

Immigrants in a Multicultural and Postmodern World:
Multiculturalism in
Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* and *The Autograph Man*

By

Maisha Tasneem Drishti
19263010

A thesis submitted to the Department of English and Humanities in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in English

Department of English and Humanities
Brac University

September 2021

© 2021 Maisha Tasneem Drishti
All rights reserved.

Declaration

It is hereby declared that

1. The thesis submitted is my/our own original work while completing degree at Brac University.
2. The thesis does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate referencing.
3. The thesis does not contain material which has been accepted, or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.
4. I/We have acknowledged all main sources of help.

Student's Full Name & Signature:



Maisha Tasneem Drishti

19263010

Approval

The thesis/project titled “Immigrants in a Multicultural and Postmodern World: Multiculturalism in Zadie Smith’s *White Teeth* and *The Autograph Man*” submitted by

1. Maisha Tasneem Drishti (Student ID:19263010)

of Fall 2019 has been accepted as satisfactory in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Masters of Arts in English on [Date-of-Defense].

Examining Committee:

Supervisor:
(Member)

Dr Mahruba T Mowtushi
Assistant Professor, Department of English and Humanities
Brac University

Program Coordinator:
(Member)

Full Name
Designation, Department
Institution

External Expert Examiner:
(Member)

Full Name
Designation, Department
Institution

Departmental Head:
(Chair)

Dr Firdous Azim
Professor, Department of English and Humanities
Brac University

Abstract

In sociology, multiculturalism pertains to the coexistence of diverse ethnic groups within a community. On the other hand, in political science multiculturalism refers to the state's ability to deal with different ethnic communities. Often a state creates political models to deal with the diverse cultural communities interfering with the language, religion, occupation, education and lifestyle. Many writers have included the multicultural experiences of immigrants in their novels and poems. Zadie Smith's novels, *White Teeth* and *The Autograph Man* depict characters from different cultural backgrounds struggling to co-exist in multicultural Britain. The study of multiculturalism connects to certain postmodern sensibilities. These sensibilities acknowledge the heterogeneous nature of human existence. Multiculturalism in the work of Smith needs analysis through the postmodern lens. Her writings express cultural dilemmas and simultaneously hint at the negotiation between different cultures.

Keywords: Acculturation; ethnicity; race; Zadie Smith; micro-narratives; assimilation

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank Dr. Mahruba Mowtushi for guiding me throughout my thesis. She gave me important suggestions which helped me to write. I have learned a lot from her. I would also like to thank Dr. Sayed Manzoorul Islam for introducing me to the works of Zadie Smith. Sir has taught me about multiculturalism and postmodernism in an illuminative way. I sincerely thank all my teachers, Dr. Fridous Azim, Anika Saba and Dr. Sayeed Noman for their lectures. I love literature because of them. I would also like to thank my parents and friends whose immense support has helped me in my academic life. Lastly, I want to thank all my lovely classmates. Their participation in class discussions has made me think deeply and critically about literary themes.

Table of Contents

Declaration.....	ii
Approval	iii
Abstract.....	iv
Acknowledgement	v
Table of Contents	vi
Chapter 1 Introduction.....	1
Chapter 2 Literature Review.....	5
Chapter 3 An Exploration of Multiculturalism.....	12
Chapter 4 Postmodernism and Multiculturalism.....	19
Chapter 5 Multiculturalism in Zadie Smith's <i>White Teeth</i> and <i>The Autograph Man</i>	26
Chapter 6 A Comparative Study of Multicultural Elements in Zadie Smith's <i>White Teeth</i> and <i>The Autograph Man</i>	32
Chapter 7 Conclusion.....	39
Works Cited.....	41

Chapter 1

Introduction

The expressions of culture have become interlinked with national identities and sensibilities. Nations have their own cultures even though these cultural roots outdate the birth of nations. Often peoples' nationality can be identified by observing their culture and language. The postmodern world has expansions of science, technology, international businesses and foreign work availability. Due to these reasons, people feel the necessity of travelling from one nation to another. The rising political tensions and social security are also making people move from one country to the other. The creations of the nation and border lines have implied rules and regulations in peoples' movement. However, movements across the border of one's country still exist. As a result, multicultural communities are expanding. Immigration and the dilemmas of the immigrant communities are central themes in the writing of many writers. Characters from different nations, religious backgrounds, linguistic groups, ethnicities and social institutions interact and experience racial, language and economic discrimination. These interactions can sometimes be celebratory but also traumatizing and destructive. Often characters find it difficult to let go of their cultural practices and welcome the new culture. They also find it hard to get acceptance from the dominant group because of their racial backgrounds. The dilemma of not belonging to one particular culture remains. Postmodern traumas of finding the difference between the original and the copy¹, the declining of grand narratives and believing in the everydayness of life are also present among the communities along with the multicultural dilemmas. Thus, multiculturalism and postmodern dilemmas are crucial in literary works.

¹ Copies of original images, music, edited videos are available that create simulacrum.

Zadie Smith portrays different multicultural societies through her writings. Her mother is Jamaican and father is British. Her mother immigrated to England in 1969. Smith is a second generation immigrant. She grew up in family where she learned to pick up cultural norms from African and British cultures. She moves to England and later begins her career as a writer. Thus, she begins to write about multicultural communities. In England many African and Asians have immigrated. She writes about a large number of Africans remaining in England after the colonial rule. Some workers were taken by the colonizers for their service. She also writes about some colonizers, who had African wives and children and later took them to England. The Asian migrants in her novels may have migrated due to economic or political tensions.

Smith's first novel, *White Teeth* has been a success because it includes diverse cultural communities and analyzes the multiple dilemmas regarding multicultural coexistence. One of the main characters, Samad, is a Bangladeshi immigrant in England. He tries to teach his sons the social and religious ideals of his native country. He becomes quite forceful in implementing his will. Although he wants his sons to follow the social and religious ideals he fails to abide by them. He drinks, develops extramarital relationship and gambles. He sends one of his sons back to Bangladesh, worrying that he will miss out on the Bengali cultural ideals that he grew up following. It is difficult for him to accept what the schools are teaching them in Britain. The schools and the entire curriculum are guided by the social and religious ideologies of Britain. His sons were also particularly fond of the British school curriculums. Smith focuses on the integration of Asian (Bangladeshi, Indian and Pakistani cultures) and African cultures to show how acculturation has influenced these cultures.

Smith's second novel, *The Autograph Man* has multiple themes. Multiculturalism is one of the most important themes of the book. The main character of the novel is Alex. He

has a Chinese father and an English mother. He grows up balancing the two cultures. From his childhood he has been particularly close to his father. His father's sudden death leaves him alone, striving to deal with the diverse society of England. His girlfriend is an African woman. His relationship remains problematic for he is in dilemma of loving this woman. He realizes that she is ethnically different from him. He struggles to settle with this relationship. Smith has spoken in some of her interviews about the few mixed-race characters in her novels. These characters represent her own personal experiences of growing up in Britain. Irie's experiences in *White Teeth* and Esther's experiences in *The Autograph Man* have resemblances to Smith's own experiences as an immigrant of Britain. Smith examines the immigrants from an objective and neutral perspective. Sometimes, she uses magical realism and at other times the hyperreal² city space to connect human experiences with places, time, people and other external factors.

This thesis is a qualitative study that analyzes multiculturalism and postmodern conditions in Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* and *The Autograph Man*. The thesis contains four chapters excluding the literature review and the conclusion. Chapter three is a detailed analysis of multiculturalism. It analyzes the language, religion, food, education, economy and lifestyle of immigrants in Britain. These elements go through major changes when one migrates to a new country and gives moral dilemmas. Chapter four includes analysis on the simultaneous existence of multiculturalism and postmodernism in literary texts and art. The discussion and co-relation of these topics work as a tool to understand the plight of migrant communities. Chapter five includes an examination of the multicultural elements in the *White Teeth* and *The Autograph Man*. This analysis helps to assert whether cultural integration can have a positive impact on immigrants' livelihood. Lastly, chapter six offers a comparative

² Hyperreality is an exaggerated representation of reality that has distorted it.

study of the two novels providing a close analysis of Smith's novels and showing that integration is inevitable.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Multiculturalism is analyzed differently by different scholars. Bhikhu Parekh analyses multiculturalism in a convincing way in his book *Rethinking Multiculturalism: Cultural Diversity and Political Theory*. He analyses multiculturalism as political theory and practice. He discusses about diverse ethnic communities. His belief about the equal distribution of political and economic power makes his arguments strong. However, pluralist universalism is also an important process discussed by him. He writes:

As we shall see there are universal moral values and there is a creative interplay between them, and the thick and complex moral structures of different societies, the latter domesticating and pluralizing the former and being in turn reinterpreted and revised in their light, thus leading to what I might call pluralist universalism. (127)

Parekh discusses human nature, culture, economic and political institutions, technology etc. Then he analyses the complex processes: globalization, pluralist universalism, transnational business operations and assimilations. These discussions are important in forming proper analysis of multiculturalism and features of multiculturalism. Major political influences in Europe that controls multicultural societies are also acknowledged from this book.

Parekh's book *Rethinking Multiculturalism: Cultural Diversity and Political Theory* has similarities with Panikos Panayi's book *An Immigration History of Britain: Multicultural Racism since 1800*. Both the books include immigrants' experiences while assimilating in a foreign land. However, Panayi's book is more relatable with Zadie Smith's novels *White Teeth* and *The Autograph Man* as they have the common setting. There are regional influences on the experiences of the migrants. According to Panayi, "Britain has been a country of immigration over the past two hundred years in a variety of ways. But at the same

time as ‘positive’ developments have taken place, an iron girder of racism and xenophobia has remained.” (26) His research exposes the realities of racism in labor and housing markets³, jobs at the bottom of the social scale, initially worst available accommodation and violence. Furthermore, his research about the changes that migration causes to religion, food and clothing plays important role in explaining the claims related to the lifestyles of the immigrants.

It is vital to develop a deep understanding of culture while analyzing multiculturalism. Michael Ryan gives detailed information about culture, geography and space in *Cultural Studies: A Practical Introduction*. He says, “Culture is often national in character. The culture of Japan is distinct in many respects from that of nearby China. The cultural traditions are different; the current political culture is different.” Ryan’s analysis helps to relate culture with geography and politics. Furthermore, cultural identity is influenced by religious identity. This example is given by Andrew Furman’s exploration of Jewishness in his article “The Jewishness of the Contemporary Gentile Writer: Zadie Smith’s *The Autograph Man*”. He raises the question of the complexities of identities. How is Jewish writing treated in a multicultural society? He writes: “Zadie Smith’s *The Autograph Man*, to my mind, marks a welcome return of the Jewish novel actively engaged with the pressing cultural cries of our day, specifically the complexities involved in claiming a viable identity in our increasingly multi-ethnic, multiracial and transnational world.” (7) This article helps to understand the identities of the characters in the novels: *White Teeth* and *The Autograph Man*. It also provides the arguments for creating negotiations of complexities among the migrant characters. Some scholars have considered *White Teeth* as a novel that promotes multiculturalism and tries to solve the problems associated with assimilations. Matt Thomas suggests similar thoughts in “Reading *White Teeth* to Improve Intercultural Communication”.

³ In Economics, housing market deals with the supply and demand of house. The real estate business is related to the housing market.

He says, “*White Teeth* attempts to point out this misinterpretation and consequently offers advice to correct the problem of intercultural miscommunication in the West.” (15) This article supports the claims that Irie and Magid get into the process of assimilation.

It is important to analyze postmodernism and multiculturalism together. These two sensibilities are co-related and interdependent. Richard Appignanesi analyses postmodernism appropriately in his book *Introducing Postmodernism*. It is a graphic book that talks about concepts that can define different cultural conditions. It also talks about globalization and unpredictable terrorism. It helps to view postmodernism as an adventurous journey considering both the eastern and the western parts of the world. He says, “Postmodernism in South-East Asia has taken a form unique to itself. Here the postmodern premise that reality and its simulacrum are indistinguishable has espoused a thriving culture and economy based on fakes.” (163) Thus, this book provides insights into the postmodern condition of the South Asian countries. Appignanesi also shows good research about Salman Rushdie’s controversies regarding the *Satanic Verses*. His research is an addition to Bhikhu Parekh’s research on Salman Rushdie’s works in *Rethinking Multiculturalism: Cultural Diversity and Political Theory*.

Linda Hutcheon’s *The Politics of Postmodernism* contains information about modernism, postmodernism, postmodernity, postmodern representation of fiction and history, the politics of parody and postmodern feminism. Hutcheon clearly points the relationship of society, culture and postmodernism. She writes,

Of course many other factors must be taken into account, but generally speaking, the postmodern appears to coincide with a general cultural awareness of existence and power of systems of representation which do not reflect society so much as grant meaning and value within a particular society. (8)

Another important name in the study of postmodernism is Frederic Jameson. Jameson's *Postmodernism or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* criticizes modernism and postmodernism from a Marxist perspective. The book also highlights the influence of mass media on people and culture. It includes the colonization of minds by capitalism. The book is also noteworthy in explaining the complex processes of postmodernism: "The postmodernism is however, the force field in which very different kinds of cultural impulses -what Raymond Williams has usefully termed "residual" and "emergent" forms of cultural production- must make their way." (6) Thus, he asserts how minor cultures are vital aspects of the postmodern condition. Furthermore, Jameson's argument that capitalism underlies postmodernism as a cultural logic provides deep insights into the realities of multicultural societies.

High culture, low culture and popular culture are vital parts of analyzing culture. John Storey critically analyses everyday life under cultural theories in *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture*. Storey includes chapters of writers on postmodernism: Jean Baudrillard, Barbara Creed, Meaghan Morris, Elizabeth Wilson and Andrew Goodwin. The part "Postmodernism" of this book helps in analyzing the relationship between postmodernism, class and culture. It also provides enlightening insights into the fusion of high culture and low culture. This discussion can further be elaborated by Rafael Perez Torrez's "Nomads and Migrants: Negotiating a Multicultural Postmodernism". This article includes the necessity of discussions on postmodernism and multiculturalism. He feels, "The point to make here is that a discussion of multiculturalism and postmodernism should help clarify how these terms can be used productively to construct an inclusive discourse about cultural employment."(162) The article also includes the re-territorializing process, migrations, invasions, enslavements and de-territorializations. Furthermore, it insists that multicultural postmodernism can determine the specificity of political influences and identify the potential of the local and minor communities. Thus, Torrez's writings are remarkable in analyzing the scope of

discussing multiculturalism and postmodernism together. Noha Nasser's "From Multicultural Urbanities to the Postmodern Cosmopolis: A Praxis for Urban Democracy" also addresses that the complex problems of the present world can be analyzed if multiculturalism and postmodernism are brought into consideration together. Lastly, Jason Gladstone and Daniel Worden's "Introduction: Postmodernism, Then" also includes features of postmodernism appropriate to be placed with a multicultural society. He says, "... a breakthrough to some as yet unimaginable new mode of representing (the world space of multicultural capitalism) in which we may again begin to grasp our positioning as individual and collective subjects..." (54) He says maybe postmodernism can help to map oneself in a multicultural world. However, these writings mainly highlight the necessity of analyzing postmodernism and multiculturalism together. The analysis needs examples from literary texts.

Many literary texts help to understand the conditions in a multicultural society. Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* can be considered a text that talks about the domination of British culture. Due to integration, Antoinette suffers from double alienation: she is alienated from her native people and at the same time British people. Hence, Thomas includes, "This provides *Wide Sargasso Sea* with the ability to be read as a critique of modern day cultural segregation⁴, making it relevant to the Western multicultural condition." (28) Next, *Black Skin White Masks* by Franz Fanon is his observations about racism, dehumanization, colonial domination and the human psyche. His observations have two categories: the analysis of the behaviors of the colonizers and the analysis of the behaviors of the colonized. One important point that he highlights is the presence of an inferiority complex among the natives. Sometimes, natives consider the culture and language of the colonizers civilized. Similarly, the colonizers consider the colonized as uncivilized. Fanon's observations about "the woman of color", "the white man", "the man of color" and "the white woman" influence the analysis

⁴ Cultural segregation can be compared to racial segregation. Racial segregation means the separation of residence, restaurants, schools and other institutions based on one's race.

of some characters' desire for a white man or white woman. Furthermore, Benjamin Zephaniah's poetry collection *City Psalms* shows the division between "us" and "them" which can be compared to the postcolonial binary of "self" and the "other". He focuses on the problems he faces as an African migrant in Britain. His statements can be relatable to the conditions of the characters.

The development of one's identity is an important factor in a multicultural setting. In a society that follows only one culture, one's identity is easy to perceive. This happens because that individual can connect to others easily. However, multicultural settings show various problems with the formation and acceptance of identities. Rebecca Dyer's article "Generations of Black Londoners" Echoes of 1950s Caribbean Migrants' voices in Victor Headley's *Yardie* and Zadie Smith's *White Teeth*" includes the feelings that the migrants have about having the identity of ethnic minorities. This is particularly relatable to Samad's bitter assessment of London. He thinks London is a place where a foreigner like him is just tolerated. Lastly, this article is closely linked to the dilemmas and at the same time speaks about the influence of colonial history in a postcolonial world. Jonathan P.A. Sell's article "Chance and Gesture in Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* and *The Autograph Man*: A Model for Multicultural Identity?" also focuses on identity in Smith's two novels. At the same time, he critically analyses whether Smith's model of identity is multicultural or not. He writes,

This paradoxical state of affairs, whereby an entity is a member of a given set and also stands outside that set, with the result that the entity's true identity is cast into doubt while the possibility of defining identity at all is ruled out altogether, is recurrent in the novel on the tropological level.

(36)

Thus, a crisis in the formation of identity is expressed. Furthermore, this article suggests the necessity of discussing postmodernism and multiculturalism together to understand the identities created in the novels. It also discusses the significance of chance and gesture in the

interactions of multicultural societies. Beatriz Perez Zapata writes in “Exploring Death and Grief: Zen in Zadie Smith’s *The Autograph Man*” about Alex’s grief and trauma after his father Lin Jin’s death. The article also talks about the importance of Jewish rituals for the deceased and contemporary approaches to death. She says, “Grief has been, and still is, a recurrent topic in the literature that portrays a complex personal experience that is difficult to overcome and share. “(281) In the novel such a complex situation is seen. Alex (second-generation immigrant) is negotiating with the loss of his father (first-generation immigrant). His father may have been his only way of connecting to his native country. How does such death influence multicultural experiences? Thus, Zapata’s article provides a way to analyze death and grief in multicultural societies and conclude about the themes that all the researchers have put forward.

Chapter 3

An Exploration of Multiculturalism

Multiculturalism deals with different cultures. This term has complicated interpretations in social and political conditions. Whereas multicultural society is a society that has the presence of multiple cultures among its people, in politics multiculturalism deals with the state's policy of dealing with people from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds. The government makes policies to control the practices of minor cultures and approves some cultural practices. The existence of multiculturalism has become prominent in the world. As a result, it is also observed in the literature. The texts that talk about the migrants in foreign lands and their different cultural practices resemble practical situations. Human beings possess some inherent qualities and behavioral tendencies. With time, some of the qualities and tendencies become widely accepted. However, the practices may vary from society to society. Hence, culture imposes similarity in some groups and at the same time, it differentiates among others. The differences become prominent when a group tries to live with another group. Issues are often raised by people while trying to balance between the two. Thus, a multicultural community begins to exist. Bhikhu Parekh defines multicultural society:-

A multicultural society, then, is one that includes two or more cultural communities. It might respond to its cultural diversity in one of the two ways, each in turn capable of taking several forms. It might welcome and cherish it, make it central to its self-understanding, and respect the cultural demands of its constituent communities; or might seek to assimilate these communities into its mainstream culture either wholly or substantially. (6)

Assimilation and mainstream culture are the two important terms related to multiculturalism. In cultural assimilation, the minor ethnic groups may slowly surrender to the dominant

culture. They can also partially accept the dominant culture. The mainstream culture is the dominant culture or the culture of the majority in a community or nation. For example, in England, British culture is the dominant and mainstream culture, whereas the ethnic minorities, such as the: Bangladeshis, Pakistanis and Indians may or may not go through cultural assimilation while residing in England.

To define culture Michael Ryan has said, “A more familiar meaning of the word culture is the things we humans make when we translate ideas into objects ... the second meaning of culture comprises cultural artifacts, such things as we give the built environment.”⁽⁹⁾ In a multicultural society, people who belong to different cultural backgrounds may want to turn their different ideas into realities. For example, some Bangladeshis may feel the necessity of building a temporary “Shaheed Minar”⁵ on the occasion of International Mother Language Day while living in England. So, minor cultures may also have influences on the foreign land. Again, some people may respect their culture more than their own lives. For example, Bengali-speakers in East Pakistan protested the forceful imposition of Urdu as their state language by West Pakistan. This incident led to the Language Movement of 1952 in which lives were lost. There are groups of people in multicultural nations who put their culture above their self-interests. They form their communities while living in a society with diverse cultural influences. Usually, the first-generation immigrants who move to a new land find it difficult to give away from the culture they have adopted from childhood. They prefer to retain their native culture. Some people are open-minded about accepting the actions of the new culture. They may prefer to assimilate. Second-generation immigrants usually prefer the mainstream culture in the new land. It is difficult for them to connect to the culture of their parents. It is easy for them to accept the

⁵ The Central Shaheed Minar is situated in Dhaka. The monument has been built to remember the martyrs of the Language Movement of Bangladesh in 1952. People whose mother language is Bengali may build a similar monument on 21st February to show respect to the language martyrs.

dominant culture. Sometimes, it is difficult for them to balance between the new culture and the culture of their parents. For example, the children of a Pakistani family born and raised in England may prefer the British culture. They learn about British culture at school and from their friends. At home, their parents may follow Pakistani culture. Hence, it can be difficult for them to find the optimum balance between the two cultures.

Multicultural literary texts contain debates on Asian and African values struggling to survive in multicultural England. Although English societies consider themselves open to other cultures, they are still deeply rooted in their own culture. Hence, they may examine the Asian and African cultures critically. They often show racial hatred, discrimination and forced removals⁶ of non-immigrant people from their nation. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie writes in her short story “Checking Out” about Obinze’s forced removal from England. Asians and Africans working in England have often been victims of racial abuse and the strict immigration laws whereby they are removed from the country forcefully. However, some immigrants can improve their conditions through their education and profession. Some Asians are immigrating through marriage with citizens and the jus soli provides opportunities for their children to reside there. All these situations are constantly providing opportunities for their children to live there. All these situations are constantly creating a mixture of different cultures surviving in the vast dimension of British societies. Some Asians and Africans demand permission to practice their native cultural events. Some practices are allowed and some are prohibited. The scenarios are different in different European countries. France has restrictions for wearing hijab (a scarf with which Muslim girls cover their head) and veils⁷. Parekh has written:-

⁶ Non-immigrant people residing in a foreign country often faces legal actions after their visas expire. They are given legal notice to leave the country or directly arrested and sent back to their native country.

⁷ Veil is a piece of cloth used by the Muslim women to cover their face.

On 10 September 1994 the Education Minister, Francois Bayrou, ruled that while wearing ‘discreet’ religious symbols was acceptable, ‘ostentatious symbols which in themselves constitute elements of proselytism or discrimination’ were unacceptable and that the hijab fell under that category. (250)

Parekh also raises the issues with Britain’s government funding Anglican, Catholic and Jewish religious schools but rejecting to fund for the Muslim school. The government has raised concern about the creation of Islamic fundamentalism in Muslim schools. However, privately funded Muslim schools are allowed in England.

Clothing and food are two important factors in a multicultural society. People all around the world dress differently. In Europe, there are several laws regarding wearing helmets while driving motorcycles. However, some Sikhs protested about wearing a helmet because they preferred wearing their turbans. Many of them were penalized but later their protests made the authority approve wearing turbans instead of helmets. Research says that turbans have a relatively lower capability to protect people from injury than helmets but wearing them can protect people from major injuries. Debates about formal wear are still prevalent in western countries. They have fixed dresses for the nurses, the restaurant workers, the drivers and the corporates. Hence, when an Asian migrates to the western countries, they face the dilemma of wearing foreign clothes. Next, all the countries of the world have different foods. A migrant may find difficulties in coping with the less spiced food. Panikos Panayi writes, “Food undergoes a fairly rapid process of integration, even though in the short run, newly arrived migrant communities have the desire to eat the food of their homeland.” (174) One prominent dilemma observed in a multicultural society is the dilemma to find halal food. Muslims seek food permitted by their religion. Some immigrants decide to process their food. They eat bread or vegetarian foods. Some Muslims also slaughter their chickens at their homes. Some of them also start their restaurant to have as well as serve halal

food. The Hindu people have restrictions about eating non-vegetarians. Some of them prefer eating food prepared by their caste. All these diverse food choices exist in different parts of the world; often they struggle to survive together in a multicultural society.

Religion and culture are deeply connected. It is difficult to find any culture in the world without the influence of religious institutions. At the same time, it is also difficult to find any religion that is completely isolated from culture. According to Parekh, “Culture and religion influence each other at various levels. Religion shapes a culture’s system of beliefs and practices, which is why when individuals or communities convert to another religion, their ways of thought and life undergoes important changes.” (147) Religion has directions for prayers, food, clothing, behavior, marriage etc. As a result, the cultures of some nations are shaped by religion. For example, the culture of the middle-eastern countries is largely influenced by the Islamic guidelines. The American and European countries largely follow the Christian rules and regulations. Christmas day is a part of Christian religion. Overtime Christmas day celebration has become a cultural celebration. Streets are decorated. Christmas themed clothes, toys and food are sold. People from other religions also buy them and celebrate this day. Differences in religious preferences cause differences in cultural practices. Religion can contribute to the formation of a community with similar beliefs. Panayi mentions such a community, “In addition, a Pan-Islamic Society came into existence as early as 1903, renamed the central Islamic Society in 1910, with the aim of removing ‘misconceptions prevailing among non-Muslims regarding Islam and Muslims.’” (171)

Culture is inseparable from economic and political institutions. Due to the expansion of science and technology, people are conducting multinational businesses. People are traveling from one country to another for work. As a result, they are continuously coming across different cultural practices. When a person starts working in a

company, he or she is expected to follow the work culture that is prevalent in that company. In the process, the previous employees may also start to know about the new person's culture. Exchange of cultural practices occurs when individuals of different cultural backgrounds meet. To expand the economy and trade, people move beyond their national boundaries. The politicians also focus on foreign relationships. Several countries are welcoming immigrants from different cultural backgrounds. This instance may occur of their need to increase the workforce in the country.

Globalization has opened doors for people to interact with other nations and their cultures. However, this process has roots connected to westernizing the world. Compared to the ideals and values of the western countries, the eastern countries' ideals and values are given less importance. There are discriminations against Asians and Africans. Parekh says, "The rule that policeman should be six feet tall, or that a candidate for an academic post must have acquired his first degree within the country, discriminates against Asians and immigrants respectively." (210) Multiculturalism influences the education system as well. With the increasing number of immigrants, there is a rise in multicultural academic environments. However, most education systems in Europe and America focus on teaching their curriculum. American schools focus on teaching American curriculum. They focus on the history and establishment of America. They also focus on their job market. All immigrants need to follow the curriculum followed at school.

The tribal people and different communities have their languages. According to Sander L. Gilman, "Language marks the difference of the Jew from the Boer and the Anglo." (132) The Boers are Dutch or German descendants in South Africa; the Anglos are English descendants in South Africa, North America and Australia. Hence, languages in different nations can also create divisions. When one migrates to another country one faces the dilemma of speaking in the new language. It is difficult for migrants to give up

the language in which they have been speaking for a long time. At the same time, learning a new language has its challenges. Languages can also be considered as the carrier of culture. Researches have shown that the language of a particular community bears the culture of that community. There can be words that are available only to that particular culture. The actions of the community determine these words. Hence, the journey to learn a particular language can also influence a person to learn specific aspects of that culture. Often a migrant can develop different versions of languages: a mix of the two languages, his/her native language and the new language. For example, the creole language is a mixture of two different languages.

Although there are cultural clashes and dilemmas in a multicultural community, different cultures correct and complement each other. A single culture cannot possibly possess all the elements of human nature and ways. Each culture has some limitations and at the same time contains some elements that other culture does not have. In a multicultural society, different cultures correct and complement each other. They fulfill the limitations of other cultures and correct their faults. Cultures can change with human behaviors. Hence, human beings must learn to create a dialogue to settle in a multicultural community. They must develop tolerances for new cultures and manners. Thus, the different communities can co-exist peacefully.

Chapter 4

Postmodernism and Multiculturalism

The word postmodernism contains the prefix “post” which gives an impression that it has occurred after modernism. Postmodernism is estimated to be a continuation that addresses modernism’s limited scopes. It is a movement that has introduced new ways of acknowledging art, architecture, literary texts, social institutions, political agendas and individuals. This word is explained differently by different scholars. One of the most accepted explanations is given by Linda Hutcheon:

Nevertheless, it seems reasonable to say that the postmodern’s initial concern is to de-naturalize some of the dominant features of our way of life; to point out that those entities that we unthinkingly experience as ‘natural’(they might include capitalism, patriarchy, liberal humanism) are in fact ‘cultural’ made by us, not given to us. (2)

Postmodernism questions the dominant features of our surroundings and makes one think about the reasons behind it. It shows that there can be another reality beneath what appears to be real in front of people’s eyes. Some scholars think of postmodernism as the cultural logic to wrap capitalism convincingly and make people believe in the new movement. However, postmodernism exists with multiple features that are complex and need attention along with the underlying factors. The changes in perceiving the world as something different than what the dominant features suggest have not remained limited in thoughts. Along with art and architecture, it has greatly influenced literature. In literature, postmodernism is identified with the use of experimental procedures of writings. Postmodern literary texts constantly show the presence of the postmodern themes and techniques: irony, playfulness, intertextuality,

pastiche, metafiction, temporal distortion, magic realism, technoculture, paranoia etc. Along with these, multicultural societies are prominent among postmodern writings. Postmodernism and multiculturalism complement each other and acts as a bridge to empower cultural understanding. Zadie Smith is one of the most influential postmodern writers who has worked on multicultural societies in most of her novels. If novels like *The Autograph Man* and *White Teeth* are closely analyzed it is noticed that the postmodern conditions exist parallel to the multicultural scenarios. Thus, postmodernism and multiculturalism are two ways of looking at the world whose courses often match, sustain each other and helps to analyze the situations accurately.

Capitalism has been playing an important role in both postmodernism and multiculturalism. Postmodernism is often defined as a reform of the old methods of producing capitals of the industrial age. There is constant surrendering to the market ideology. Individuals feel like they are refusing the authority of any single style in art or literature but in reality, they are trapped in the market demand. They are still expected to create what the market wishes to be sold and what the buyers are willing to buy ignoring their creative skills. Fredric Jameson says, "...postmodernism is not the cultural dominant of a wholly new social order but only the reflux and the concomitant of yet another systematic modification of capitalism itself...live on, to be rewrapped in the luxurious trappings of their putative successor." (12) Postmodernism has been successful to attack the cultural elitism of modernism but it has itself remained dependent on its successor, modernism and its underlying reality, capitalism. Multicultural societies, which are often the focus of postmodern literatures, also bring forward the same realities. Migrations in such societies are sometimes caused due to economic reasons. Migrants work at their organizations fulfilling the industrial demands of the new country. They work in hope of better income, better lifestyle and a secured life for the future generations. So, acculturation that occurs due to

migration is also influenced by capitalism. Rafael Perez-Torres says in this regard, “The driving forces of capitalism and its re-territorializing process always haunt migrations, invasions, enslavements and other multicultural de-territorializations.” Hence, the cultural realm is deeply dependent on the economic realm.

The ethnic minorities who migrate to different countries in the west remain dislocated from their nation, culture, religion and language. The metanarratives⁸: the nationalist texts, cultural ideologies, religious texts and texts written in their mother language get consciously or unconsciously avoided by them. Although some migrants remain deeply connected to their native countries the environment in the new country has its influence on them. Slowly, their lifestyles reach a stage where they cannot follow any metanarrative (the holy Quran or any nationalist text) particularly. This instance leads to the creations of micro-narratives. Micro-narratives are short specific narratives that focus on particular communities or unique cases. Thus it raises the question do all the ethnic minorities have texts that speak about their definite conditions? Some minor communities may not even have micro-narratives of their own. Is it possible for a migrant to create metanarratives if they want to? Is there any investment in the creation of such work? Or do they remain in the postmodern space trying to balance their hybrid cultural identities?

The origin and practice of postmodernism are deeply associated with North America and Europe. The discussion about postmodernism is also deeply related to American counter-culture. The features of American counter-culture are, opposing the Vietnam War, support for black civil rights, rejecting the elitism of high modernism, the birth of second-wave feminism, accepting gay liberation movement, experimenting with culture and celebration of every day. It is also important to acknowledge how postmodernism has influenced people of Asian and African countries. Migration has allowed Asians and Africans to become a part of

⁸ Metanarratives contain historical meanings and knowledge. It is also termed as a grand narrative.

the postmodern spaces of North America and Europe but it is important to know how postmodernism has influenced those who remained in their native lands. What about the acculturation of the Asians and the Africans in their territories? There are many debates among Asians and Africans about accepting other cultures. Some people do consider practicing foreign culture in their native land. On the other hand, some people are critical about acceptance of foreign cultures. They are exposed to foreign cultures through various media. For example, Salman Rushdie has become a matter of great debate for his text *Satanic Verses* among the Middle Eastern countries. Some Muslims consider the text as humiliating for their Prophet Muhammad. Almost all Muslims living all over the world have protested against his words. However, Richard Appignanesi and Chris Garrett have included in their book:

The Rushdie Affair is a war of non-communication between the two en-trenched “panic positions”. Muslims object to Rushdie’s blurring of boundaries between fiction and real history which for them enshrines the Prophet Muhammad’s revelation. Westerner’s defend Rushdie’s right to treat Islam as simply another postmodern “Grand Narrative”. (157)

Postmodernism in the Asian and African continents has received a different angle. There is a mix in the native creations of art and literature with the postmodern characteristics pointed out by the western countries. Garrett especially talks about “Quawwali” which is a form of music in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. These songs are sung to praise the Sufis, Prophets, God and Caliphs of Islam. Significant changes have come to this form of music due to postmodernism. The music is at present mixed with rock beats. Garrett says, “Even more postmodern is the juxtaposition of Hindu fundamentalism in politics with trendy Hindu youths bopping to the beat of updated Sufi music.” (161). The art and music of Thailand, Bhutan and Singapore also show noteworthy influences of postmodern conditions. Postmodernism has also influenced African culture. However, some African and Asian

writers' experimental ways of writing in their languages have transformed postmodernism as the culture that resists. For example, the African writer Ngugi wa Thiongo has chosen to write in his native language Gikuyu instead of English.

Both postmodernism and multiculturalism look at the world to emphasize the heterogeneous nature of human existence. Political parties often try to bring changes in the heterogeneous nature. They often interrupt with their intentions to homogenize the minor groups. However, the two sensibilities have been released and it is diffusing in the environment. This diffusion process has to negotiate with the political barriers. The black postmodernist practices can also be analyzed to overview the nature of this diffusion. There are black African churches in America where the African remains originally rooted and then engage with the postmodernist and political debates. Looking at the black Africans it is questionable how many of them reflect their native culture and language in their art and literary creations. Chinua Achebe, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Ama Ata Aidoo and some other prominent African writers have tried to include their native experiences. However, few Africans have also revolted against swing music and white musicians through Bebop. Charlie Parker and other musicians have tried to Africanize jazz radically.

Benjamin Zephaniah has spoken against the discriminations of the British social and political systems in his dub poetry. He has shared his experience as an African in the British multicultural society: "As a⁹ African I was a woman in a man's world, / A man in a computer world" (28) He feels he is less than an estimated standard because of his racial and national identity. Zephaniah also experiments with poetic language and forms in his book *City Psalms*. He breaks the standard Queen's English and plays with words and punctuations in

⁹ Benjamin Zephaniah breaks the grammatical rules and regulations intentionally to protest against the linguistic domination of the British writing formats.

his poems. Thus, hybrid identities create these diverse sensibilities and poetry is a way of revolting against the social norms.

Postmodernism is often judged as a condition that has ended the division of high culture and low culture. Concerts, rock, pop, television etc. are popular among all classes of people. Television has been an important factor in guiding culture and acculturation. People get exposed to multiple cultures through television shows. The copies of the original branded products, original books, CDs and paintings now exist in all parts of the world. Some of the Asian markets are run only by the copied products. In the late nineteenth century, people from different financial conditions have shown the blends of their tastes. It has become acceptable that a scholar with critical knowledge about dramas and operas can also be attending a pop music concert. The voices of the working class and the minorities are also part of the postmodern sensibility. This instance has influenced the media and cultural productions. Sometimes, the cultural products of the minorities are even more popular than the elite cultural products. John Storey says:

These voices from the margins, speaking from positions of difference, have challenged theoretically (and by their presence in the academia) the metanarrative of the categorical distinction between high and popular culture. This is the metanarrative that all postmodernists agree has collapsed: the Arnoldian distinction between high culture as 'culture' and the culture of everyone else as 'anarchy'. In this way postmodernism is said to proclaim the end of culture and the beginning of a plurality of culture." (347)

Some scholars may argue that the distinction between the two cultures still exists. The realm of low culture is open to the elites because they can afford it. Can someone with low income have access to expensive opera? Can everyone have access to critical art forms without academic knowledge? Most television viewers may not find it convenient to attend the shows in person. So, the dilemma remains. Hence Jostein Gripsrud says, "It can be safely assumed

that the dividing lines between ‘double -access’ and ‘single-access’ audiences coincide with lines drawn on the basis of other significant social characteristics, such as income and education.” (537)

To conclude, postmodernism and multiculturalism coincide and create a space where the scopes of cultural understanding are relatively easier. It is crucial to understand what remains disguised underneath the two sensibilities to end the dilemmas. Understanding the postmodern conditions in different nations and their reactions to the rise in multicultural institutions makes it easier to understand the situations that literature creates or recreates. This also helps to recognize the main political and economic challenges that hinder integration.

Chapter 5

Multiculturalism in *White Teeth* and *The Autograph Man*

Zadie Smith in her two novels *White Teeth* and *The Autograph Man* has shown the diasporas of multicultural England. Analysis of her personal life reveals her multicultural identity. She has a British father and a Jamaican mother. She grows up in England with the dilemma of not belonging to any particular culture. In her novels, she shows characters having similar struggles. However, in her writings, she has involved multiple other cultures along with British and Jamaican cultures. She has also added her knowledge about many religions to give a complete picture of the multicultural societies that exist in England. The two novels show characters from South Asia, Africa, Europe and North America. In the two texts there is parallel existence of postmodernism and multiculturalism. As cultures go through integrations and receives new forms it shows the postmodern condition. Characters go through the dilemmas of language, food, clothing, integration, education, relationship, religion, economic stability, genetic differences and historical knowledge. These dilemmas can be related to both multicultural situations as well as postmodern conditions. They also raise the question of whether cultural understanding and dialogues between the cultures are possible. Therefore, the conditions that create these dilemmas in literary texts need to be deeply analyzed in order to conclude that any solution is possible.

Language crossing is an important phenomenon in *White Teeth*. There are uses of Bengali, Jamaican and English languages. Smith also shows the successful crossing of the standard and the non-standard English. Jarica Linn Watts says: “Smith draws upon an impressive linguistic repertoire- which combines Cockney¹⁰ and Creole, Bengali and the King’s English, into a pot of linguistic diversity-to capture in print a compelling portrait of

¹⁰Cockney is a dialect of English used by the lower middle class and working class of England.

modern London.” (852). An immigrant learn a new language to communicate with foreigners. They may have to learn it to communicate with their co-workers. For example, Samad has to speak English to communicate. He needs to speak to the foreigners who dine there. His Pakistani and Indian co-workers may also need him to communicate. However, the standard use of English may or may not have changed by Samad. Most immigrants learning English may speak it in a non-standard form. The accent can also be different. Second-generation immigrants may find differences in the language spoken at their homes and school. This can influence their use of language. For example, Millat uses a language that has a Jamaican accent. He says, “Cha, man! Believe, I don’t want to tax dat crap,” (132) his Jamaican accent is a result of his communication with people using the same accent. Irie has the accent of her mother, Clara. A dilemma is created when one tries to force oneself to speak formal English. Watt comments about forceful speaking, “Thus, language crossers are highly conscious of their language use, and, as a result, the language used by crossers tends to come across as formal, controlled, guarded, artificial- in a word inauthentic.” (853) However, the process of language crossing has reached a complex stage where British people can also speak non-standard English. Samad identifies the differences of standard and non-standard English when Poppy says, “So what?” (143) he replies: “What kind of a phrase is this: “So what?” Is that English? That is not English. Only the immigrants can speak the Queen’s English these days.” (143). Hence, some British people may also be accustomed to the use of non-standard English.

A particular language may contain words that tell about the culture of that particular community. When Magid returns from Bangladesh, Marcus goes to receive him at the airport. He listens to the Bengalis saying “Nomoskar...Salam alekum ...kemon acho?” (330). It is considered that the words used for greeting in different nations, languages, religions and

cultures are different. The use of “Nomoskar”¹¹ can mean the person is Hindu and the use of “Salam alekum” can mean the person is Muslim. Smith also tells about the informal language that Samad and Alsana use at their home. Alsana says, “Bhainchute! I am not crying for her, you idiot, I am crying for my friends. There will be blood on the streets back home because of this, India and Bangladesh.” (157). She cries when she receives the news of Indira Gandhi’s death on BBC World Service and replies to her husband’s demeaning comments. Her use of Bengali slang to address her husband represents the turmoil relationship between the Bengali couple.

The economic conditions of the migrants are important to determine their lifestyle. Firstly, why does one migrate? The reason behind Samad’s migration can be his sentiment as a soldier. It can also be the financial cause. He may have migrated in the hope of a better income, lifestyle and future. What conditions is he put in due to his desire for a better lifestyle? A former student and soldier works as a waiter. His income is low. His conditions are identical to the conditions of the immigrants in Samuel Selvon’s *The Lonely Londoners*. The West Indians in the novel try to reach social mobility and in return receive odd jobs and are exploited terribly by their landlords. Next *The Autograph Man*, Lin Jin is a migrant from China. He may have migrated in search of a better job. His son Alex travels to places for his profession. When he meets Kitty in New York, she tells him about her desire to return to Europe. He makes a business deal about selling her autograph, getting a percentage of the profit and providing her the money to travel. He convinces her by saying, “There is nothing dodgy about it. I’ll take a percentage, like any agent-...Just ten percent, standard.” (346). Then he arranges their tickets to London. All these characters migrate and travel for economic causes. Hence, multiculturalism has been greatly influenced by capitalism.

¹¹ “Nomoskar” is used by the Hindu people to greet each other. Similarly, “Salam alekum” is used by the Muslims to greet each other when they meet.

The use of Mangal Pande's presence in the novel *White Teeth* tells about the two versions of histories of colonial rule. Samad and Archie argue about the history of Mangal Pande's¹² bravery. Samad believes in the Indian version of history that states Pande fought bravely against the British in 1857. On the other hand, Archie believes the fictionalized history from his school in Britain: "History was a different business then...And the Great Indian Mutiny of 1857 began when a drunken fool called Mangal Pande shot a bullet." (201). According to historian Fitchett, Pande missed his bullet shot to kill the lieutenant and himself. He took trial. His was executed. Samad is more infuriated General Henry Havelock's (the person who ordered Pande's execution) statue kept outside Palace Restaurant, Trafalgar Square though he finds it so difficult to place a photograph of Mangal Pande at Abdul Mickey's restaurant. Rebecca Dyer mentions:

In *White Teeth*, she undercuts official British memorialization by demonstrating that the desire of "Englishmen" to "never forget" can have quite unexpected consequences in the case of one naturalized Englishman and war veteran - Samad - who insists that his and his ancestors' stake in the Indian "Mutiny" be recognized and that his great-grandfather's story be told. (94)

Frantz Fanon in his book *Black Skin, White Masks* writes about women of color desiring to marry white men. He says, "First of all, there are two such women: the Negress and the mulatto. The first has only one possibility and one concern: to turn white. The second wants not only to turn white but also to avoid slipping back." (54) The mind of a woman of color may feel the white race as superior. To attain that superiority she may want to marry or be with a white man. In the novel *White Teeth*, Clara submits herself completely to Archie. She tries to erase her past religious and social identities as a Jamaican woman. Irie also feels the necessity of being like the Chalfens. She loves Millat but in the end, she chooses Joshua (a white boy who belongs to Chalfens' family). Fanon also writes about the man of color

¹² Mangal Pandey is an Indian soldier who played an important part in The Indian Rebellion of 1857. The original spelling of his name is "Mangal Pandey". Zadie Smith writes his name as "Mangal Pande".

desiring the white woman. He says: "I wish to be acknowledged not as black but as white...who but a white woman can do this for me? By loving me she proves that I am worthy of white love. I am loved like a white man."(63) Men may feel their self-esteem to be heightened by having a white woman as their partners. In *The Autograph Man* Alex considers Boot's partnership. He feels her British beauty is sophisticated. In *White Teeth*, Samad's desire for Poppy despite his strict dedication to his religion shows that his subconscious mind considers white ladies as bodies to desire.

Interracial marriages and relationships are prominent in both novels. Irie, Joshua, Alex, Esther, Samad, Millat, Poppy, Archie and Clara are in relationships with characters from other races. Sometimes, these relationships can be a cause of great tension. Alsana, Millat's mother often wakes up in the middle of the night in fear that someday her daughter-in-law maybe Sarah. This fear emanates from the thought that her grandchildren will be of mixed races. The reason behind her fear is their original culture will be lost. The reason can also be her estimated difficulty to be able to connect to her grandchildren. The tension of mixed racial identities can be related to Antoinette of Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Her creole identity makes her feel marooned. According to Matt Thomas, "Double alienation supports the idea of the assimilation/creolization dichotomy by discussing how two different ways of "reading" hinders cultural merging as a whole. Antoinette is unable to accept her multiple identities since she views English cultural ideals as superior."(28)

Antoinette faces double alienation when she wants to assimilate. The fear to assimilate can also occur when one views any culture as superior. Mixed races also highlight genetic features: teeth and hair. One's DNA¹³ can be traced by teeth and hair. Some humans feel the necessity to keep white intact teeth and beautiful hair. Clara gives up her teeth in an accident

¹³ The full form of DNA is Deoxyribonucleic Acid. It is an important molecule in the human body that can determine one's identity and genetic features.

and takes fake white teeth. Irie gives her curly hair and takes straight colored hair. Their changes show their desire to integrate.

Religion causes differences in multicultural societies. Samad, the Muslim Bengali immigrant shows his devotion to Islam. Firstly, he keeps himself guarded by the sexual restrictions provided by Islam. However, he ends up breaking some of the rules. Secondly, his preference for halal food is noteworthy. He dines at Abdul Mickey's restaurant because halal food is available there. Smith adds, "Pig is banned from the menu." (195). Religious restriction about gambling is also highlighted in the text. However, Mickey's restaurant has a gambling room: "Abdul-Mickey takes over O'Connell's Institutes underground gambling room to make up money lost on sausages."(195). Samad and Archie gamble there and thus, Samad again shows contradiction to his religious beliefs. His case also suggests that maybe it's the multicultural environment that is making him give up his devotion towards his culture and religion or maybe deep inside he wants to assimilate.

To conclude, Smith's two novels *White Teeth* and *The Autograph Man* tell about the dilemmas of the multicultural communities living in England but at the same time, they suggest that integration is possible. Alex Li Tandem's name (combination of British and Chinese words), suggests that hybrid people are surviving in multicultural societies. Similarly, Magid and Irie's openness to mixing also symbolizes the possibilities of integration. The dilemmas need to be solved and new generations are to be welcomed. Transnational business and immigration are going to increase. Hence, it is important to develop the mentality to accept other cultures warmly.

Chapter 6

A Comparative Study of Multicultural Elements in *White Teeth* and *The Autograph Man*

Zadie Smith's first two novels, *White Teeth* and *The Autograph Man* containing the setting of multicultural England have some similarities as well as some differences. The novels show the multicultural societies and the dilemmas but the natures of the dilemmas are different. Based on national and ethnic identities the characters show differences in their experiences of integrations. However, the process of assimilation is noted in both novels. All characters in the novels are going through the process of assimilation. The nature of cultural acceptance and being skeptical towards some cultural beliefs of the foreign nation can be compared to the nature of a liquid solution. Sometimes, the solute and the solvent are unable to mix. This phenomenon is similar to the problems of integration. Such exceptions need to be identified in literary texts. Therefore, the analysis and comparison between the two novels can help to understand the integration in the British multicultural society.

White Teeth includes multiple generations of immigrants living in England. Firstly, there is Samad and Alsana, who are first-generation immigrants. Secondly, there is Clara whose family has a long history with colonizers. Hortense's (Clara's mother) father is Charlie Durham, one of the British officers. He suggests educating Hortense's mother, Ambrosia and makes her pregnant at an early age. Later he moves back to England according to his convenience. Thus, Smith relates the colonial history of Africa with the existing multiculturalism in Britain. Many of the immigrants in Britain may have grandparents who are directly related to the British rule in Africa and South Asia. Furthermore, there are Magid, Millat and Irie who are second-generation immigrants. The novel also talks about the

Chalfens, their previous generations have immigrated to England. However, the integration in the case of Chalfens is so strong that they have become completely British. They encourage Magid, Millat and Irie to become like them. The traumas of these different generations show significant differences that are prominent in multicultural societies. The second generation faces less difficulty in integrating. When the integration of few generations is completed it is difficult to differentiate between the migrants the native people.

The Autograph Man mainly focuses on the trauma of second-generation immigrants. Lin Jin's untimely death limits the acknowledgement of the first-generation immigrant's struggle in England. Alex suffers from excessive grief syndrome¹⁴ due to his father's death. He also has amnesia after a car accident. He remains in a dilemma to negotiate his fantasy and real life. He becomes attached to Kitty whom he has seen on screen. He sends multiple letters to her. Though he receives no reply he keeps sending letters. Alex's obsession with Kitty also represents the postmodern condition where the difference between reality and simulacrum is lost. The movies become more important for him than his friends. Hence, the novel directly focuses on his dilemmas. He also acknowledges that his life is different from all the people around him. He looks different and has mixed-race friends. He faces difficulty accepting the cultural ideologies of his parents. Hence, movies and media become his reality. Banaz Wirya Ali quotes about the second-generation:

They (Second generation) are not trying to fit into a culture but rather to find their own space by drawing on the culture they have been brought up in and, to some extent, either appropriating or rejecting the culture of their parents. Conflicts between first and second generation immigrants characterize the novel.(331)

Zadie Smith has used historical facts as the background events of *White Teeth*. These

¹⁴ Excessive Grief Syndrome (EGS) is the prolonged painful emotion of any loss. It can be related to permanent loss of a person or an object.

events help to develop the main plot. In *White Teeth*, Samad and Archie join World War II. The book raises the debate of how Samad has been able to join the war but his presence is inscribed. Smith has been successful in portraying the facts about the devastating situations that war puts people in. For example, Samad and Archie lose all their co-soldiers. They have to make deals with the villagers for food. They have to create fake identities and struggle with uncertainty to keep surviving. Smith also beautifully shows how nations have combined during World War II and different ethnicities are allies to each other. Nations form allies to fight against their common oppositions. Samad and Archie's friendship symbolizes such an alliance. Their friendship promises a negotiation between the eastern and the western countries' people.

Very few historical events have been used in *The Autograph Man*. However, the use of Royal Albert Hall is noteworthy. The place is enriched with the history of the British Royal Family. Queen Victoria opened this place in memory of her late husband, Albert. Her husband's death made the Queen depressed. She felt the necessity of fulfilling his vision and remember him. Smith says about the place: "On the magnificent mosaic that wraps itself around the Albert Hall, the following is engraved: This hall was erected for the advancement of the arts and sciences, and works of industry of all nations..." (26) However, this place which was developed for advancement of science and arts has become a multipurpose hall in postmodern multicultural Britain. This hall is currently used for multiple functions: wrestling, concerts, basketball game etc. In the postmodern era, the uses of built spaces have reached a new dimension. The traditional uses of space are expanded. In Frederic Jameson's words, "...a whole new culture of the image or the simulacrum; a consequent weakening of historicity, both in our relationship to Public History and in the new forms of our private temporality...which is itself a figure for a whole new economic world system; and after a brief account of postmodernist mutations in the lived experience of built space itself..." (58)

The original purpose of the hall is lost and the hall is now used for wrestling matches which is a new way of supporting capitalism. It is questionable that how many of the visitors know the history of its origin which can be termed as “weakening of historicity”¹⁵. However, Alex’s visit to Albert Hall remains an important event throughout the novel for two reasons. Firstly, he meets a boy there from whom he gets the idea of becoming an autograph man. This profession gives insights into one’s profession in a postmodern multicultural world. Furthermore, Alex’s father Lin Jin collapses and dies in the Hall (after suffering from a brain tumor). Thus, Albert Hall that is the lasting sign of Queen Victoria’s mourning for her husband becomes the place to initiate Alex’s long-lasting grief for the death of his father.

Zadie Smith raises several questions in her novels, one of which is: “How can one be different without being a victim? And can that difference be positive rather than a negative quality?” (Sander L. Gilman, 137) Ethnic minorities are often considered victims of racial prejudice and class-based discrimination. Often the dominant group considers its members superior to the minor races and views them as aliens. The members of a dominant group may also develop the feeling that they are inclined to certain privileges that the other group cannot have. Furthermore, they can also consider that the minor groups are aiming to obtain certain facilities from the state that is politically belonging to dominant groups. Under all these circumstances can a person from a minority group be positive about his/her racial identity. In *White Teeth*, Samad is received warmly by his friend Archie and Poppy. Only the Chalfens and his children’s school principal remain concerned about Samad’s ideologies. The Chalfens are concerned about the alien manners of Samad to raise their children. He faces class-based discrimination as well. As a migrant, he finds it difficult to find a well-paid job to support his family. His work opportunities also remain confined to a restaurant where his career growth is limited. On the other hand, Alex becomes an autograph man. He faces difficulties to make

¹⁵ The term “weakening of historicity” is used by Fredric Jameson to indicate a postmodern condition that can no longer represent the original history.

his both end meet. Once he gets caught by the police at the train station to travel without a ticket. Hence, racial prejudice is existent simultaneously the class-based discrimination makes it difficult for the immigrants to survive. Hence, Bradley R. Schiller states that “The foregoing analysis has suggested that many opportunity barriers previously supposed to be solely racial in origin may instead have economic origins.” (268)

Smith’s novel *White Teeth* shows religious fundamentalism. Often the alien feeling produced among the migrants can lead them to strictly follow their religion and impose it on their family members. Samad serves as the character who tries to reinforce Islamic ideologies in his family. He takes actions: sends his son back to Bangladesh, eats halal food and aborts his relationship with Poppy. The novel shows that Samad’s extreme behavior has resulted in breaking some of the major rules of Islam. His sons take paths very different from what he wants them to take. The novel also includes Millat joining a major Islamic group called “KEVIN”¹⁶. Ali explains Millat’s decision by stating that:

According to KEVIN’s rule of living Millat attempts to purify his soul “purge of the taint of the West” and become a strict Muslim. Furthermore, Millat decides to give up smoking, drinking, drug and women as well. He compares his fundamentalist Muslim training with the gangster education of his Hollywood Mafia heroes: “As far back as I can remember I always wanted to be a Muslim” (Smith, 558). (341)

Millat’s comparison of becoming Muslim with Hollywood Mafia heroes indicates his lack of belief that a real Muslim needs to have. Smith’s second novel, *The Autograph Man* shows a secular and post-secular view of religion. Alex remains skeptical about religion throughout the novel and he is successful in having his secular views. However, he is coerced to attend Jewish ceremonies such as the: naming ceremony and death ceremony. The novel also shows that sometimes adhering to the religion of one’s parents is the only option a child has in

¹⁶ The full form of “KEVIN” is Keepers of the Eternal and Victorious Islamic Nation. In the novel *White Teeth* it is a radical Islamic organization.

belonging to a community. Hence, Magdalena Maczynska says: “Smith’s second work of long fiction is mediation on the complexities of twenty-first century religious identity, as well as an intertextual game in which the trajectory of the narrative is structured by borrowings from mystical Judaism and Zen Buddhism.” (77) Alex’s beliefs also reflect the postmodern condition whereby religious beliefs suggested by the grand narratives have been replaced by micro-narratives. Hence, the religious beliefs of the migrants in the two novels represent two very different types of beliefs.

Human genetics is an important subject in Smith’s *White Teeth*. She not only highlights the genetic features of the migrants but also focuses on the research of the future mouse. The future mouse is genetically engineered to be able to survive certain diseases. The researches and experiments take a long time to develop an animal with artificial genetic properties. Similarly, the genetic identities of the migrants are also modified due to interracial marriages and mixed-race children. Mindy McMann says, “...this slippage between theory and practice also occurs when the novel talks about multiculturalism in light of various perceptions of race, especially in the context of the children of immigrants.” (621) The character Irie is seen to struggle with her DNA and her genetic identity. She wants to be like “white” British girls who have perfect hair. Irie’s behavior can be explained through Homi K. Bhaba’s idea of mimicry¹⁷. According to Bhaba, there is a tendency among the colonized subjects to imitate the cultural behavior, dress, politics and language of the colonizers because of considering the culture as superior to their native culture.

Hence, Zadie Smith’s *White Teeth* and *The Autograph Man* exhibit certain similarities: the setting of multicultural England, mixed-race children, interracial marriages, use of historical facts, religious beliefs and so on. However, if the situations are closely

¹⁷ Mimicry is one of the key concepts in post-colonial studies developed by Homi K. Bhaba, a critical theorist. It indicates the taking on of culture of the colonizers by the colonized. It originates from the colonizers’ desire to civilize the “Other”.

analyzed there are notable differences too. The natures of characters' dilemmas, social conditions and religious beliefs are different. However, cultural integration is ultimately inevitable, however painful or unwarranted the consequences.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

Being a mixed race citizen, Zadie Smith watched the discrimination her brother faced for having darker complexion. As a child she only had an African friend. Smith has survived the feeling of being looked at as the “other”. She has struggled to cope up with the multicultural society of England herself. As a result, she has chosen to write about these multicultural societies in most of her novels. She has researched other nationalities apart from British and African. Through *White Teeth* and *The Autograph Man* Smith recalls some of her own experiences and at the same time adds more to them. Racial prejudice, class discrimination, language dilemma, lifestyle problems, identity crisis and religious dilemmas exist among all multicultural societies in the world. Such instances lead one to question about one’s surroundings. One learns to investigate the social and political institutions and negotiate between one’s traumas and the social rules. Assimilation puts one individual in a disconnected state where one feels disconnected from the native and the foreign culture. It is a strange negotiation between national boundaries and an individual. One’s mind remains at two places at the same time.

Smith’s novels also deal with postmodern subjects. There is intertextuality, irony, paranoia, simulacrum and magic realism. Furthermore, Jameson’s statement about postmodernism as the cultural logic of late capitalism also indicates how capitalism is rooted in the multicultural postmodern societies. Smith shows the replacement of the metanarratives by micronarratives in both novels. Smith also explains that multiculturalism is not only confined to migrating to another country. There can be acculturation within one’s own country. If any character comes in contact with the foreign culture through any medium from home, acculturation is possible. The use of telephone, television, newspaper, internet and

photographs can cause acculturation. In a postmodern era, the omission of differences between high culture and low culture has also become significant. Thus the discussion of multiculturalism and postmodernism together has helped to understand the conditions of migrants.

Although assimilation has certain undesirable impacts, cultural assimilation is inevitable. Hence, accepting new cultures can bring a positive impact like racial harmony. The characters', Archie, Marcus, Magid, Irie, Alex and Esther accept assimilation and the mainstream culture. As a result, they can pick a path in the chaotic world. Migrants should not accept the domination of any culture. They should only learn to negotiate through dialogues between the dominant and the minor cultures. Successful negotiation can lead to a peaceful community. Racial prejudice, injustice, economic discrimination, injustices based on language and religion need to be avoided by both the natives and the foreigners. These are the central messages of Smith's writing. In her own life, she has tried to negotiate with herself and the chaotic multicultural world of England. She has accepted her mixed identity, married an Irish man, writes and speaks tirelessly about multiculturalism and has continued to belong to more than one nation, culture and language. Smith experiments with different languages, cultures, religions and races. There is chaos simultaneously there persists the idea that all the characters belong to the same world. All human beings have the same attributes that connects them to, no matter what they look like, what languages they speak and what cultural beliefs they adhere to.

Works Cited

Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi. "Checking Out", *THE NEW YORKER*, March 11, 2013.

Ali, Banaz Wirya. "The Construction of Identity in Zadie Smith's *White Teeth*", vol.23, no.5, 2019, *ResearchGate*, www.researchgate.net/publication/337951558.

Appignanesi, Richard and Chris Garrat, *INTRODUCING Postmodernism*, Icon Books Ltd, 2004.

Dyer, Rebecca. "Generations of Black Londoners: Echoes of 1950s Caribbean Migrants' Voices in Victor Headley's "Yardie" and Zadie Smith's "White Teeth"", *Obsidian* III, vol.5, no.2, Board of Trustees of Illinois State University, 2004, pp-81-102, *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/44479696. Accessed 7 April 2021

Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks*, Grove Press, 1967.

Gilman, Sander L. "'We're Not Jews': Imagining Jewish History and Jewish Bodies in Contemporary Multicultural Literature", *Modern Judaism*, vol.23, no.2, Oxford University Press, 2003. pp-126-155. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/1396725. Accessed 1 March 2021.

Hutcheon, Linda. *The Politics of Postmodernism*, Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2001.

Jameson, Fredric. *POSTMODERNISM, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Duke University Press, 1991.

Maczynska, Magdalena. "TOWARD A POSTSECULAR LITERARY CRITICISM:
EXAMINING RITUAL GESTURES IN ZADIE SMITH'S "AUTOGRAPH
MAN"", *Religion & Literature*, The University of Notre Dame, vol.41, no.3,
2009, pp-73-82. *JSTOR*,www.jstor.org/stable/25746544. Accessed 7 April, 2021.

McMann, Mindi. "BRITISH BLACK BOX: A RETURN TO RACE AND SCIENCE IN
ZADIE SMITH'S "WHITE TEETH"", *Modern Fiction Studies*, The John
Hopkins University Press, vol.58, no.3, 2012, pp- 616-636. *JSTOR*,
www.jstor.org/stable/26292923. Accessed 4 May, 2021.

Panayi, Panikos. *An Immigration History Of Britain: Multicultural Racism since 1800*,
Routledge Taylor & Francis Group. 2014.

Parekh, Bhikhu. *Rethinking Multiculturalism: Cultural Diversity and Political Theory*,
Harvard University Press, 2000.

Ryan, Michael. *Cultural Studies: A Practical Introduction*, Blackwell Publishing, 2010.

Schiller, Bradley R. "Class Discrimination vs. Racial Discrimination" *The Review of
Economics and Statistics*, The MIT Press, vol.53,no.3, 1971.pp-263-269,
JSTOR,www.jstor.org/stable/1937970. Accessed 9 September, 2021.

Smith, Zadie. *The Autograph Man*, Hamish Hamilton, 2002.

---. *White Teeth*, Penguin Books, 2000.

Storey, John. *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture*, Pearson Education Limited, 1998.

Thomas, Matt. ““White Teeth” to Improve Intercultural Communication”, *Journal of*

Caribbean Literature, vol.6, no.1, 2009, pp-15-30, *JSTOR*,

www.jstor.org/stable/40986296, Accessed 1 March 2021.

Torrez, Rafael Perez. “Nomads and Migrants: Negotiating a Multicultural Postmodernism”,

Cultural Critique, University of Minnesota Press, no.26, 1993-1994, pp- 161-189,

JSTOR. www.jstor.org/stable/1354459, Accessed 11 June 2021.

Watts, Jarica Linn. ““We Are Divided People Aren’t We?’ The Politics of Multicultural

Language and Dialect Crossing in Zadie Smith’s *White Teeth*.” Brigham Young

University, 2013.

Zapata, Beatriz Perez. “Exploring Death and Grief: Zen in Zadie Smith’s *The Autograph*

Man”, *Brno Studies in English*, vol.46, no.2, 2020. *ResearchGate*,

www.researchgate.net/publication/347252444.

Zephaniah, Benjamin. *City Psalms*, Bloodaxe Books Ltd, 1992.

