie’s pregnancy makes Third Space a real existing space.

“What she didn’t know, and what she realized she may never know, was the identity of the father. No test on earth would tell her. Same thick black hair. Same twinkling eyes. Same habit of chewing the tops of pens. Same shoe size. Same deoxyribonucleic acid. She could not know her body’s decision, what choice it had made, in the race to the gamete, between the saved and the unsaved.” (Smith, 2000, p. 377)

Her child conceived in Third Space is the living embodiment of hybridity, in-betweenness and ambiguity. The unresolved mystery about the actual father of Irie’s child whether Majid or Millat

reduces so-called pure or original identity to a mere word that doesn’t really matter in post-colonial world.

“Irie’s child can never be mapped exactly nor spoken of with certainty. Some secrets are permanent. In a vision, Irie has seen a time, a time not far from now, when roots won’t matter anymore because they can’t because they mustn’t because they’re too long and they’re too tortuous and they’re just buried too damn deep. She looks forward to it.” (Smith, 2000, p. 385)

Marcus Chalfen’s Future mouse project is the climax of the novel where all the storylines coincide. Through this project’s demonstration ceremony several deductions can be made but the most important in this study’s context is the final encounter of Joshua and Marcus Chalfen. Joshua Chalfen who has joined an animal rights activist group, i.e. F.A.T.E and intends to sabotage this event with his friends to stop the brutal experimentation on the Future Mouse. He succeeds in freeing the mouse and through his rebellion, Smith demonstrates the universality of the intergenerational conflict, she states that identity crisis is not limited to immigrants but has taken roots in the colonizers too with ever changing narratives and new ideas where old ideals are being rejected by the younger generations, whether they be immigrants or natives. “The Center” has collapsed the untouchable, the proud culture has been disintegrated, and everything has fallen into Bhabha’s Third Space, leaving everyone to find new meanings of life new purposes behind their existence and new identities.

“Our children will be born of our actions. Our accidents will become their destinies. Oh, the actions will remain. It is a simple matter of what you will do when the chips are down, my friend. When the fat lady is singing. When the walls are falling in, and the sky is dark, and the ground is rumbling. In that moment our actions will define us. And it makes no difference whether you are being watched by Allah, Jesus, Buddah, or whether you are not. On cold days a man can see his breath, on a hot day he can’t. On both occasions, the man breathes.” (Smith, 2000, p. 77)

Conclusion

Drawing this discussion to a close, the current study employs an interpretivist qualitative research

design with its objectives to specifically explore the second-generation immigrant navigation of their identity in multiculturalism. In a post-colonial multicultural Britain, the study concludes that the so-called pre-colonial world identity is not fixed, as Alsana remarked, it is possible to get a pure Hoover bag but not a pure origin. This is the truth of original identity in the post-colonial world. So, the diverse approach of Majid, Irie, and Millat towards their identity and their quest for belonging tell us that every individual has different perspectives towards identity. Irie's ultimate acceptance of her own self, her origin as a hybrid, and her child with non-definite or unrecognized fatherhood symbolizes her acceptance of identity as something fluid and ongoing, which resonates with Stuart Hall's concept of identity as becoming. With Millat, the acceptance of identity is something that he cannot reduce to a single identity, even though he has apparently joined the KEVIN group, he is still that gangster-minded person, disguising himself as a Muslim enthusiast. This is because of the ongoing clash in his mind between his home and host cultures, the influence of the environment he is living in, and the imposed expectations upon him. While on the other hand, Magid's recovery from Bangladesh tells a completely different story, living among his people, he turns out more English than the English themselves. So, their experiences, on the whole, present the Homi K. Bhaba's Third Space not merely as a point of collision, where two different cultures, traditions, religions, or perspectives come into conflict, but as an actual state that now exists in the post-colonial world. It has become an everyday reality, with hundreds and thousands of people immigrating to other countries, carrying the influence of their homeland while simultaneously being shaped by their host culture ultimately heading towards this *Third Space*.

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