DYNAMICS OF MULTICULTURALISM IN SELECTED WORKS OF ZADIE SMITH

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DECLARATION

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May, 2016.

I, Lalhlupuii Ralte, hereby declare that the subject manner of this dissertation is the record of work done by me, that the contents of this dissertation did not form basis of the award of any previous degree to me or to the best of my knowledge to anybody else, and that the dissertation has not been submitted by me for any other University or Institute.

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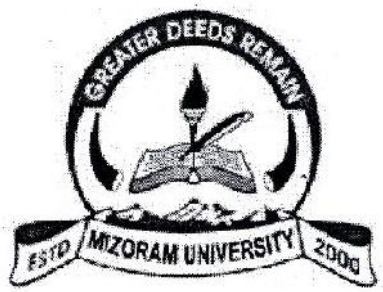

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that ‘‘Dynamics of Multiculturalism in Selected Works of Zadie Smith’’ written by Lalhlupuii Ralte has been written under my supervision.

She has fulfilled all the required norms laid down within the M.Phil. regulations of Mizoram University. The dissertation is the result of her own investigation. Neither the dissertation as a whole nor part of it was ever submitted by any other University for any research degree.

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Chapter 1

Introduction: On Zadie

This dissertation proposes to analyse three select novels of Zadie Smith namely, *White Teeth* (2000), *The Autograph Man* (2002) and *On Beauty* (2005). This chapter will denote a detailed biographical description of Smith's life and the journey she undertook to become the writer that she is today. It will also situate her along the line of the British literary canons while probing the issue of categorisation of writing to which she belongs. Introduction on the works along with the thematic concerns shall be deliberated upon in this chapter.

Contemporary British novelist, essayist and short story writer, Zadie Smith achieved celebrity status in both popular media and the academic world, with the publication of her first novel *White Teeth* in 2000. So far, the body of her fictional works consists of five novels and one novella, which are: *White Teeth* (2000), *The Autograph Man* (2002), *On Beauty* (2005), *Martha And Hanwell* (2005), *NW* (2012) and *The Embassy of Cambodia* (2013), respectively. Phillip Tew in *Zadie Smith* rightly points out that her autobiographical facts resonate both explicitly and implicitly in much of her fictional works. In "Fail Better" Smith reports that for writers "personality is more important than biographical details, it's our way of processing the world, our way of being and it cannot be artificially removed from our activities" (Smith *Changing* 108). Smith's past family life reflects the historical scene of post war Britain in the 1970s.

Zadie Smith was born in Royal Free Hospital at Hampstead on 27th October 1975 to a Jamaican mother Yvonne McLean (in other sources also denoted as Yvonne Bailey) and a British father, Harvey Smith. Smith was christened with the name 'Sadie' but changed it to Zadie at the age of fourteen in order "to look more exotic" (Tew *Zadie* 29). Initially the family of Smith was modest in both social and economic aspects and they belonged to the lower middle class in society. Yvonne McLean was born and brought up in Jamaica and she migrated to London in 1969 at the age of fifteen. She was married to a much older Englishman at the age of twenty one to become his second wife. Like many others during the

period of mass immigration from the empire old possessions to Europe in the post war era, Zadie Smith's mother suddenly acquired bourgeois status through Thatcherian expansion of the professional class. Smith's mother aspired in terms of career through the expanding education system:

> Briefly a part time model and subsequently a secretary, she undertook a course concerned with Youth and Community Studies at Brunel University, subsequently studying further to qualify psychoanalytic practices. To date, she works at National Health Service (NHS) as a psychotherapist and consultant to parents for the charity Young Minds. (Tew *Zadie* 27)

This aspiration to acquire higher social status among the immigrant characters and their second generation children in Smith's works is pervasive. The strong woman that Yvonne McLean had become has also immensely influenced her daughter in life and writing. However, it is also evident that the influence of Harvey Smith is also responsible in moulding Zadie Smith as a writer. Harvey Smith was twenty years older than his second wife. He worked as a commercial photographer in Soho and subsequently as a paper salesman.

Zadie Smith is the eldest child of her father's second marriage. She has a half-brother, a half-sister and two younger brothers, Luke and Ben, also known as Luc Skyz (a rapper) and Doc Brown (a rapper and stand-up comedian) respectively. She attended two public schools namely, Malorees Junior School and Hampstead Comprehensive School, where she completed her studies in 1994. During her time at the latter establishment her parents divorced and it resulted as a traumatised experience for the young teenager. In an interview with Eleanor Wachtel, Smith reports that it was during this period that she read the most (n.p). Zadie Smith's literary taste and inspiration remains eclectic. She lists Kafka, Nabokov, Virginia Woolf, David Foster Wallace and E. M. Forster amongst her reading. With regard to her eclectic inspirations, she says:

> Off the top of my head, I was reading a lot of Victorian fiction and everything on my mother's shelves. I was reading a lot of inappropriate books like *Our Bodies, Ourselves* and various kinds of feminist fiction that she had. My mom had this very eclectic bookshelf, partly because she wasn't particularly educated herself and neither was my father, but they had an idea that if they bought books with penguins on the spine this was a sign of quality, so they would go to car-boot sales, et cetera, and buy these books. Of course in that period, mid-1970s, early 1980s, that was absolutely a sign of quality. So we had the green Penguins and the blue Penguins and the orange Penguins, and I made my way through those and it was quite a good early education. (Wachtel n.p)

Smith's consciousness continued to be influenced by fiction throughout her adolescence. She reports that her mother used to make her read books written by black women, especially Toni Morrison, Alice Walker and Zora Neale Hurston, who wrote mostly about the experience of black immigrant women in America. Although approached reluctantly, she was touched by Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937) at the very first page and even describes the book as "soulful" (Smith *Changing* 85). The experience of reading these books has helped her understand the problems faced by black immigrant women in England, especially her mother. However, in the Masterpiece Theatre Interview PBS she insists, "I am not an immigrant". By making such statement, it is evident that Smith retaliates against the criticism of her works in the light of her race.

At eighteen, Zadie Smith joined King's College, Cambridge University to study English. She completed college in 1997 with a modest academic result, which she apologetically mentioned, by way of correcting the rumour that she completed her Bachelor's Degree with double first class, in an interview with *The Guardian*. Smith's reading of English

at Cambridge had been instrumental in her literary achievements. She absorbed influences from both literary and critical traditions. Nico Israel comments that rather than race, the educational class seems to be more important in Britain and that there are very few Booker Prize winning writers without "Oxbridge credentials" (95). The same goes for Smith, who had been introduced to the social class consisting of literary personnels like McEvan and Martin Amiz while a student, which subsequently became crucial in her literary achievement. While commenting on McEvan's wedding party which she attended, she says, "it was a party, people from my bookshelves came to life" (qtd in Tew *Zadie* 35). Smith confessed to Aida Edemariam that she aspired to change her social class:

> I think when I was growing up I was very very aware of not being middle-class; much more aware of than of being black as unusual, I never wanted to be white; but I always wanted to be middle-class. I liked the big house, […] the cello lessons (n.p).

Her aspiration became reality partly due to her enrolment at Cambridge. Following her success and with regard to her notion of class and change, she says to Hattenstone, "I may have been working class once, I think once you live in a nice flat in a nice area, and you've had a great education, you're really pushing it, to continue to claim to be the salt of the earth. Life changes […]" (n.p). Therefore notion of class and change of class have been a recurring theme in her works.

Smith met Nick Laird at one of the literary competitions at Cambridge in which Laird won. The two eventually got married in 2004. Nick Laird grew up in County Tyronne, Northern Ireland and trained for solicitor after university. He has published *To a Fault* (2005) (collection of poems) and *Utterly Monkey*, a novel in 2005 (Tew *Zadie* 37). The couple lived in Monti, Rome, Italy from November 2006 to 2007, and is now based between New York City and Queen's Park, London. They have two children, Katherine (Kit) and Harvey.

Zadie Smith emerged as a writer with the publication of her short story “The Newspaper Man” in *May Anthology* while studying at Cambridge. Her second story was published in *May Anthology*, an annual journal of collection for budding writers at Oxford and Cambridge, in 1994, during which Nick Laird was the editor of the journal. After the publication of her debut novel in 2000, she subsequently served as "writer in residence" at the ICA in London and subsequently published, as editor, an anthology of sex writing, *Piece of Flesh* (2001), as the culmination of this role. After the publication of her second novel in 2002, Smith visited the United States as a 2002–03 Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study Fellow at Harvard University.

In 2006, Smith published *Martha and Hanwell*, a book combining two short stories about two troubled characters. Originally published in *Granta* and *The New Yorker*, In December 2008, she guest-edited the BBC Radio 4 *Today* programme. After teaching fiction at Columbia University School of the Arts, she joined New York University as a tenured professor of fiction as of 1st September 2010. Beginning with the March 2011 issue, extending until October 2011, Smith was the monthly New Books reviewer for *Harper's Magazine*. Smith's latest novel, *NW*, was published in 2012. It is set in the Kilburn area of north-west London, the title being a reference to the local postcode, NW6. She also published a novella, *The Embassy of Cambodia* in 2013.

The categorisation of Zadie Smith’s works is predominantly associated with myriad complexities. Tracy L. Walters comments in an introduction to *Zadie Smith: Critical Essays*, “stylistically Smith’s novels also do not fit neatly into any literary genre, for Smith’s fiction shares features with the comic novels, metafictional novels, modernist novels and postmodernist novels” (3). In an essay titled, “The Flipping Coin: The Modernist and Postmodernist Zadie Smith”, Matthew Paproth attempts to define Smith’s philosophical affiliation between modernism and postmodernism. He acknowledges that while Smith’s

writing style and the structures of her novels are modernist, the themes of distorted reality, conflicts of race and class can be associated with postmodernism. Although the novels share the characteristics of both genres, Paproth concludes that novels like *White Teeth* and *On Beauty* are modernist because despite the experimental writing style, the content of the works adheres to a structure that is modernist. (Paproth 13-15)

Zadie Smith's works are predominantly read from the perspective of postcolonialism for Smith's concern with the themes of cultural alienation, exile and identity issues faced by people, predominantly those who are uprooted from their homeland. Critics like Raphael Dalleo and Ulka Anjaria have identified Smith with Black British literary tradition. Dalleo highlights the 'Caribbeanness' of her characters, the presence and discussion of the large Caribbean immigrant population and the transplantation of Caribbean culture into British culture (Dalleo 91- 97). However, Smith's preoccupation with such postcolonial themes does not merely situate her along with 'conventional' postcolonial writers. According to Tracy L. Walters,

> One of the distinguishing features between postmillenial Black British writers and the first generation of Black British writers is that the younger writers offer a different discussion of Britishness, identity and cultural conflicts. (*Zadie* 5)

Smith departs from the traditional postcolonial writing by focusing mainly on the experience of the second generation immigrants by way of redefining 'Britishness' in the light of multiculturalism. Her novels do not merely retaliate against marginalisation, or pronounce "back to the roots": they are the renditions of the dynamics and complexities accompanied by such issues. Phillip Tew describes *White Teeth* as, "a rapturous evocation of

multiculturalism" (*Zadie* 3). Multiculturalism, in itself, is a body of thought in political philosophy about the proper way to respond to cultural and religious diversity.

Drawing inspiration from the multiethnicity of her existence, most of her characters identify with more than one culture, country, and ethnicity. Irie Jones, the principal character of *White Teeth*, is the daughter of a working-class, white, British father and a Jamaican mother living in multiracial North London. Alex-Li Tandem, the protagonist of *The Autograph Man*, is a Chinese-Jewish North Londoner, and the Belseys of *On Beauty* are an interracial couple. They are global in their travels, moving easily in time between past roots and present chaos, and in place from London, to various countries of origin and memory, to New York and to New England. Boundaries between liberal and conservative are also crossed, especially in the friendship between Kiki Belsey and Carlene Kipps in *On Beauty*. Smith's witty and contemporary voice, the wide scope of her novels, the vulnerability of her characters, and her social satire are elements of her work which have contributed to her phenomenal success with critics and public alike. The cultural and national identity of Britain has undergone explicit change towards the end of the millennium. After the Second World War, people from all over the erstwhile colonised countries migrated to England in mass exodus. The immigrants brought in the multiplicity of their cultures along with themselves. So the constant interaction between the immigrants' cultures and the host culture evoke the hybrid space, where in assimilation, mimicry and all kinds of intercultural mixing took place. Multiculturalism has become an inherent feature of British culture:

> This has been the century of strangers, brown, yellow, and white. This has been the century of the great immigrant experiment. It is only this late in the day that you can walk into a playground and find Isaac Leung by the fish pond, Danny Rahman in the football cage, Quang O'Rourke bouncing a

> basketball, and Irie Jones humming a tune. Children with first and last names on a direct collision course. Names that secrete with them mass exodus, cramped boats and planes, cold arrivals, medical checkups. [...] Yet, despite all the mixing up, despite the fact that we have finally slipped into each other's lives with reasonable comfort (like a man returning to his lover's bed after a midnight walk), despite all this, it is still hard to admit that there is no one more English than the Indian and no one more Indian than the English, (Smith *White Teeth* 271-2)

The works of Zadie Smith transcend the boundary of her race and colour. To confine Smith in the category of 'Black' British writer is too small a box for her. In an essay titled, "What does Soulful Mean?" Smith admits, "[…] I want my limits to be drawn by my own sensibilities, not by my melanin counts" (Smith *Changing* 5). The English literary tradition has shifted from the homogenising 'white Englishness' to the all-pervasive multicultural concerns. Irene Perez Fernandez has rightly suggested that writers like Zadie Smith, Monica Ali and Andrea Levy create and occupy the liminial third space in British literature (154). However, beyond Fernandez's suggestion, the liminial space as determined by Homi Bhabha is fluid, blurring the definitive distinction between what is 'British' and what is not. This fluid quality of hybridity with regard to culture has successfully shifted the peripherial liminial space wherein Smith creates her novels at the center of British culture. This is what Michel Foucault claims with his concept of power. Power and discourse are the embodiment of one another. Power is fluid and pervasive: it exists in every social relation. Although Smith's novels are marked by humorous rendering of distorted realities, the presence of discursive power embedded in the unlikely 'realities' situate her in the line along with the all-powerful British literary canons. Phillip Tew claims that Smith "adapts several traditional forms, the comic picaresque interfused with the family saga, adding narrative of society and

authenticity. She evinces other quasi-Dickensian qualities, both structurally and stylistically, highlighting cultural contradictions and oddities" (*Zadie* 1). The basic content of Smith's novels do not stray much from the forefathers of English novel. She writes about dysfunctional families, personal quest for a place in society, the complexities concerning morality in the not so moral world. Nevertheless, Smith differs in the manner of dealing with these issues. The world that we live in today as compared to the Victorian writers has changed a lot. Religiosity, an inherent theme for Smith, alone has continued to be an integral part of culture but faith (which constitute religion), is no longer an integral part of religion. This conflict between faith and religiosity is found in all the novels of Smith. In *The Autograph Man* it is more explicit as Alex-Li Tandem perpetually battles with his commitment to a single form of religion, Judiasm or Buddhism. Smith employs irony and satire in order to express her own ambivalent attitude toward religiosity in her works.

According to T. S. Eliot in "Tradition and Individual Talent: An Essay":

> Yet if the only form of tradition, of handing down, consisted in following the ways of the immediate generation before us in a blind or timid adherence to its successes, "tradition" should positively be discouraged. We have seen many such simple currents soon lost in the sand; and novelty is better than repetition. Tradition is a matter of much wider significance. It cannot be inherited, and if you want it you must obtain it by great labour...the historical sense involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence; the historical sense compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order. This historical

> sense, which is a sense of the timeless as well as of the temporal and of the timeless and of the temporal together, is what makes a writer traditional. And it is at the same time what makes a writer most acutely conscious of his place in time, of his contemporaneity. (67)

So Smith cannot be dismissed from the tradition of the literary canons. In *On Beauty*, she acknowledges her indebtedness to E.M. Forster by drawing on his style. Murphy Moo in "Zadie, Take Three" reports that Smith "wanted to return to the fiction she'd been brought up on to see if it could reflect contemporary concerns" (n.p). Therefore it is only right that Smith be categorised as "Contemporary British' writer in its broadest sense.

White Teeth, Smith's first novel, was published in January, 2000, when Smith was twenty-four years old. The book, a saga of three families in multicultural north London, was an instant best seller. While still a university student, she was offered an advance of £250,000, approximately $400,000, for her first two books by Hamish Hamilton (Tew *Zadie* 75). The size of the advance for such a young, unknown writer put her name in the news even before her first book was published. The book did not disappoint, becoming an almost overnight critical success. It went on to win the Whitbread First Novel Award, the Guardian First Book Award, and the James Tait Black Memorial Prize for fiction (Tew *Reading* 10).

White Teeth is a complex and multilayered novel, with a wide cast of characters and a twisting plot ranging over many years and several continents. The story follows the fortunes of two best friends, World War II buddies Archie Jones, a white working-class man, and Samad Iqbal, a Bangladeshi who works at an Indian restaurant in London. Archibald "Archie" Jones is attempting to commit suicide on the morning of New Year's Day, 1975. He is gassing himself from the exhaust fumes of his car, which is parked in Willesden Green, a multiracial, multicultural, and mostly immigrant neighbourhood of London. Suicide has been Archie's New Year's resolution since the miserable failure of his

childless marriage to an insane Italian woman. As with most decisions in his life, he had tossed a coin to determine whether or not he should kill himself. A local hallal owner, Mo Hussein-Ishmael saves Archie's life when he sees him in his car, which is parked in the shop's loading area. Archie readily treats this as a good sign that his life has not yet given up on him:

> Once in the street, Mo advanced upon Archie's car, pulled out the towels that were sealing the gap in the driver's window, and pushed it down five inches with brute, bullish force.
>
> "Do you hear that, mister? We're not licensed for suicides around here. This place halal. Kosher, understand? If you're going to die round here, my friend, I'm afraid you've got to be thoroughly bled first". (Smith *White Teeth* 6)

Reinvigorated by his second chance, Archie, a forty-seven-year-old World War II veteran, attends the aftermath of a random New Year's Eve party. At the party he encounters Clara Bowden, a nineteen-year-old Jamaican and a lapsed Jehovah's Witness. Archie and Clara marry just six weeks later. Clara immediately sees her marriage to a native-born Englishman as an escape from the old, convoluted ways of her family. Her mother, Hortense Bowden, was born during a 1907 earthquake in her native Kingston, Jamaica. Hortense's mother, Ambrosia, was fourteen years old at the time of Hortense's birth. Ambrosia had become pregnant by a white English captain stationed in Jamaica. Due to earthquake, Hortense had considered her own birth a miracle, and for the rest of her life she would be a religious zealot. As a Jehovah's Witness, Hortense excitingly continues to anticipate the end of the world because she is firmly convinced that she must be one of the 'chosen people'.

Samad Iqbal, Archie's best friend for nearly thirty years, had encouraged Archie's second marriage to a much younger woman, such as Clara. Samad is married, by arrangement, to Alsana Begum, a woman nineteen years younger. Samad and Archie had met

long before the Iqbals' immigration from Bangladesh. Having served together at the end of World War II, the two men feel united in that experience, despite neither having done any fighting. They continue to retell their memories of the war at their regular spot, O'Connell's Pool House, where they go for drinks, omelette, and discussion. Clara and Alsana become pregnant nearly at the same time and become close, albeit somewhat slowly and, for Alsana, reluctantly. Clara gives birth to Irie, while the Iqbals welcome twin boys: Magid, "the older son by two minutes", and Millat. The three children grow up together and, as the first British-born children of immigrants, go through a process of cultural assimilation much different from that of their parents.

Samad gets obsessively involved with his children's education, attending all parent meetings at their school and promoting all Muslim holidays for the sake of multiculturalism. An affair with his sons' music teacher leads Samad to question English values and his own religion. For his sons' salvation and his own redemption, he decides that the children are better off growing up in his native Bangladesh. However, on his waiter's salary, he can only afford one airline ticket. After a torturous introspection, Samad settles on Magid, the more obedient and seemingly more old-fashioned of the twins. So, unbeknownst to his wife and with assistance from Archie, Samad sends away his older son to the house of Magid's grandparents. Such betrayal is impossible for Alsana to forgive, and she begins to treat Samad with indifference and resignation. Nothing but the return of her firstborn can fix the family's rift, not even Magid's letter about his accomplishments in Bangladesh. Despite his father's original aspirations, however, Magid becomes more interested in science than in religion.

Millat and Irie continue to grow up on English soil. By this point, Irie, an overweight girl of low confidence and with a head full of unruly hair, has developed an enormous infatuation on the younger son of the Iqbals. After they get caught smoking marijuana on

campus, both children join a study group at the home of Joshua Chalfen, an older schoolmate, to avoid further consequences. Joshua's parents, Marcus, a scientist, and Joyce, a horticulturalist, quickly become "the children's adopted parents".

The Chalfens are "middle-class", established, blissfully content, and egotistical. They often speak of themselves in the third person. Irie begins assisting Marcus with his experiments on the genetically manufactured FutureMouse©, experiments that become controversial. Joyce, however, dotes on Millat. She supports him financially and defends him sometimes at the expense of her own family's interest. To the children, the Chalfens' middle-class ways are exciting at first, but soon, as in any child-parent relationship, a generational gap arises. Along with the Chalfens' own son, Joshua, the children reject the adults' input, mostly on topics relating to the children's future.

In the meantime, a correspondence begins between Marcus and Magid, and it is only through Marcus's investment in a return ticket that the older son of the Iqbals is able to fly back to England. Magid, despite his father's original aspirations for him, returns to England as a more Westernized citizen and immediately becomes an assistant to Marcus. With FutureMouse© related publicity, Marcus is in need of such a companion, while Irie gets shoved off into a role of a filing girl. It seems that she can never escape the Iqbal twins. In a moment of frustration with her unrequited love, she sleeps with both of the twins within an hour, first with Millat then with Magid.

In search of a sense of belonging, Millat goes through his own transformation and joins a Muslim fundamentalist group, KEVIN (Keepers of the Eternal and Victorious Islamic Nation). Group members burn the book, *Satanic Verses*, by Salman Rushdie and intimidate those whose ways they detest. With his genetic meddling, Marcus becomes an obvious target of KEVIN's retaliation. Chalfen's own son Joshua also has joined a cause: the environmental

group FATE. The organization utilizes Joshua as an insider to his father's experiments and plans a violent protest against his work.

It is the last day of the millennium, and Marcus is presenting his FutureMouse© to the public and to potential sponsors. The event brings together all of the members of the three families: the Joneses, the Iqbals, and the Chalfens. Clara and Archie are there, but are somewhat disinterested; Irie, who is now secretly pregnant with a child of one of Iqbal twins, is there, too. She will never know the real father of the soon-to-be-born child. Hortense makes her appearance as part of the Jehovah's Witness' next anticipation of the end of the world. While Magid is at Marcus's side, Millat is at the presentation as part of a religious protest by KEVIN. Joshua attends along with his FATE group in the name of defending animal rights. Both Samad and Archie have a surprise encounter with a former prisoner of war, a French fascist doctor, who has become a mentor to Marcus. FutureMouse©, which represents the future, escapes.

Smith's second novel, *The Autograph Man* (2002), differs from its predecessor in its scope, its themes, and in its intended audience. A more narrowly focused study of one young man's career in autograph dealing; the novel is also darker in tone. While *White Teeth* embraced multiple generations, *The Autograph Man* is chiefly concerned with youth, specifically people in their twenties. Thematically, the novel revolves around Jewish mysticism and the insidious effects of fame on modern life. In an interview with *Entertainment Weekly* magazine, Smith claimed that the novel grew out of her year-long attempt to write a rabbi joke as well as a comment by actor Marlon Brando in *The Guardian* newspaper about being famous: "I haven't had an honest moment with a person in forty-one years" (n.p). That comment struck a chord with Smith, since she had already felt the dislocations and vertiginous effects of being instantly renowned. Her youthful good looks, exotic lineage and "Bret Easton Ellis-style" (*Entertainment* n.p) savvy about youth culture

made her a marketer's dream, and *The Autograph Man* reflects her disenchantment with both the machinery of fame and the slavish hero-worship that it breeds in consumers. Although *The Autograph Man* did not receive the expected critical acclaim, it did not cease to be a commercial success. Smith received the *Jewish* Quarterly Wingate Literary Prize 2003. Alex Clark comments that the book tells us how Smith thinks about:

> Jewishness and goyishness, Zen Buddhism, the relationship between Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, being upgraded to business class, living on your own with a cat, the manic internationalism of hotel breakfasts, male bonding and female bravery, Ginger Rogers and Lauren Bacall. It introduces us to some of her heroes - Lenny Bruce and "the popular wise guy Walter Benjamin" seem particular favourites - and to some of her abiding anxieties, most notably the effect of celluloid culture on our ability to express ourselves spontaneously and originally (n.p).

The Autograph Man is set in a fictional north London suburb called Mountjoy. The novel opens with a prologue in which the young Alex-Li Tandem attends a wrestling match with his father, Li-Jin, and his two friends, Mark Rubenfine and Adam Jacobs. They meet Joseph Klein, who introduces the boys to autograph collecting. At the end of the prologue, Alex's father collapses and dies of a brain tumour just at the moment when the boys are rushing forward to obtain the autograph of the wrestler Big Daddy. Throughout most of the novel, the inability to face the death of his father and escaping reality by collecting autographs are Alex's predominant character traits.

Book one is set fifteen years later in Mountjoy. Alex has become a professional autograph dealer. He especially desires the autograph of 1950's Hollywood star Kitty Alexander, to whom he has written weekly for thirteen years. The four boys of the prologue are still close friends. Alex has a girlfriend, who is Adam's sister Esther, but lives a

superficial life and seems unable to connect with other people. His friend Adam, a black Jewish mystic, urges him to read the mourner's Kaddish on the anniversary of his father's death, but Alex resists the idea. Book one presents Alex's obsession with the cult of celebrity and the brittle shallowness of this life with satirical and sometimes ribald humour and ends as he finally receives his desire in the mail.

Book two is set in New York, where Alex is attending an autograph fair and trying to find Kitty at her return address in Brooklyn. When he finds her living in genteel poverty he persuades her to return with him to London, so he can make her rich by auctioning some of her rare autographs and letters. After a television news story wrongly reports Kitty's death, Alex makes even more money than he imagined. Throughout Book two, Alex grows in self-knowledge, and he gives his commission on the sale of Kitty's letters to a dying fellow autograph man as evidence of his character development.

In the final scene of Book two and the epilogue, Alex places his father's autograph in the place where he had contemplated placing Kitty's and recites the mourner's Kaddish in the synagogue with all of his friends present. He finally acknowledges his connection to his father, a living hero, and elevates him above the artificial heroes of Hollywood films. Like *White Teeth*, *The Autograph Man* observes and satirizes the subcultures of north London's multicultural inhabitants, but Smith's second novel is both narrower in scope and deeper in exploration of character than her first. It is inventive in form and clever in its wide range of references to both popular and literary culture. Irony and metaphor abound. Alex-Li Tandem, the autograph collector, is repeatedly unable to sign his own name, but in the touching moment when he gives his commission from the sale of Kitty's letters to the dying Brian Duchamp, he clearly signs his name to the check, taking possession of his identity in compassion. Alex-Li Tandem has taken a journey from substituting celebrity for reality to compassion and self-knowledge. However, the novel moves quickly back into vulgar humor

as Alex follows this act of compassion by getting roaring drunk. Smith's works are predominantly comical; humour is always an important component of her commentary.

On Beauty, Smith's third novel, was short-listed for Britain's coveted Man Booker Prize and may be poised to surpass the success of *White Teeth*. The British company FilmFour purchased the motion-picture rights (Walters *Zadie* 6). As in *The Autograph Man*, the action of *On Beauty* also spans the Atlantic Ocean, this time between London and suburban Boston, with the preponderant share of its events occurring in the United States. Its American setting is the fictitious college town of Wellington, an academic environment that owes much to Smith's year as a fellow at Radcliffe, Harvard (2002-2003). The title of the novel also acknowledges the influence of the distinguished Harvard professor Elaine Scarry, whose book *On Beauty and Being Just* (1999) argues that over the preceding two decades, aesthetics (beauty) has lost too much ground to political correctness (being just) (Smith *On Beauty* iii).

The first section of Smith's *On Beauty* is used to identify the major characters and to set up the dynamics among them. The story begins with e-mails from Jerome Belsey to his father, Howard. Jerome is temporarily living in London. He is staying with the Kipps family. Howard Belsey and Monty Kipps have very different political and academic philosophies. Howard is liberal. Kipps is conservative. Howard is white and British. Kipps is a Trinidadian black. Both have taken a deep interest in the artist Rembrandt, but their opinions are quite different. Kipps has just published a book on Rembrandt. Belsey's book remains unfinished. With their great differences, jealousies, and dislike for one another, it is no surprise that Howard is not pleased that his son Jerome is staying at the Kipps's house. Furthermore, Howard is mortified when Jerome writes that he is going to marry Kipps' daughter, Victoria. As it turns out, Jerome, who is a social misfit, has misinterpreted Victoria's attentions towards him. Jerome had been a virgin. Victoria definitely was not. She has sex with Jerome but is not

in love with him and certainly has no intention of getting married. Jerome realizes his mistake too late. Both families are incensed. Mortified, Jerome comes home in distress.

Home for the Belseys is Wellington, a small college town outside of Boston. Howard is a professor of art history at Wellington College. Kiki, his Jamaican wife, is a hospital administrator. The couple has three children: Jerome, Zora, and Levi. Howard and Kiki are planning a party to celebrate their thirtieth wedding anniversary, but there is tension in the air. Howard has recently admitted to an affair. He claims that it was a one-night stand while he was at a conference in Michigan. He has not named the woman, and so far, Kiki has not pressed the issue. But at the party, Claire Malcolm, a long time friend of Howard's and a fellow faculty member at Wellington, makes a motion that is too personal for Kiki's keen sense. Claire, while talking to Howard, touches his chest and slips her finger between two buttons on his shirt. Kiki, standing nearby, reads her husband's face. She now knows that Howard's affair has been with Claire. Kiki tells Howard he can continue to live at the house, but she will have nothing to do with him from now on.

In the meantime, the Belseys have also heard that Monty Kipps has been offered a teaching position at Wellington College and has moved his family into a house down the street. Howard is frustrated and Jerome is embarrassed. Kiki, on the other hand, goes out of her way to meet Kipps' wife, Carlene. Kiki likes the older woman and looks forward to making her a friend. Zora runs into Carl Thomas. She had mistakenly taken Carl's disc player at a concert. Now they meet again at the college swimming pool. Zora is taken by Carl's attention. Later, Zora meets with Jack French, the dean of the Humanities Department. Zora subtly blackmails French into getting her into Claire Malcolm's creative writing class. Zora tells French that she believes Claire has rejected her from the class because of the affair with her father. Zora suggests that if French does not ensure her entry in the class, she will file a complaint. Wanting to avoid publicizing this scandal, French blackmails Claire, in turn, into

accepting Zora. French threatens to stop Claire's practice of accepting talented but unregistered student poets into her class. Meanwhile, Kiki visits Carlene Kipps, and they enjoy one another's company. They discuss feminism. Carlene is very conservative and believes her role is to take care of her husband and children. Kiki thinks more in terms of what she wants, personally, out of life. Later, Claire takes her poetry class to a coffee shop to listen to local performers. Carl, Zora's friend, performs that night and wins over the crowd. Claire invites Carl to attend her writing classes.

The third section opens with Carlene Kipps's funeral. After the funeral, Howard Belsey strays from the crowd at the Kipps house and encounters Victoria, who motivates him to sleep with her, which he does. Back in school, Howard tries his best to stay away from her. Zora, in the meantime, falls for Carl. She becomes entrenched in fighting for Carl's right to attend Claire's creative writing classes, even though Carl is not a registered student. For her effort, Zora believes Carl should feel indebted to her and is stunned when she discovers him in a sexual act Victoria. When pushed into a corner, Carl claims the Belseys and the Kippses are all hypocrites. He insinuates that Victoria was taken advantage of by Howard Belsey and tells Zora that Monty Kipps has done the same to Chantelle, another student.

The next day, Kiki Belsey finds a stolen painting under Levi's bed. While asking the grilling the young boy as to how it got there, they find a note written by Mrs. Kipps, stating that the painting was intended to go to Kiki. Though this matter is not fully developed, readers learn later that Kiki has moved out, has gotten her own apartment Howard is left alone and is suffering. However, in the concluding scene, while Howard stumbles through a speech in Boston, he sees Kiki sitting in the audience, making notes of his lecture. In the novel, there are no specific events mentioned that allow the reader to pinpoint the date, though one can assume that it is fairly contemporary. Some clues are that the music mentioned is rap and hip-hop. There is also a discussion of immigrants from the Caribbean,

especially Haitians, which could place this story in the 1990s. Another contemporary element is affirmative action, specifically the preferential treatment given to African Americans in the attempt to gain a representative population of black students on college campuses.

With the first sentence of her new novel, *On Beauty*, Zadie Smith declares E. M. Forster's 1910 novel, *Howards End,* to be a model for her own. Smith's high-tech opening- "One may as well begin with Jerome's e-mails to his father", updates Forster's first line and introduces the short-lived engagement between Jerome Belsey and Victoria Kipps. Jerome's e-mail triggers the same cringe-inducing meddling as Helen Schlegel's letter announcing her equally fleeting alliance with Paul Wilcox in *Howards End*. In each novel, the missive initiates the plot, propelling the opposing worlds of Belseys or Schlegels and Kippses or Wilcoxes toward collision. Parallels between the two novels abound. Both the Belsey and the Schlegel children are bicultural; the Belseys are African American, white British and the Schlegels are Anglo-German. A Christmas shopping expedition in each novel produces a connection between a Belsey or Schlegel and a Kipps or Wilcox woman that results in an unexpected legacy. Henry Wilcox, the family patriarch in *Howards End*, represents the interests of capital and wealth. Smith's Sir Montague Kipps, who hails from the Caribbean via Britain, wants to eradicate “affirmative action” in the university. The progressive Belseys and Schlegels claim to believe in handling those in socio-economic straits with more humanity than the obdurately conservative Kippses and Wilcoxes. Yet, the hypocritical actions of liberal and conservative family members paradoxically align them. A female member of each novel's liberal family, Helen Schlegel and Zora Belsey, inadvertently pinches someone else's property at a concert: Helen grabs an umbrella and Zora a CD player. And in the end, unwittingly snatches far more from the rightful owner. Their high-minded carelessness about the people they feel equipped to manage, but fail to see accurately, initially opens new worlds to the beneficiaries of their largesse. However, it ultimately

plunges them into catastrophe. In Forster's novel, Leonard Bast's dream of escaping his constrained clerk's life by embracing literature and the open road comes to naught, while Smith's talented but diffident Spoken Word poet, Carl Thomas, is vulnerable to stereotypes about young black men from Boston's Roxbury neighbourhood.

In summing up the three books of Zadie Smith, Phillip Tew denotes:

> All three books incorporate structure and themes many of which feature in Smith's shorter fiction concerned with family, community and possibilities (and impossibilities) of belonging […] the extremities of belief; the demand of system of faith, both secular and theological; the vicissitude of friendship and affection; the disruptive nature of seduction, passion and sexual love; the comic possibilities of everyday realism; the simultaneously banal and heroic qualities of such quotidian human routines; and the often unexpected contradictions of an age exploring both diversity and a liberal version of multiculturalism. (*Zadie* 15)

Zadie Smith is noted for her vivid descriptive style for settings and mannerisms, especially towards her ear for speech. Nonlinear plot development emphasizes coincidence, ambiguity, and unpredictability. Humour and irony abound in her use of language and social satire, which occasionally shades into farce. Smith's work is not easily categorized. It is a hybrid: part popular culture and part dense literary writing. Critical reception has been mixed, perhaps because each book is so different from that which came before, because the scope of her work is vast, and because expectations have been so shaped by the amount of publicity that has been associated with Smith.

Chapter 2

Power and Multiculturalism

This chapter focuses upon the theoretical framework of the dissertation. It shall attempt to provide a detailed study of the concept of multiculturalism by presenting different arguments and claims prescribed by critics of multiculturalism. It will situate power relations in the semiotics of multiculturalism in the light of Zadie Smith's works and in this perspective; it will locate itself upon Foucault's concept of power.

The term "multiculturalism" is derived from the adjective, "multicultural", which is defined as "of, relating to, reflecting, or adopted to diverse cultures" (*Webster* n.p). The meaning of the term is beyond its derivative in political discourse. The discourse on multiculturalism has gained its currency towards the second half of the twentieth century as a direct effect of the Second World War and an indirect consequence of the long history of colonialism. People from all over the erstwhile colonised countries migrated to the past imperial centres due to political and economic reasons, while forming massive minority population in the host countries. Initially, the term multiculturalism was used in Canada and Australia as a key plank for government policy to assist in the management of ethnic pluralism within the national polity; to address the moral and political claims of varied disadvantaged groups, including African Americans, gays and lesbians, and the differently-abled. However, many theorists tend to focus their arguments on immigrants who are ethnic and religious minorities, minority nations, and indigenous people. *Encyclopaedia of Stratford University* describes:

> Multiculturalism is closely associated with "identity politics," "the politics of difference," and "the politics of recognition," all of which share a commitment to revaluing disrespected identities and changing dominant patterns of representation and communication that marginalize certain groups. Multiculturalism is also a matter of economic interests and political power; it

> demands remedies to economic and political disadvantages that people suffer as a result of their minority status. (n.p)

Coined by a Canadian Royal Commission in 1965, Canadian governmental use of ‘‘multiculturalism’’ is widely supported and endorsed by its proponents as both a progressive political imperative and an official article of faith – a term associated in principle with the values of equality, tolerance, and inclusiveness toward migrants of ethnically different backgrounds:

> Canadian multiculturalism is fundamental to our belief that all citizens are equal. Multiculturalism ensures that all citizens can keep their identities, can take pride in their ancestry and have a sense of belonging. (Government of Canada).

After Canada, the Australian government implemented multiculturalism as an affirmation of the value of cultural diversity, and they celebrated the cultural agencies of the Aborigines such as ritual practices, costumes and cuisine. At the turn of the century, it has become commonplace for Western democracies to describe themselves as multicultural societies even though only a few countries have embraced official policies of multiculturalism. With the growing intensity of global migration, countries which had been known for their stringent homogenising cultures, such as Japan and Germany, could no longer avoid acknowledging the diversifying situation of their cultures. Although the term “multiculturalism” is not used in the Indian Constitution, the principle of ‘unity in diversity’ has been the foundation of Indian legal policies, which aimed at preserving the variant multiple cultures while harnessing national unity among its citizens in spite of their differences.

In Britain, a Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain was set up in 1998 by the Runnymede Trust, which was ‘‘devoted to the cause of promoting racial justice’’ and to

proposing ways of ‘‘making Britain a confident and vibrant multicultural society at ease with its rich diversity’’. The Commission’s report, The Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain also known as the Parekh Report after the Commission’s chairperson, Bhikhu Parekh, stated famously that ‘‘Britain is both a community of citizens and a community of communities, both a liberal and a multicultural society, and needs to reconcile their sometimes conflicting requirements’’ (n.p). ‘‘Multicultural’’ is thus often equated with multi-ethnic in public discourse, which in turn is conflated with multiracial, indicating the extent to which debates on multiculturalism are concerned predominantly with the presence of non-white migrant communities in white, Western societies. In this context, multiculturalism is variously evoked as a response to the need to address real or potential ethnic tension and racial conflict. ‘Race’ and ‘ethnicity’ are the terms which are inherently associated with multiculturalism. Critics of multiculturalism predominantly analyse the concept of race and ethnicity with regard to politics of difference. Paul Gilroy in *After Empire* denotes that the perceived problematic of multiculturalism in Britain has been due to racialization (13).

In terms of what emerged as a political philosophy which aims at redressing the problems faced by certain groups of a nation’s citizens, multiculturalism has become a cultural phenomenon, affecting cultural identities of people belonging to distinct geographical space and ethnic groups, and further evoking problematic and contestations among proponents of various theoretical affiliations. Discourses on popular, political and academic realms have been evoked by the intensifying claims and arguments on multiculturalism which centres on whether or not multiculturalism is the appropriate way to deal with diversity and immigrant integration. Ien Aug perceives the growing complexity about the idea of multiculturalism:

> The burgeoning language of multiculturalism signals a heightened awareness of and concern with the increasingly problematic and

> disjunctive relationship between race, ethnicity, and national identity in the Twentieth and Twenty-first centuries. This also accounts for why ‘‘multiculturalism’’ has remained a controversial concept despite its now common circulation. While the precise meaning of the word is never clear, it refers generally to the dilemmas and difficulties of the politics of difference (35).

The principle claim of multiculturalism is characterised by what a Canadian liberal multiculturalist, Will Kymlicka, calls “group differentiated rights”. Since mere toleration and anti-racism acts are not sufficient to solve the complex problems faced by minority groups in a nation-state dominated by majority groups, Kymlicka insists that minority groups need special rights and accommodations for their protection: because states cannot be neutral to culture. In culturally diverse societies, the authorities tend to lay down patterns of support for some cultural groups over others. While states may prohibit racial discrimination and avoid official establishment of religion, they cannot avoid establishing one language for public schooling and other state services. (Kymlicka 111). Group differentiated rights are rights of the members of minority groups which motivate them to act or not act according to their religious obligations and cultural commitments. It can be understood as cultural accommodation as it accommodates members of minority groups to do things that the majority can do while being unassisted. It serves to bring the disadvantaged members of society at a higher pedestal which would enable them to compete along with the majority from an equal platform. However, Kymlicka’s proposal is not uncontested; what seems like an act of enforcement for social egalitarianism can be perceived as a divisive force. It is a right that directly restrict the freedom of non-members, in order to protect the rights of the minority cultural groups. This aspect of multiculturalism echoes Michel Foucault’s concept of power.

Foucault eschewed the labelling of his works "in terms of the existing categories" (Taylor 1). He counters the concepts of universalism and absolutism, and asserts that the universal and absolute knowledge and moral actions are historical constructs. One of the main objectives of his works is the philosophical analysis of the "historical and contingent nature" of what is popularly known as 'worldview'. He contends that our present condition, form of knowledge and morality emerged out of the continued historical phenomena, and endeavours to "separate out, from the contingency that had made us what we are, the possibility of no longer being, doing and thinking what we are, do and think" ("What is Enlightenment" 46). His works are mainly concerned with the Western culture and the investigation of how it has arrived at its present condition. In doing so, he asserts that although the present condition has emerged out of historical development, it is not the necessary condition. Through his "ontology of the present", he concerns himself specifically with "the promotion of change that counters oppression and domination and fosters what he refers to as 'the work of freedom'" (Taylor 2). While investigating the historical development of Western culture, Foucault reconceptualises the philosophical concept of power. While asserting the ubiquitousness of power, Foucault rejects the conventional notion of power that is based on 'jurisdisco-discursive' as it limits the intricacies of power as a repressive and subjugating force only. Foucault suggests that power:

> […] must be understood at the first instance as the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organization […] as the support which these force relations find in one another, thus forming a chain of system…and lastly as the strategies in which they take effects. (*History* 96)

For Foucault, the modern era has dismissed the ancient form of power which is also known as Sovereign power. New forms of power, disciplinary power and biopower, have

evolved in the modern era which is exercised by observing and controlling individual body and the collective subjects respectively. These forms of power do not require force but are voluntary internalisations of discipline and behaviour. Power, in the new sense, has become productive and emanates both negative and positive forces which determine every social relation. Power in this context is imminent in the social relations which are pervasive in multiculturalism. Foucault states, "I hardly use the term 'power', and if I do it is always a short cut to the expression I always use: the relationships of power" (qtd in Taylor 3). It is not something that is owned and possessed by an individual or collectivity, but rather exists in multiplicity of relationships. Since numbers of people from numbers of different cultures come together and form a new society, there are resistance and conflicts in the social relations of the collective people. Critics like Jeremy Waldron argue, based on the problematics of culture itself, that culture is not a distinct whole, it is fluid and that it changes through time and interaction with other cultures through war, trade, imperialism and migration. To preserve an allegedly pure distinct culture in the face of contemporary highly globalised culturally hybridised societies, is to limit the growth and development of the people belonging to that distinct cultural group:

> We live in a world formed by technology and trade; by economic, religious, and political imperialism and their offspring; by mass migration and the dispersion of cultural influences. In this context, to immerse oneself in the traditional practices of, say, an aboriginal culture might be a fascinating anthropological experiment, but it involves an artificial dislocation from what actually is going on in the world. (Waldron 736)

The subversive power in this context confines the already marginalised collectivity into another fixed boundary from which new strategies are required to mobilise the disadvantaged groups from their confinement. Waldron also rejects the premise that the

options available to an individual must come from a particular culture; meaningful options may come from a variety of cultural sources. What people need are cultural materials, not access to a particular cultural structure.

Culture on one hand, is a reification of an abstract entity (Parekh n.p), which helps groups of people in constituting principles which would guide them to pursue their own conception of the good life. Bikhu Parekh asserts, "Cultures grow out of conscious and unconscious interactions with each other, define their identity in terms of what they take to be their significant other, and are at least partially multicultural in their origins and constitution" (n.p). The social relations which are formed by individuals and cultural groups in a multicultural society, and the dynamics through which contemporary global societies have become an inherent point of debate in contemporary discourse, have also become one of the focus points for contemporary British novelists as well. Kenan Malik posits the broader aspect of multiculturalism as defining "a society that is particularly diverse, usually as a result of immigration, and the policies necessary to manage such a society. It thus embodies both a description of society and a prescription for dealing with it." (Malik "Failure" n.p). In literature, aspects and complexities of multiculturalism may be understood through the investigation of the impact of the legal implementation of multiculturalism policies in a multicultural society, in the network of social relations.

British novelist, Zadie Smith, is deeply inspired by the socio-cultural changes which she experienced while growing up in "the brave new multicultural world" (Nichols 62)) of London. She employs this inspiration as the central theme for most of her novels. The implementations of certain policies with regard to multiculturalism by the British government are found in the episodes of her novels. In *White Teeth,* Manor School which the children, Magid, Millat and Irie, attended when they were younger, adopted the cultural tolerance policy as part of the objectives for the school curriculum, which is reflected in the discussion

for celebration of the pagan harvest festival in the PTA meeting and the insistence on the part of the music teacher to include Bollywood music as part of the orchestra practice (154). In her novel *On Beauty,* Monty Kipps, the black-Caribbean-turned–English-conservatist, perpetually protests against the Affirmative action that Wellington College had been implementing. Smith's rendition of such policies is marked with irony and humour, so as to denote the movement of the power forces.

> 'The Harvest Festival'…
>
> 'Yes, Mr Iqbal,' said Katie Miniver. 'What about the Harvest Festival?'
>
> 'That is precisely what I want to know. What is all this about the Harvest Festival? What is it? Why is it? And why must my children celebrate it?'
>
> […]
>
> 'Mr Igbal, we have been through the matter of religious festivals quite thoroughly in the autumn review. As I am sure you are aware, the school already recognizes a great variety of religious and secular events: amongst them, Christmas, Ramadan, Chinese New Year, Diwali, Yom Kippur, Hanukkah, the birthday of Haile Selassie, and the death of Martin Luther King. The Harvest Festival is part of the school's ongoing commitment to religious diversity, Mr Iqbal.'
>
> 'I see. And are there many pagans, Mrs Owens, at Manor School?'
>
> 'Pagan – I'm afraid I don't under – '
>
> 'It is very simple. The Christian calendar has thirty-seven religious events. Thirty-seven. The Muslim calendar has nine. Only nine. And they are squeezed out by this incredible rash of Christian festivals. Now my motion is simple. If we removed all the pagan festivals from the Christian calendar, there would be an average of' – Samad paused to look at his cupboard – 'of

twenty days freed up in which the children could celebrate Lailat-ul-Qadr in December, Eid-ud-Fitr in January and Eid-ul-Adha in April, for example. And the first festival that must go, in my opinion, is this Harvest Festival business.'…

'…. Well, shall we vote on the motion?'

Mrs Owens looked nervously around the room for hands.

'Will anyone second it?'

Samad pressed Alsana's hand. She kicked him in the ankle. He stamped on her toe. She pinched his flank. He bent back her little finger and she grudgingly raised her right arm while deftly elbowing him in the crotch with her left.

"Thank you, MrsIqbal,' said Mrs Owens …

'All those in favour of the motion to remove the Harvest Festival from the school calendar –'

'On the grounds of its pagan roots.'

'On the grounds of certain pagan… connotations. Raise your hands.'

Mrs. Owens scanned the room. One hand, that of the pretty red-headed music teacher Poppy Burt-Jones, shot up, sending her many bracelets jangling down her wrist. Then the Chalfens, Marcus and Joyce, an ageing hippy couple both dressed in pseudo-Indian grab, raised their hands defiantly. Then Samad looked pointedly at Clara and Archie, sitting sheepishly on the other side of the hall, and two more hands moved slowly above the crowd.

'All those against?'

'The remaining thirty-six hands lifted into the air.

'Motion not passed.' (Smith *White Teeth* 142-144)

Samad Miah Iqbal's determination on the incorporation of Muslim holidays into the elementary school curriculum was dismissed by a simple vote in which the dominating majority unanimously won. While reflecting the sometimes irrational claims of the minority groups in multicultural settings, Smith also denotes the inherent cultural conflict and power relations present in such settings.

Smith's works can be perceived as the dialectics of multiculturalism, while her manner of dealing with such topic is toned with ambivalence, blurring distinctions between affirmation and refutation. Smith's preoccupation with multiculturalism is more explicit in *White Teeth* (2000), while in the other two novels, *The Autograph Man* (2002) and *On Beauty* (2005), the socio-cultural impact of multiculturalism are implicated in the narratives. *White Teeth* was written right before the new millennium when British multiculturalism had initially been questioned due to the growing intensity of violent riots and rebellions organised by minority communities in Britain. The narrative of *White Teeth* takes place at the span of approximately one-fifty years, from 1857 to the end of the millennium. By making most of the actions of the novel take place in the 1970's and 80's when British culture was characterised by its celebratory attitude toward multiculturalism, Smith explores the dynamics of social relations and the sensibilities of the members of the immigrant communities, and the changes that British culture as a whole went through in such situation. Toward the end of the millennium British multiculturalism in its purest sense had undergone change from celebratory mood to suspicion against threats for its national security from internal terrorism. Events like the fatwa against Salman Rushdie by the Muslim fundamentalist groups due to the allegation that his novel, *The Satanic Verse*, was blasphemous for Islam, in 1989 and the Hansforth riot of 1985 in Birmingham, organised by discontented minority groups evoked the majority groups to react against the policy of multiculturalism and declare it as a failure. Smith presents the metamorphosis of attitude,

which affects and is affected by the characters in Smith's novels and the real world beyond her fiction. However, Smith's rendition of discourse on multiculturalism in her other fictions is rather different in mood, which is understandable, because *On Beauty* and *The Autograph Man* were written in the post 9/11 incident in the United States of America, when the Muslim fundamentalist group, Al-Qaeda, attacked the World Trade Centre in New York which resulted in the death of many innocent people and terrified the whole world. The attitude of the whole Western world became dramatically hostile. The backlash against immigrant multiculturalism is based on fear and anxiety about foreign "others" and nostalgia for an imagined past when everyone shared thick bonds of identity and solidarity. The concern is not only over security but also the failures of multiculturalism policies to integrate and offer real economic opportunities to foreigners and their descendants. In the latter novels, Smith's concerns her narrative more with the impact of multiculturalism on a more personal level. While reflecting the Jewish social relations in the suburban north-west London in *The Autograph Man* and the campus social relations of the imaginary Wellington College in New England in *On Beauty*, the individual struggle to cope up with the complexities of integration and struggle of characters like Alex-Li Tandem, a son of an immigrant, and Howard Belsey, an immigrant, with the politics of difference and recognition, become more conspicuous in the narratives.

Multiculturalism can be examined from a paradigmatic angle, as an ideal or as an ideology that has the capacity to influence behaviours, evaluate actions, and legitimize activities (Fleras and Elliott 35).This view conceives of multiculturalism as instrumental in exercising power over the collective minority groups of a society. The collective human subjects adhering to common beliefs, values and religion are the common aspects that make up culture. Foucault adheres that when institutions of cultural resources are 'materialised' in the name of culture, the human subject becomes incapable of raising questions against the

authority which controls such institutions. Zadie Smith is very much aware of this power relation which exists in the multicultural world wherein she creates her novels.

Smith depicts religion and its rituals as an integral feature of culture. Smith seems to be very critical of any form of institutionalised religion. In the novel *White Teeth*, she critiques the irrational conviction of characters like Samad Miah Iqbal simply because he is Muslim. For Samad, the provisions of the Quran are the ultimate truth. For Foucault, 'the regime of truth', knowledge and power are closely related and they are the embodiment of one another and they emerge out of historical development. Foucault states:

> Truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power. Each society has its regime of truth, its "general politics" of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true. (*Power/Knowledge* 131)

When a group or an individual strives to elevate a particular regime of truth at the cost of deprecating other's culture in a multicultural society, it results in intercultural competition among the collective human subjects while causing chaos in terms of their mutual existence. Samad went through an alleged epiphany after a promiscuous relationship with Poppy Burt Jones and concluded that the Western culture was corrupting his morality (184). His obsession with Islam moral values made him unable to comprehend things beyond what he conceived of as good and right. His decision in sending Magid to Bangladesh so that Magid world learn and live up to Muslim ideals ended up in the disintegration of his family. Samad had to go great length, even to the extent of kidnapping his own son in order to pursue what

he wanted, which further results in his unforgiveable betrayal of Alsana. Smith's treatment of Samad's decision with ridicule blurs the binary paradigm between "home" and "there". Magid, who had been sent to Bangladesh ended up being an 'Anglicised' atheist, and became more "English than the English" (365). Although Samad could exercise his dominant power over his children when they were younger, he could not succeed in imparting Muslim values in Magid even from his Bangladesh 'home'. Moreover, Millat, who stayed on in the 'corruptible land' of London joins a Muslim fundamentalist group named Keepers of The Eternal and Victorious Islamic Nation who at the end rebelled against the dominant society, which is represented by the launch of FutureMouse© project by Magid's mentor, Marcus Chalfen. Nevertheless, the two brothers ended up in jail for the sin one of the brothers committed (535). The moral departure of the children from what had been prescribed to them by their parents and society, determines their resistance to subjectivity. By refusing to shape their behaviour to what the broader collectivity requires them to be, they practice freedom which is intrinsically associated with power relations, and choose their way from the multiple choices available to them. Although the ending scene of the novel is not that convincing, Smith cleverly denotes the unreliability of the concept of "home" in a multicultural society.

Smith also denotes that there are people like Jerome Belsey in the novel, *On Beauty*, who hold firm belief in religion without causing chaos. Jerome's conversion to Christianity is independent of cultural or familial influence which reflects Foucault's 'technology of the self' which contends that an individual can break free from societal influence and organise his own behaviour. Foucault asserts that technologies of the self:

> […] permit individuals to effect by their own means, or with the help of others, a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and the way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain

> a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality. (*Technology* 18)

Jerome acknowledges the alleged truth that the other members of the Belsey family hold, thus, paying mutual recognition of their conviction to what they believe and not believe. Howard Belsey remains almost antagonistic toward Jerome's faith; his inability to comprehend things beyond the boundary of his liberalism results in his downfall in terms of his relationship with his family and his career.

The 'politics of difference' is one of the key features of multiculturalism. While multiculturalism aims at preserving differences among the multiple diversed cultures, the very concept of "difference" has been problematised, contested and perceived through different lenses. Man's association with difference undergoes changes throughout the ages. Kenan Malik analyses retrospectively through history how individuals and cultures differ in their outlooks; he discards the Enlightenment notion of universality which claimed that all human beings were the same and that they inhabited different worlds. Individuals inhabiting the same world/space form their own distinctive culture which differs much with other distinctive cultures formed at different spaces. However, the Romantics did away with the Enlightenment notion and conceived that the spaces were the same but the people settling in these spaces differ from each other. Contemporary notion of difference posits that men are different and the spaces in which they settle are also different. The difference which pervades through discourse on multiculturalism is also treated with scepticism by Zadie Smith.

Susan Alice Fisher asserts with regard to *On Beauty*, "Smith urges us to reject binary paradigm and to connect across the social constructed differences so we can see the full beauty of humanity" ("Gimme" 107). In the novel, the difference that is most prominent lies in the ideological difference of Howard's liberalism and Montague Kipps' conservatism. As the plot develops Smith reveals that they are more alike than previously supposed. As the plot

develops, the two men are presented as archrivals who refuse to comprehend things beyond their ideological stances. The academic conflict and the differences they hold reflect the fixed boundary associated with binary opposites in a multicultural society. Multicultural societies consist of diverse religious and moral outlooks, and if liberal societies are to take such diversity seriously, they must recognize that liberalism is just one of many substantive outlooks based on a specific view of man and society. Liberalism is not free of culture but expresses a distinctive culture of its own. Till the end of the plot, Howard Belsey fails to acknowledge other beliefs who do not share his liberal outlook. In order to break free from the binary paradigm of their husbands' differences the two women of the families, who are able to conceive the existence of difference, become friends eventually. Carlene Kipps reminded Kiki that they could remain blind to the constructed difference between their families (127). By the end of the novel, Smith denotes that the two men, in spite of their ideological affiliation move toward the interstices of their beliefs by indulging into adulterous sexual relationship with their students each. In doing so, Smith reveals that in a multicultural society it is impossible to sustain the fixed, deterministic boundary between cultures as culture is an ever evolving entity.

In a civil society characterised as multicultural, "race" and "ethnicity" become the defining line of difference between cultural groups. Race is often equated with ethnicity. However, Nira Yuval-Davis defines racist discourse as "involving the use of ethnic categorisation (which might be constructed around biological, cultural, religious, linguistic or territorially based boundaries) as a signifier of a fixed, deterministic, genealogical difference of 'the Other'" (193). Race becomes a site of subjugation, exploitation and oppression which is served by the otherness as a means of legitimisation of oppressive differences. On the contrary, ethnicity relates to recognition among members of a collectivity based on "myths of common origin or/and destination, and engaging in constant processes of struggle and

negotiation", to form a new collectivity within the wider collectivity. Ethnicity is comprehended as a form of power through which the minority ethnic groups influence the social relation in a multicultural society:

> Ethnicity is not specific to oppressed and minority groupings. On the contrary, one of the measures of the success of the hegemonic ethnicities is the extent to which they succeed in 'naturalising' their ideologies and practices to their advantages (Yuval-Davis 194)

Ethnic groups appropriate resources such as political and economic which are cultural; relating to customs, language and religion for their promotion. Difference in terms of ethnicity is not only asserted by the alleged dominant majority but also claimed by the ethnic groups. Joy Warmington, director of the Birmingham Race Action Partnership, a charitable organization working to reduce inequality, in 2005, observed that they "have tended to emphasize ethnicity as a key to entitlement. It's become accepted as good practice to allocate resources on ethnic or faith lines. So rather than thinking of meeting people's needs or about distributing resources equitably, organizations are forced to think about the distribution of ethnicity" (qtd in Malik "Failure" n.p). Zadie Smith implicitly captures the power relation in ethnic discourse. It is to be noted that in rendering issues related to ethnicity and race, Smith almost always incorporate irony in a humorous way so as to present the dualistic perception of each issue. Characters like Kiki Belsey and Millat are instrumental in the representation of the tendency on the part of people belonging to minority groups to use their ethnicity to their own advantage. In the words of Gill Bottomley, "Categories and ways of knowing […] are constructed within relations of power and maintained, reproduced and resisted in specific and sometimes contradictory way" (309).Kiki often willingly submits herself to the white stereotypical expectation out of her blackness; "'Honey' said Kiki, moving her head from side to side in a manner she understood white people enjoyed, 'I done

set already'" (232). By catering to the expectation of her white antithesis, Kiki does not merely accept the stereotype, but rather denotes her resistance against it by using it as a means for exercising power in their mutual relationship. The ability on the part of Kiki, as the character and Smith, as the author, to render the situation in humorous tone also reflects the power which influences the other white individual's perception of Kiki.

The binary opposites encapsulating difference in terms of race and ethnicity have been dealt with in order to bring to light its capriciousness and uncertainty. Rather than discourse on ethnicity, difference in terms of culture as a whole has been in the forefront of multicultural discourse. As established earlier, multiculturalism seeks to accommodate differences among diverse cultures, while claiming equality among the citizens as a whole who have constituted different cultures. To aim for equality while promoting difference is rather problematic considering the fluidity of the concept of culture itself. Kenan Malik comments:

> Equality cannot be relative, with different meanings for different social, cultural or sexual groups. If so it ceases to be equality at all, or rather becomes equality in the way racists used to define it - 'equal but different' - in defending segregation or apartheid. Equality requires a common yardstick, or measure of judgement, not a plurality of meanings. ("Race" 26)

In *White Teeth*, Poppy Burt-Jones' attempt in sustaining mutual cultural respect among her students in turn implies the inevitable failure of equality while promoting diversity:

> 'Do you? How would you like it, Sophie, if someone made fun of Queen?'…
>
> 'Wouldn't like it, Miss.'…
>
> 'Because Freddie Mercury is from your culture.'

> Samad, who was waiting for his son in the audience, remembered at this point that he heard rumours 'that this Mercury character was in actual fact a very light-skinned Persian named Farookh, whom the chef remembered from school in Panchgani, near Bombay. But who wished to split hairs.' Once Poppy Burt-Jones regained composure and control over the ten-years-olds, she tried to pursue the idea of respect being due to different cultural belonging:
>
> 'For example, what music do you like, Millat?'
>
> Millat thought for a moment, swung his saxophone to his side and began fingering it like a guitar. 'Bo-orn to ruuun! Da dadadaaa! Bruce Springsteen, Miss!...'
>
> 'Umm, nothing-nothing else ? Something you listen to at home, maybe?'
>
> At this point Millat, troubled that his answer seemed somehow wrong, looked at his father, who started gesticulating wildly to convey head and hand movement of bharatanatyam, a dance from the subcontinent. Elated Millat shouted:
>
> 'Thriiii-ller!'… believing he had caught his father's gist. Thriiii-ller night! Michael Jackson, Miss! Michael Jackson!'
>
> Samad put his head in his hands. (154-156)

When the children were younger, the school policy of cultural tolerance reflects the dilemma of equality and difference. When the classmates of Millat and Magid moan over the teacher's insistence on experimenting with Bollywood music, the manner in which they reciprocate the teacher's speech denotes the inherent presence of difference in the treatment of cultural resources in the school community and among the innocent children who simply act out their reproach against a genre of music. And the reason why Poppy wanted to experiment with India music is because it is different, and it implicates discourse on race.

The discourse on race emerged as a means of reconciling the conflict between the ideology of equality and the reality of the persistence of inequality. From the racial viewpoint, inequality persisted because society was by nature unequal. The destiny of different social groups was shaped, at least in part, by their intrinsic properties. Humanity was divided into discrete groups, each with particular properties, and the divisions between the groups were immutable and unchanging. Racial ideology was the inevitable product of the persistence of differences of rank, class and peoples in a society that had accepted the concept of equality. Race came to be the way through which people made sense of the world around them.

Smith brings to light the concept of "cultural belonging" by way of re-imagining its practical manifestations. The adults who were present at the incident share a common understanding that Millat's 'home' is irreversibly connected to the sub-continent, India for Poppy and his Bangladeshi home at Willesden Green for Samad. But Millat did not share this understanding of belonging with them. His idea of home was inhabited by the music of Bruce Springsteen and Michael Jackson, regardless of what anyone expects him to listen to. The young boy fails to acknowledge the socially constructed difference in which the sensibility of the adults is founded. Smith reflects through her novels that the politics of difference with regard to multiculturalism does not end at the difference between race or cultural groups. In fact, in this episode, the people who belong to the older generation irrespective of their race share more in common rather than the younger generations belonging to their respective communities.

Samad and Poppy based their knowledge on essentialist assumption (Knauer179). To Poppy, Freddie Mercury is part of white English culture, while Millat should identify with Indian or Bangladeshi music rather than Michael Jackson and Bruce Springsteen. Both, Samad and Poppy are disappointed with Millat's inability to comprehend their expectation

which results in Poppy's failure to prove her point for toleration and cultural diversity. Samad knows that Freddie Mercury is of Persian origin who grew up in Bombay, and that he participated in mainstream British culture successfully. Poppy's ignorance and Mercury's true identity blur the cultural boundary paradigm in which difference has been perceived and dealt with.

The objective of multiculturalism has often been equated with the idea of "the melting pot" of cultures. Bikhu Parekh and other multiculturalists do not find the idea acceptable for it leads toward universalism. Universalism, in postcolonial and other cultural theories, is perceived as a means for promoting Western ideals and values, using as a façade the common well-being of the collectivity. Kylimca argues that the melting pot melts the diversity and the history of minority groups in the big pot of the mainstream culture (143). In *White Teeth*, Samad Iqbal perpetually strives to establish his history, the history of his great great grandfather, Mangal Pandey, who had been responsible for triggering "the Indian sepoy mutiny of 1857". The fact that Smith draws on the real personality of Mangal Pandey and the event of Revolt of 1857 in India, reflects the embodiment of power relations in discourse. Foucault links discourse and power in *The History Of Sexuality*, saying that speech and writing are not simply the communication of facts that occurs in a vacuum. As important as what is said is who decides what is said. Foucault develops a complex body of thought out of the old saying that "knowledge is power." Whoever determines what can be talked about also determines what can be known. Whoever determines what can be known effectively determines how we think and who we are. According to Foucault, then, language and knowledge always have a political edge. According to Foucault:

> Discourses are not once and for all subservient to power or raised up against it […] We must make allowances for the complex and unstable process whereby a discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but

> also a hindrance, a stumbling point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy. Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart' (Foucault *History* 100-1).

As Archie Jones puts it, Samad has "history in his blood" but his history has been eroded in the new land where he is an immigrant. In spite of Samad's attempt, his children could not accept the alleged valour of their ancestor. They have been conditioned through knowledge imparted by education and other strategies of power, to accept what they learn in their History subject at school as the ultimate truth. Smith presents different angles of perceiving history and perpetuates that through knowledge, what have been considered as one of the most important moment in Indian history, is rendered as a mere accident committed by a drunken Indian soldier. By dismissing the history of the immigrant Samad Iqbal, the majority group exercises biopower which aims at fostering life, fosters their supremacy over the immigrants, and the existence of their 'race'. Mangal Pandey is appreciated and recognised only at O'Cornell's pool house, the only place where people belonging to different cultures come together and form a new culture of its own. It is only here that Samad could establish his history. The plot develops, O'Cornell's multicultural norms have also moved toward the inevitable unbalanced recognition of difference. The portrait of Samad's ancestor Mangal Pandey is taken off the wall again (458).

Chapter 3

Identity in Multicultural Society

This chapter substantiates the manner in which the notions of multiculturalism and integration have had an impact on identity construction, while attempting to establish that they can be seen as a means of governing individuals "as a society, as a part of a social entity, as a part of nation or a state" (Foucault *Technology* 146). In this chapter, multiculturalism is contextualised in terms of multicultural society. This chapter focuses upon the individual identities of the characters in the novels selected for study. The characters negotiate with their identities in the complex multicultural societies they inhabit, which is characterised by the cultural interstitial space. The characters are predominantly migrants or descendants of migrants, and they reflect the sensibilities of those who are uprooted from their homeland and have faced the complexities of assimilation.

A multicultural society is a new form of society, which is reconstituted in the age after the empire. Although multiculturalism entails the recognition and acknowledgement of difference among cultures, the individuals who make up these cultures influence each other and form this new space. In postcolonial and other contemporary discourse, this new space has been celebrated as a way to disavow the conventional fixed boundary between the colonizing power and the colonised, or the self and the other. Homi Bhabha, the forerunner of hybridity in postcolonial discourse, posits:

> Terms of cultural engagement, whether antagonistic or affiliative, are produced performatively. The representation of difference must not be hastily read as the reflection of pre-given ethnic or cultural traits set in the fixed tablet of tradition. The social articulation of difference, from the minority perspective, is a complex, on-going negotiation that seeks to authorize cultural hybridities that emerge in moments of historical transformation […] It is in this sense that the boundary becomes the place from which something begins its presencing in a movement not dissimilar to the ambulant, ambivalent

> articulation of the beyond that I have drawn out: Always and ever differently the bridge escorts the lingering and hastening ways of men to and fro, so that they may get to other banks. The bridge gathers as a passage that crosses. (Bhabha *Location* 2-5)

For Bhabha, all cultural systems and statements are constructed in what he calls the 'Third Space of Enunciation (*Location* 183); a space which is marked by liminiality, arising out of its hybrid situation. A liminal space, made by nature of cultures, does not separate but rather mediates their mutual exchange and relative meanings. Even breached condition of cultures—liminal points or threshold of cultures assists in making culture new or hybridized. Zadie Smith has successfully reflected this space in her novels. The "Happy multicultural land" that she has denoted in *White Teeth* does not bluntly celebrate the cultural differences among its characters, but reflects that in spite of their differences they undergo certain similar problems and complexities with regard to their being and existence in the space they occupy in their new homeland. The fundamental problem that the first generation immigrant characters encounter is nostalgia for their homeland, which can be conceptualised as 'rootedness". The second generation characters on the other hand negotiate with the contrasting rootedness of their parents in the past and their assimilatory sensibilities. Home for them is where they were born and to which they feel the connection of being. Smith explicitly denotes the uncertainty of such concepts as "home", rootedness, assimilation and belongingness. The characters negotiate with these seemingly similar problems in their own different terms, thus forming and reconstituting their own identities.

According to Homi Bhabha, when a belief or practice is transplanted from one culture to another, values and meanings are reconstituted. Yasmin Hussain states, "Cultural identity is fluid, produced and reproduced so that it often results in 'hybrid' forms of expression" (6). These notions of identity formation stems from the understanding that identities, especially in

a multicultural setting, are negotiable, taking on new aspects while giving up others. The fluidity of identity is constantly in correspondence with power relation. When Smith's second generation characters are younger they are recognised with their familial identity but as they grow older this power relation shifts. In the works selected for study, Irie Jones, Joshua Chalfen, Magid Iqbal, Jerome Belsey and Levi Belsey grow up and recognise their complex situations and deal with such situations on their own terms while subverting the power relations with a refusal to adhere to fixed identities while causing further tension between the two generations.

In contemporary discourse on identity politics, Michel Foucault's notion of power has often been perceived as an inspiration. However, it is to be noted that Foucault himself favours the dissolution of identity, rather than its creation or maintenance. He sees identity as a form of subjugation and as a means of exercising power over people while preventing them from moving outside fixed boundaries. In an interview with Rux Martin, Foucault instigates the transgression of fixed identities:

> I don't feel that it is necessary to know exactly what I am. The main interest in life and work is to become someone else that you were not in the beginning. If you knew when you began a book what you would say at the end, do you think that you would have the courage to write it? What is true for writing and for a love relationship is true also for life. The game is worthwhile insofar as we don't know what will be the end. (Foucault *Technology* 9)

Foucault concerns his theory on identity with the concept of "subjectivity". Human beings have become subjects in modern power structure. An individual becomes a subject voluntarily while practicing freedom to conform to the "norms" and "mores" set up by the authority through disciplinary power. The subject is in constant becoming. In a hybrid society, or ratter a multicultural society, the demand for mutual recognition of difference

among the members, subjectivises the individuals. The people with more power influence the subordinate members of the society, which results in the modification of their behaviour accordingly. However, the network in which these social relationships take place is complex without an end. This subject positioning in cultural phenomena can be associated with the fluidity of identity. Stuart Hall, the grandfather of multiculturalism, illustrates this positioning in terms of cultural identity:

> Cultural identity are the points of identification, the unstable point of identification or suture, which are made within the discourses of history and culture. Not an essence but a *positioning*. ("Cultural Identity" 53)

Maeve Tynan asserts that in dealing with the already diasporised characters whose only known home is the metropolis, Zadie Smith's narrative in *On Beauty* (2005) is marked by a point of departure from the conventional postcolonial portrayal of hybrids as "dependently stranded between two cultures" (73). *On Beauty* has been aptly associated with postcolonial writing for its connection and rewriting to and of the canonical text, *Howard's End* (1910) by E. M. Forster. Charles Pollard argues that "the novelist or dramatist rightly recuperates oppressed character, but this recuperable character is expected to have a single, coherent identity" (62). However, Smith departs from the essentialists' expectation about characters in postcolonial narratives, which leads to a crisis of representation. The characters of *On Beauty* and other novels by Zadie Smith explore the complex network of existence white struggling and conflicting through the webs of these networks. Smith asserts in an essay "Love, Actually", "Foster wanted his people to be in a muddle: his was the study of the emotional, erratic and unreasonable in human life" (n.p). Instead of presenting the antithesis of her source text, Smith appropriates this characteristic of her source text. Her protagonists "have a tendency not just toward error, but toward repeated error" (Tynan 84). More than

immigrants and hybrids, Smith's characters are first human beings, who strive to achieve better life, but who are prone to "repeated errors" in their strives.

The concept of blackness is one of the factors responsible for constituting identity, as inscribed in the body; it is a point of identification in terms of race and ethnicity, which affects both the black and white, alike. In the novel *On Beauty*, almost each and every character, at one point questions what it means to be black, which emphasises the confusion and the contesting claims surrounding the term. For Kiki Simmonds the term implies a point of departure toward the perpetual becoming. For Michael Kipps, son of Monty Kipps, "being black was not an identity but an accidental matter of pigment" (Smith *On* 44). Michael Kipps's observation reduces blackness to a simple biological aspect. The contrasting view on blackness reflected by Kiki and Michael marks how patterns of inclusiveness are carried out in British and American multiculturalism. For Michael, who has been assimilated in British society, does not seem to face obstacle with regard to the colour of his skin in performing life. For Carl Thomas, who belongs to a working class community of Roxbury, blackness is a matter of ethics. He shouts in an argument with Zora Belsey, "You people aren't even black no more [...] you don't live right" (Smith *On Beauty* 418). For Carl, blackness entails unity, a kind of fraternity, and it is a scale to measure worth. Throughout the novel, Levi Belsey, the youngest son of Kiki and Howard, searches for authenticity in terms of blackness. The concept of authenticity is inherent in the identity politics of Zadie Smith's narratives. Howard Belsey, the father of the Belseys, conceives of blackness with much complexities. There are times when Howard shows signs of apprehension in seeing his adolescent children growing up in America, where he himself is an immigrant. Despite being an adherent of liberalism, Howard ironically dreads racial conversation with his children. He calls Levi's manner of speaking as "faux Brooklyn accent" (Smith *On Beauty* 5) .

The matriarch of the central family in *On Beauty*, Kiki Simmonds is a fifth generation descendant of a Jamaican house slave, who has climbed up the social ladder and become middle-class. There are instances in the novel when blackness is reflected through the history of slavery to which Kiki always relates to. Despite being married to a white liberal Englishman for thirty years, she still uses her blackness as a means to understand her relation with herself. Kiki's enormous bosom and the colour of her skin acts as a force for her subject positioning:

> The size was sexual and at the same time more than sexual: sex was only one small element of its symbolic range. If she were white, may be it would refer only to sex, but she was not. And so her chest gave off a mass of signals beyond her direct control: sassy, sisterly, predatory, motherly, threatening, comforting - it was a mirror world she had step into in her mid-forties, a strange fabulation of a person she believed she was. (Smith *On Beauty* 47)

The inherent force of power brings Kiki's body as a point of subjectivity. Kiki constantly negotiates with how other people perceive her. In this context, Kiki's body directs her personality, which leads to discursive association. Kiki's bosom always speaks to her beholder before she could relate to other people. On perceiving her enormous bosom, a predetermined meaning, forged as stereotype, has been drawn out of her identity. It becomes inevitable for Kiki not to respond to the reaction of other people who demand and expect certain norms and mores of behaviour out of Kiki. Kiki succumbs to such expectation; responding to recognition of this new self, forged in the eyes of others. The living body has become a text which can be read and interpreted. If Kiki were white, she would be observed as a female who is an object of desire. However, her black skin happens to be a point, at the same time, through which power is exercised, which unleashes a chaotic realm of possibility beyond the merely fixed sexual in the eyes that behold her.

Kiki has no clear center or core from which to produce a single fixed identity. She must negotiate with a plurality of centers, weaving a self from intersecting discourses of race, gender and class. These identity determinants induce in her a heightened sense of awareness. Throughout the novel, Kiki is conscious of the manner in which her body is being perceived. At times she relates herself to Aunt Jemima from the cartoon series of *Tom and Jerry* (z. Smith *On Beauty* 51). Her encounters with other people are affected by her introspective musings as to the range of signals her body gives off and of which she is unable to control; "sometimes you get a flash of what you look like to other people" (Smith *On Beauty* 98).

Kiki's heightened self conscious attitude with regard to the blackness of her skin is reflective of Paul Gilroy postulation of racialisation as the main problem of multiculturalism. She negotiates with the deterioration of her marital relationship in terms of race. On realising that Howard betrayed her with "a tiny little white woman" (Smith *On Beauty* 206), Claire Malcolm, Kiki's pain is deepened by the "temporal layers" of history; the history of American slavery figures in the contemporary world of Kiki Simmonds (Fisher "Temporal" 85). Kiki conceives of Howard's action as an act of the past white supremacy over her blackness. Kiki tells Howard of the white composition of the world she inhabits as bounded by racialised environment because of her commitment to their relationship:

> I am alone in this [...] this sea of white. I barely *know* any black folk any more [...] unless they be cleaning under my feet in the fucking cafe, in you *fucking* college, or pushing a fucking hospital bed through the corridor. *I staked my whole life on you*. (Smith *On Beauty* 206)

She is responding to Howard's claim that she is being 'ludicrous", with Howard failing to see the blow to Kiki not only as his wife, but specifically as a black woman in a white dominated society. Despite being an adherent of Liberalism, Howard remains obstructed to perceive history in the current situations.

Smith reverses the Western centre/periphery dualism by marking Howard's whiteness. In fact, Howard is described as isolated, ashamed, and with a deep feeling of unbelongingness, which transfers the feelings that have been often attributed to those on the margins onto somebody who is allegedly in the centre. Howard's unbelongingness results from his inability to connect fully with the blackness of his wife and his children. Being affiliated to Liberalism, Howard's sometimes introspection and reluctance on the skin colour of his children reflects the melancholic sensibility for the imperial past.

Howard Belsey, the only white member of the Belsey family, refuses to perceive the significance of history in current situations. He despises his labour class origin and chooses to experience only limited aspects of life. Susan Alice Fisher points out that Smith's concept of 'temporal layers' constitutes both personal and public relation. Past experience shapes the concerns of contemporary world. In the words of Fisher, "the entrenched position that the characters take on in their intimate and public lives have a destructive effect which halts progress in both arenas' ("Temporal" 83). Howard is unable to comprehend where their relationship went wrong because the problem demands retrospection. However, there are instances when Howard fails to turn a blind eye to history. His well intended but destructive visit of his father, Henry Belsey, in Cricklewood exemplifies the intrinsic presence and inescapability of history. The weight of their history is palpable when Howard arrived at the house and saw the 1970's decor alongside the momentos of his long dead mother. Both father and son are stuck in a history that neither can see nor escape:

> For they fell into the same patterns at once. As if Howard had never gone to university (against Harry's advice), never left his piss-poor country, never married outside his colour or his nation. He'd never gone anywhere or done anything. He was still a butcher's son and it was still just the two of them, still making do, squabbling in a railway cottage in Dalston. Two English men

> stranded together with nothing in common except for a dead woman they had both loved. (Smith *On Beauty* 295)

It is impossible for Howard to extricate his working-class origin, just as it is impossible for him to accept it. His entrenched antagonistic attitude against his past led him to commit yet another error. His failed encounter with his father results in a drunkenness which leads him to commit an illicitly inappropriate infidelity with Victoria Kipps, a past object of his son, Jerome's affection, which further leads to the ultimate crumbling of his family.

Roots, past, history and tradition are marked as significant aspects in the multicultural discourse with regard to identity construction. Zadie Smith's novels investigate the dialogic movements between past stability or roots, and the subsequent pathways which are connected to roots (which can be conceptualised as route) Suan Friedman theorises the duality of root/route as:

> [...] a kind of geographical thinking that addresses the meanings of location and itinerary in the production of cultural identities. As such, geopolitical thinking is attuned to questions of borders and transgression - all kinds of borders and all kinds of transgressions" (178).

Taryn Beukema analyses the novel, *White Teeth*, in the light of masculine identity in postcolonial British society by way of challenging the conventional notion of masculinity. Asserting one's identity does not merely imply who one is in the static moment, rather it takes into account all the historical phenomena and the present reality that an individual experiences. According to Beukema, the two elderly male protagonists of *White Teeth*, fail utterly in asserting conventional masculine identities. Samad is obsessed with his roots and Archie Jones is devoid of history. Their inability in striking balance between the dichotomy of "root/route" is the cause of failure in their positioning. Friedman continues by arguing that:

> Roots and routes are [...] two sides of the same coin: roots, signifying identity based on stable cores and continuities; routes, suggesting identity based on travel, change and disruption [...] In terms of the roots/routes symbiosis, experiencing identity as roots requires some figurative or material engagement of routes through a contact zone of intercultural encounter. Conversely, identity developed through routes involves an experience of leaving roots, of moving beyond the boundaries of 'home'. (153-154)

Roots, in other words, give people grounding within history, while routes present the experience of discontinuities.

In the light of Beukema's analysis, the sense of identity portrayed by Samad Iqbal and Marcus Chalfen are deeply rooted in the values and social codes set out for them by the British Empire of the past, placing a heightened importance on ancestry and assimilation, and Samad and Marcus have tried to teach these principles to their sons (Magid and Millat Iqbal and Joshua Chalfen). Smith thus maps the desires of the first generation men to negotiate pure and essentialised masculine selves in order to succeed in a society marked with nostalgia for a past greatness.

Stuart Hall cites two ways of understanding this notion of "cultural identity." The first, he says, "defines 'cultural identity' in terms of one, shared culture, a sort of collective 'one true self' hiding inside the many other, more superficial or artificially imposed 'selves' which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common" ("Cultural Identity" 51). The second recognizes that "there are also critical points of deep and significant difference which constitute 'what we really are'; or rather - since history has intervened - 'what we have become'. We cannot speak for very long, with any exactness about 'one experience, one identity', without acknowledging its other side—the ruptures and discontinuities" ("Cultural Identity" 52). The latter postulation reverberates what Smith terms as "temporal layers" in *On*

Beauty. History or rather the knowledge of one's past and the ability to use the knowledge as a determinant of self positioning is the embodiment of power in a Foucaudian theoretical paradigm. It is the technology of the self through which an individual takes up a subject position by observing and caring for the self.

One of the main objectives of multiculturalism is to preserve the historical roots through which members of society form their distinctive cultures. The demand for mutual acknowledgement of difference with which others live by, acts as disciplinary power. Zadie Smith underscores the importance of history in her narratives in order to highlight the plurality of positions that a subject can take in its becoming. The characters in Smith's novels unconsciously exemplify Stuart Hall's second position, one that draws on the notion of the journey and constant transformations involved in forming an identity of which they continually assume they are in complete control. In the novel, *White Teeth*, the protagonist Samad Miah Iqbal strives to constitute an identity in terms of gender, race, religion and class, in the multicultural London society, which is directed by his obsession with the history of his ancestry and his desire to be assimilated in the 'mainstream" British culture. Ashley Dawson points out that "Samad has realized [very early in his life] that he has become a mimic man, a colonial subject attempting to conform to the contradictory dictates of assimilation set out by the empire" (159). However, despite such realisation, Samad continually struggle to reconcile his Bengali identity and English identity, while forcing his children to conform to strict Islamic ideals, to which the children do not feel a connection, and which intensifies tension between father and son(s).

Simultaneously, Samad refuses to acknowledge differences between generations. He continually tries to control how he is being perceived, and strives to constitute a pure Muslim identity. His determination to assimilate, while turning a blind eye to plurality of interpretations of history, obscures his growth as an individual; as a father and as a husband.

He slowly begins to see that he has put an enormous amount of faith in a country "where you are never welcomed, only tolerated. Just tolerated [...] it drags you in and suddenly you are unsuitable to return, your children are unrecognizable, you belong nowhere" (Smith *White Teeth* 407). He is utterly lost and unable to comprehend why:

> [...] you begin to give up the very idea of belonging. Suddenly this thing, this belonging, it seems like some long, dirty lie [...] and I begin to believe that birthplaces are accidents, that everything is an accident. But if you believe that, where do you go? What do you do? What does anything matter? (Smith *White Teeth* 407).

He begins to call into question his own roots and the importance of them in constituting his identity in this now not-so-foreign place. Roots are important to Samad, but the fact that he clutches too tightly on roots makes him unable to transform and journey through route.

On the other hand, Archie Jones is devoid of roots and ignorant of the history of his origin. He is unable to live up to the ideals of reason and rationality at the heart of 'English' identity (every decision he makes is based on the flip of a coin). Archie differs from his friend, Samad, strictly by the fact that he is English and thus he belongs, albeit on a superficial level. But much like Samad, he cannot grow as a subject. He is incapable of transgression and journey toward redefining new identity:

> Once upon a time he had been a track cyclist. What Archie liked about track cycling was the way you went round and round. Round and round. Giving you chance after chance to get a bit better at it, to make a fast lap, to do it right. Except the thing about Archie as he never did get any better . . . That kind of inability to improve is really very rare. That kind of consistency is miraculous, in a way. (Smith *White Teeth* 15)

Archie is instrumental in foregrounding the tension men experience in trying both to live up to historical imperial greatness as well as to break away from it. Interestingly, the novel concludes with Archie watching Marcus Chalfen's FutureMouse© escape: "[h]e watched it leap off the end and disappear through an air vent. Go on my son! thought Archie" (541). This mouse, exemplifies that there are "[n]o other roads, no missed opportunities, no parallel possibilities. No second-guessing, no what-ifs, no might-have-beens, Just certainty. Just certainty in its purest form" (Smith *White Teeth* 490). This mouse thus serves as a metaphor for fixed identity in contemporary England. The little brown mouse represents Marcus Chalfen's project and his "firm belief in the perfectibility of all life" (Smith *White Teeth* 312). Its escape, then, is not only a comic celebration of the return of the repressed, but a celebration of the reality that no man is perfect, nor should he be bound to societal constraints and demands. Because Archie roots for this mouse, his role becomes more complicated. Moreover, Archie's ironic role throughout the novel further demonstrates Smith's attempt to defuse the tension of a conflicted subject positioning. However, the escape of the mouse is accidental on Archie's part. Thus, till the end, somehow like Foucault's instigation, it is impossible to state for sure what Archie represents. His route is the most difficult to map.

Much like the first generation characters, the second generation characters also go through the sense of loss and confusion in terms of rootedness and assimilation. In *White Teeth*, Millat exemplifies most explicitly this sense of loss. As a child he considers London where he listens to the music of Michael Jackson and Bruce Springsteen as his home (Smith *White Teeth* 231). He could not comprehend the expectation of his teacher, Poppy Burt Jones, when she associated Millat's "home' with his Bengali 'root'. However, Millat begins to go through a sense of loss in the absence of his other half: his twin, Magid. As a teenager, he realises that "he had no face in this country, no voice in the country, until a week before last

when suddenly people like Millat are on every channel, every radio, every newspaper, and they were angry, and Millat thought it recognised him and grabbed it with both hands" (Smith *White Teeth* 194). From this point Millat cannot completely feel at home in England; he realises that his assimilation is based on the fundamental difference ensued through race and religion. Tariq Modood explains that the kind of rejection Millat goes through creates crises for the immigrant who needs to live with an imposed sense of dual identity:

> They were not comfortable with the idea of British being anything more than a legal title, in particular they found it difficult to call themselves "British" because they felt that the majority of the white people do not accept them as "British" because of their race, cultural background; through hurtful jokes, harassment, discrimination, and violence they found their claim to be British was too often denied. (74)

In this context, Millat derives "technology of the self" and repositions himself in a society by subversively accommodating the authoritative expectation. He appropriates the power that is vested in difference perceived by the mainstream population and refashions the position he takes as a subject. He joins a militant Muslim group KEVIN, which defines itself as "a radical movement where politics and religion are the two sides of a same coin" (Smith *White Teeth* 390), and adopts the ready-made identity prescribed by white people. Millat and the other members of KEVIN develop a voice which has been denied to them in the society. In joining KEVIN, Millat uses his religious persona as a tool to demonstrate political statement. Millat uses religion as a front. Millat's affiliation to KEVIN at some point is initially concerned with a simple preference for a particular style of mannerism. Rather than religious conviction, it is his fascination with popular culture that influenced him to join the gang. However, along the way, he realises that this religious propaganda is the only thread which connects him to the root which is imposed upon him. Theologically speaking, "Millat

was neither one thing nor the other, this or that, Muslim or Christian, Englishman or Bengali; he lived for the in between, he lived up to his middle name Zulfikar, the clashing of two swords" (Smith *White Teeth* 291). Millat cannot fully comprehend his in-between position because he is unconscious of the fact that the root that is so often associated with the identity of immigrants, continually figures in his experience of everyday life, and that he had never first-handedly experienced this root.

White Teeth serves as a constant reminder of the necessity of recognizing one's history and the history of others in order to know - to know oneself, to know others, and to negotiate between identities. Smith insists on the necessity of navigating the journey from beginning to end further illustrates the importance of understanding identity through history. Her non-linear narrative refuses to favour roots over routes and vice versa. The continual play on time and the jumping between past and present and back again emphasize the fact that history is always weighing on the present and future, thus further illuminating Smith's nuanced elaboration of historical becoming.

Connection to the past which influences the daily experience of life, which is an important aspect in becoming a subject, takes different form in *The Autograph Man* (2002). *The Autograph Man* chronicles the journey of its protagonist, Alex-Li Tandem across the mundane quotidian life in North London, who determines his subject position through representation in popular culture. Terentowicz-Fotyga asserts that *The Autograph Man* differs from *White Teeth* in its representation of multiculturalism. She says that multiculturalism is a point of departure toward redefining their identities beyond the boundaries of the host and immigrants:

> [...] the second novel is organised around the theme of culture industry and the hyper-real experience of space. A fluid sense of identity in *The Autograph*

> *Man* is not so much an effect of migration and displacement as of problematic experience of reality. (57)

In this novel, much like the characters of the other novels, the characters' experiences of reality are influenced by rootedness in the past. Alex's journey starts from the day of his father's death. However, his inability to confront and accept the reality of his father's death affects his subject positioning throughout the plot.

Smith explores Jean Baudrillard's theory of the 'hyperreal' which holds that in contemporary highly media-driven era, images have increasingly taken over the real. Images no longer refer to the actual object because instead of producing the actual objects, modern capitalist industries are more concerned with the hyperreal simulacra. As the subject is invested in simulacra, its existence becomes superficial and affiliated to meaninglessness. However, while exploring Baudrillard's theory, she, paradoxically, affirms Stuart Hall's preoccupation with plurality in terms of interpretation of popular culture. Tracy K. Parker writes in an essay "I Could Have Been Somebody: The Articulation of Identity in Zadie Smith's *The Autograph Man*" that from the very cover of the novel Smith is "concerned with contemporary preference for the symbolic over the real, images over substance" (72). The characters of *The Autograph Man* reflect Hall's postulation of "the new form of self-consciousness and reflexivity", which can be regarded as the way of portraying the hyperreal ("On Postmodernism" 137). The characters of *The Autograph Man* see themselves through the lens of popular culture references and have a sense that they are estranged from meaningful identities, with their existence created through images rather than a sense of authentic and rootedness.

Alex-Li Tandem and his friends are immersed in the popular culture. At age twelve, "Alex deals in a shorthand of experience. The TV version. He is one of this generation who watch themselves" (3). As Alex-Li gets older, his preoccupation with popular culture is

intensified by his career as an autograph trader. Just like Millat in *White Teeth,* Alex-Li is confused with his experience of the past in the present. In postmodern theory, to turn away from cultural authenticity entails, in the words of Federic Jameson, "lack of historicity" (qtd Parker 74). Tracy K. Parker denotes that "the postmodern individual has no concept of the past as differentiated from the present which results in a loss of meaning because the simplification of historical processes and contexts means that history is flattened, misunderstood and used in a superficial manner" (74). Alex chooses to experience the past in its superficial representation through old movies. He strives to escape the experience of the real by affecting all interpersonal relationship in terms of the symbolic. Alex's obsession with old films and Kitty Alexander, a 1950's Hollywood star, is tied to his wish for his inclination toward stasis: "Films are an artificial circumscribed box to him - four walls and nothing but empty International gestures inside it. Precisely the reason Alex loves it. It is dealable with." (Smith *Autograph Man* 114). Alex is fixated with a single moment in the past, the boundary of which he cannot transgress. His false nostalgia for the past disables him to negotiate with his present. Alex's rootedness is marked with complexities, as he fails to adopt route from it. Also with regard to postmodern preoccupation with authenticity, Alex's hybrid origin serves to intensify his complicated mediation of life through reading and articulating the real.

However, Gayatri Spivak contests roots altogether: "if there's one thing I totally distrust, in fact, more than distrust, despise and have contempt for [...] it is people looking for roots" (qtd. Friedman 152). Spivak's disapproval of roots stems from the idea that rootedness is based on the inability to detach oneself from a place of origin and does not take into account the fact that roots contribute immensely to the formation and production of one's identity. Furthermore, as Friedman points out, Spivak's "despisement of roots is counterbalanced by those whose attachment to roots seems vital for survival" (152). Individuals cling to their histories in order to survive, and when that history was lost or, in the

case of Alex, never really existed, their conceptions of their identities become confused as they are unable to find a connection to hold them in their present positions. Just like Archiebald Jones from *White Teeth*, Alex has a very limited knowledge of the history of his origin. The only knowledge which he has of his origin is limited to several photographs; a "train ticket to a defunct line through a defunct city" somewhere in Poland; "the qualification of émigré Russian teacher, distant cousin. One bowler hat. Crushed." (Smith *Autograph Man* 92). This lack of history intensifies his estranged sensibility.

When Alex goes to New York to attend Autographicana, a convention for autograph men, he meets Honey Richardson, an African-American partial actress and autograph trader. Like Alex, Honey also exists in the space of the hyperreal, and determines her relationship with others through aspects of popular culture. But Honey can conceive meanings of representation in popular culture. She negotiates against the universal constructed identity which is prescribed of African-American women. She can connect in terms of how the American history of slavery influences contemporary popular culture in constituting an interstitial space between past and present. She educates Alex about people like Miss Beaver, a black Hollywood actress, who needed to learn gesture and mannerism which subscribes to the stereotype, in order to get a few roles available to people of colour (Smith *Autograph Man* 203). Although Honey uses clichés and derives dialogues from movies in her interpersonal relationships, she successfully negotiates with the malleability of her identity. For Honey, history provides a source for survival.

Zadie Smith saturates her novels with the concept of authenticity by presenting how different people mediate through it. For Levi Belsey, in the novel *On Beauty*, cultural authenticity is related to racial discourse. Levi strives to attain authenticity by continually re-inventing himself. This process includes adopting a "faux Brooklyn accent", feigning residence in the poorer area of Roxbury and taking a cause for Haitian underclass of

Wellington. Levi fashions "authenticity" in terms of blackness by identifying with blackness as a concept. For him being black is a matter of being 'street'. Zora explains to his father, "Its like, 'being street', knowing the street - in Levi's sad little world, if you're a Negro you have some kind of mysterious holy communion with pavements" (Smith *On Beauty* 63). He cannot reconcile his notion of authentic blackness with the middle-class existence of his family. He thus occupies a contradictory position: while assuming "blackness" to be a fixed, stable category, his desire to become authentically black highlights a view of the concept as contingent and available through identity construction. Stuart Hall thus asserts elsewhere, "questions of identity are always questions about representation. They are always questions about invention, not simply the discovery of tradition" (qtd. Tynan 86). Therefore since her earliest novel, Smith starts to play with the deconstruction of the idea of a pure or authentic identity, especially when national, racial, or ethnic identities are considered. Indeed, one of the characters of the older generation, Alsana, articulates quite well this argument when she comically states that "it's still easier to find the correct Hoover bag than to find one pure person, one pure faith, on the globe [...] It's all fairy-tale" (Smith *White Teeth* 236). Smith's novels after *White Teeth* continued to focus on issues of authenticity. *The Autograph Man* worked with the metaphor of the "original," and *On Beauty* (2005), with class, race, and gender relations.

Chapter 4

Multiculturalism as Reality

In *After Empire: Melancholia or Convivial Culture?* (2004) Paul Gilroy denotes that multiculturalism is a description of reality, not just a mere political guideline and conspiracy. He denotes that British multiculturalism will provide a means through which the national identity will be reformulated by replacing Britain's melancholy for its global pre-eminence with the present multi-ethnic component of the nation. This chapter investigates on how 'Britishness' has been reconstructed and redefined in terms of a concept and the national identity of Britain, in an era when imperialism had just receeded, through the analysis of Zadie Smith's novels and along the lines of Gilroy's postulation.

The competing models of British identity in the fiction of Zadie Smith resonate what Paul Gilroy theorised as the divergence between "convivial" and "melancholic" versions of British national culture in the aftermath of the empire. In the convivial mode, British identity is grounded in the practical, everyday encounters with diversity that characterise cosmopolitan life; such a version of Britishness is open and empathetic and embraces "the processes of cohabitation and interaction that have made multiculture an ordinary feature of social life" (Gilroy *After* xv). Gilroy's conviviality has identification at its heart: in the convivial city, inhabitants can imagine themselves in each other's situations, no matter what cultural differences might stand in the way. On the melancholic side of national identity, a guilty version of Britain refuses to face up to the shameful history of its empire and the pain of its loss and is therefore "phobic about the prospect of exposure to either strangers or otherness" (Gilroy *After* 99); such a version of the nation anxiously protects a nostalgic, homogeneous, purified version of itself. One of *After Empire*'s most significant contributions to postcolonial studies is how it traces the legacy of empire across the whole of contemporary immigration discourse in Britain, even where such a context might seem remote. After empire, Gilroy contends, it is "the infrahuman political body of the immigrant rather than the body of the sovereign that comes to represent all the discomforting ambiguities of the

empire's painful and shameful but apparently nonetheless exhilarating history" (100): the immigrant figures empire and its loss, even when that immigrant is not actually connected to the history of the empire at all. The shift of representation from the sovereign body to the body of the immigrant echoes Foucault's explication of the transformation of sovereign power to biopower. Power has started "working to incite, reinforce, control, monitor, and organize the forces under it" and comes to be internalized by the immigrant subject in Gilroy's conception of British multiculturalism (Foucault *History* 136).

The novels of Zadie Smith do not choose between the melancholy and convivial, in the process suggesting that both understandings of national identity shape the culture's sense of what it means to be British, no matter which version one prefers. Gilroy's theory is unabashedly polemical and activist: it is an argument for conviviality and against melancholia as modes of British identity. However, Smith does not argue for one side and against the other, but shows that this irreducible doubleness is effective: it actively shapes what it means to assimilate; the meaning of Britishness cannot be decided at the individual level.

On 5th February 2011, David Cameron, the Prime Minister of Britain pronounced that the unprecedented increasing number of extremist ideologies and terrorist threats in Britain is because, "[u]nder the doctrine of state multiculturalism, we have encouraged different cultures to live separate lives, apart from each other and the mainstream" (n.p), which resulted in segregation among various cultural, ethnic and religious groups; and also the blurring of the national identity. In the same speech, the Prime Minister calls for the need of strengthened sense of belonging and sense of national identity among the citizens in order to address the problems of terrorism, which he related to the complexities of identity and lack of belongingness on the part of the immigrants. Cameron's speech echoes the poignant exposition of the immigrants' experiences in the works of Zadie Smith. Smith had presented a kind of prophetic exposition of religious fundamentalism in *White Teeth* in 2000, and

reflects the dialectics of culture mixing, in an ostensibly cheerful celebration of multiculturalism. In the essay "Affirming Complexity: *White Teeth* and Cosmopolitanism", Katina Rogers, much like Paul Gilroy, denotes that the hybrid situation of postcolonial London and its multiculturality can be perceived as 'inevibilities', rather than a solution to its postcolonial anxiety (45).

In the novels selected for study, the geographical space of London is instrumental in reflecting the complexities accompanied by postcolonial perspectives on hybridity and its associates such as multiculturalism, internationalism and cosmopolitanism. In the light of conventional postcolonial discourse on hybridity, the universal outlook or common worldview is necessitated so as to determine better society. However, the characters of Zadie Smith's novels cannot simply swallow this universalism whole in order to assimilate in the postcolonial centre of London. London, the capital city and cultural centre of Britain has transformed into postcolonial centre of ethnic and culture mixing through the years. With all the ethnic mixings and the initial ostensible acceptance and open arm of Britain, the physical component of the city has metamorphosed from its coherent nationality into a fluid hybrid zone. It has become impossible to define what Cameron means by "national identity" even if it is to be re-established in order to address terrorism in his term. In his study of migrancy and hybridity, Andrew Smith notes the increasing complexity of what is meant by claiming British identity;

> What makes [one] 'British' cannot be essentialist or absolutist notions of nation or culture, race or ethnicity. At the very least it is clear that we can no longer hold comfortably on to the notion of a closed national culture, complete within or for itself. (245)

For Gilroy, conviviality is defined in terms of sympathetic identification: the ability to put oneself in another's place, across conventional lines of difference. His book begins by

exemplifying this concept with the story of Ingrid Nicholls, a black British woman who needed a leg amputation but who could only receive a pink prosthetic through the NHS. Public discussions of her case, Gilroy argues, show conviviality because "the shameful refusal of a matching limb was described as an affront to her dignity" (*After* xiii): people imagined how she must have felt rather than accusing her of working the system or of not being fully English. Because they thought about what it would be like to live as Mrs. Nicholls, people were horrified by the institutionalised racism her story makes clear. Such acts of conviviality happen every day in the postcolonial city, Gilroy argues, when people from diverse cultural backgrounds interact with each other and see themselves inhabiting a shared space. Gilroy's most fully explored example of conviviality is Sacha Baron Cohen's Ali G, who literalizes this sympathetic identification. Ali G's imitative act is convivial because it involves "imagining oneself as a stranger in a limited and creative sense" (Gilroy *After* 70), which in turn makes it impossible to believe in "the assertions of ethnocentricity and untranslatability that are pronounced in the face of difference" (Gilroy *After* 8). Ali G represents, for Gilroy, not blackface exploitation, as some critics have alleged, but a critique of the idea that culture is property. Everyone's culture can be translated and made to mingle in the mongrel daily life of the metropolis; no culture can be so foreign as to be unimaginable, and thus everyone can identify with everyone else. This strategic and sympathetic form of identification necessarily requires the nation to abandon the idea that "the national collective was bound by a coherent and distinctive culture" (Gilroy *After* 90), to accept that national culture cannot be homogenous, is owned by no one, and is constantly being redefined. Gilroy's theory is brazenly humanist, depending as it does on the idea that everyone can identify with everyone else and that cultural differences are neither absolute nor defining.

In his essay, "Colonization in Reverse", Raphael Dalleo establishes that Smith has turned London city into the Caribbean and notes the extension of the cultural border of the Caribbean within the city, through the use of setting and the sensibilities of the characters of *White Teeth* (93). During the age of colonialism, the Caribbean had been the centre of culture mixing where the colonizers brought in their cultures and transplanted it into the culture of the colonial subjects, while causing cultural complexities entailed in cultural hybridization. Today, with the extension of the Caribbean cultural border, the people of London have been going through the same phase of what its erstwhile colonies were going through. It has become home to many cultures. The cultural syncretism of London has impacted on the "creolisation" of its streets, culture and speech. London street has become hodge-podge; "Fashion, food, music, and entertainment industry are traditionally flagged up as the most emblematic illustrations of the impact of twentieth-century immigrant populations on the lifestyle of British host communities", which are exemplified in the street "where reggae met punk; sari blouses are matched with boots, and curry goes with chips (English fries). Tikka has been celebrated as the Indian dish invented in Britain [...] while at least half the population of under-eighteen in urban Britain wants to look American and sound Jamaican" (Knauer 175). Apart from all these mix-and-match aspect of London city scape, the most remarkable aspect with regard to its cultural mixing is the prominence of "complex linkages and mixed traditions" (Smith *White Teeth* 35). Zadie Smith has reflected this hybrid situation of London in all the novels under study. Although the novel *On Beauty* is set primarily in the town of Wellington in New England, Smith presents a vivid picture of the multi-ethnic physical component of London society in the episode of Carlene Kipps's funeral, which the Belseys attend in London, while also reflecting the fascination of the outsider with such a composition:

> ‘Every kind of persons’, whispered Jerome because everybody was whispering. ‘You can tell she knew every type of person. Can you imagine a funeral –any event- this mixed, back home?’
>
> The Belseys looked around themselves and saw the truth of this. Every age, every colour and several faiths; people dressed very finely – hats and handbags, pearls and rings- and people who were clearly of a different world again, in jeans and baseball caps, saris and duffle coats. (Smith *On Beauty* 282).

Zadie Smith’s narrative strategy for using comic elements in presenting the multiculturality of London space is often bound up with a negative end in the critical spectrum. James Wood accuses Smith’s works for lacking seriousness, and for failing to present sufficiently nuanced characters with believable interiority. In *The Irresponsible Self: On Laughter and The Novel* (2004), he coins the term ‘hysterical realism’ for describing Smith’s works, a form of writing which promotes “a culture of storytelling” and pursues “vitality at all costs” (178), therefore sacrificing “substance for the sake of shiny exteriority” (183). However, from the opposite end of the critical spectrum, it is to be noted that Smith extensively uses humour and irony as interludes before presenting the more serious and poignant authorial messages. The Belseys’ fascination for London’s multiculturality is presented against the backdrop of Carlene’s death which in turn brings to light the inherent pain and crisis amidst the culture mixing. Although the crowd is made up of people belonging to different ethnicity, the event marks the end of something, like unity in the Kipps’s family as Carlene stood for the foundation of her family; and also the end of the notion of coherent pure hommogeneous “Englishness” of British society; because death is the mark of an ending.

The schools in *White Teeth* are the microcosm of London city scape. In the light of Gilroy's postulation of convivial multiculturalism, the school setting provides a space where children irrespective of their race or ethnicity share common connection among themselves:

> [...] It is only this late in the day that you can walk into the playground and find Isaac Leung by the fish pond, Danny Rahmanin the football cage, Quang O'Rourke bouncing basketball and Irie Jones humming a tune. (Smith *White Teeth* 326)

The passage describes the playground of Manor elementary school while juxtaposing the carefree environment of London school playground with "the harshness that makes up the typical fate of the most diverse immigrants" (Tancke 33). The ostensibly carefree environment with regard to cultural syncretism within the institutional space, at closer scrutiny, calls for suspicion. From a Foucaudian perspective, the power regime is constantly at work with these institutions. The playground of Manor school is a quasi-open space which is free of classroom constraint; however, it provides constant monitoring and surveillance of the children's behaviour who have been trained to "respect" other cultures. The carefree environment itself is ironically fenced off with its boundary within which the children can perform a limited freedom. At Glenard Oak, when the young characters are in their teen years, their experiences of difference take a whole new level. Within the constraint of the school discrimination in terms of race and ethnicity have been transgressed: "In Glenard Oak Comprehensive, black, Pakistani, Greek, Irish – these were races. But those with sex appeal lapped the other runners. They were a species all of their own" (Smith *White Teeth* 224). The "official multiculturalism" is ingraining cultural indifference at least inside the school environment, but cannot fully dismiss categorisation and discrimination.

London provides a space for interesting interaction between different players in the old power game. Since the interaction between the players is a two way process, the member

of the host country/culture are not unaffected. They experience a sense of encroachment and threat against the increasing immigrant population, which is sometimes performed in terms of violence against the immigrants. Smith, through the narrative voice in *White Teeth*, relates the inherent presence of internal threats in the hands of the members who belong to the 'white' community as well:

> Yet, despite all the mixing up, despite the fact that we have slipped into each other's lives with reasonable comfort [...] there are still young white man who are angry about that; who will roll out at closing time into the poorly lit streets with a kitchen knife wrapped in tight fists. (Smith *White Teeth* 327)

Although Smith is very much aware of and keen to reflect the presence of religious fundamentalism, in particular Muslim fundamentalism, in Britain, she is quick to bring to light the inherent presence of racist environment and violence motivated by racial differences at the hands of those who esteem themselves as 'mainstream'. In contrast to the observation of Cameron, Kris Knauer says that the most remarkable quality of London's diverse communities "are porous and not sealed off from each other" (174). From the seemingly contrasting observations, Cameron's segregated ethnic populations cannot escape contact with other cultures and participate in refashioning the national identity of Britain.

The novels of Zadie Smith analyse the ideological shift in the definition of Britishness and otherness. Britishness has been defined in terms of the essentialist's opposite of otherness. Zygmunt Bauman points out that "[t]oday's strangers are by-products, as well as the means of production, in the incessant- because never conclusive- process of identity-building" (54). Just as identity is an ever evolving process, the Other also participate in this process of pertpetual transformation in correspond to its opposite, the Self. *White Teeth* investigates on how the domestic lives of the Iqbals, the Joneses and the Chelfens are projected in the national level while questioning the defining forces of Britishness. Samad

Miah Iqbal is determined to construct an identity that allows his racial and national affiliation to co-exist without merging entirely. Initially, he acknowledges his colonial subjectivity while trying to establish a place for himself in British history by serving for the empire in World War II. During World War II when Samad and Archie are parts of the British Army bridge-laying squad, the squad members call him "Sultan" by way of taunting his pompous attitude and his 'exotic' appearance, Samad dismisses the epithet only in terms of being historically and geographically inaccurate: Samad tells his friends that he is from Bengal and that "Sultan" refers to certain men of Arab, which is hundreds of miles west to Bengal. (Smith *White Teeth* 73). At other time, Samad reacts aggressively against Archie for calling him Sam: "Don't call me Sam [...] I am not one of your English matey-boys. My name is Samad Miah Iqbal. Not Sam. Not Sammy. And not – God forbid - Samuel. It is *Samad*" (Smith *White Teeth* 94). The difference in Samad's reaction against the attack of his identity denotes his acceptance of colonial subjectivity while also reflecting his intolerance against the elimination of any one of the aspects of his identity- racial and nationality- for the sake of the other.

Samad differentiates between Englishness and Britishness, while projecting different forms of nationalism through the terms. Britishness encompasses affiliation to ethnic and racial differences, whereas Englishness denotes a homogenised nationality, while excluding differences in terms of race. In short, Britishness includes all the 'racially' different members of the nation, while Englishness refers only to the "white" or "mainstream" members of Britain. Englishness, in the words of Tariq Modood:

> [...] has been treated by the new Britons as a closed ethnicity rather than an open nationality. Hence, while many [minority groups] have come to think of themselves as hyphenated Brits, few yet thinks of themselves as English. (77)

Samad includes himself under the umbrella of Britishness and acknowledges his hyphenated identity as a Bengali-British subject, which reflects the emphasis on racial diversity and his investment on the British nationalism. The type of affiliation projected by Samad is what Paul Gilroy postulate as convivial multiculturalism. However, for Gilroy, it is culture instead of race that is to be emphasised. From the other angle, Samad's relative understanding of Englishness in terms of homogeneity resonate the immigrant body as representational of British melancholia for its colonial past.

After the war, when London has transformed from a "colonial metropolis" to a "postcolonial cosmopolis" (Mirze 192), Samad started considering the conception of his identity as English rather than British. He is required to make a decision about where to settle after the war: "What am I going to do...? Go back to Bengal? Or to Delhi? Who would have such an Englishman there? To England? Who would have such an Indian?" (Smith *White Teeth* 95). Samad's conception of his identity losses its footing as he is unable to comprehend his subject position in the postcolonial London, and his situation generated a crisis in him leading to a schizophrenic existence. Samad's experience as a civilian in London is dramatically different from his experience as a squad member during the war when Samad was accepted by the 'English' as a colonial Other due to his loyalty to the empire. Although Samad is acutely aware of his hyphenated allegiance, the failure of his attempt to assimilate as an 'English' subject in the no-more-welcoming London makes him perceive everything British as corrupt. In order to cope up with his intensifying paranoia, Samad turns to religion as a means of ethnic assertiveness which is "arising out of the feeling of not being respected or of lacking access to the public space, consisting of counter 'positive' images against traditional or dominant stereotypes" (Modood 67). According to Modood, this assertiveness:

> [...] is a politics of projecting identities in order to challenge existing power relations; of seeking not just tolerance for ethnic difference but also public acknowledgement, resources and representation. (67)

In order to resist the power regime which he considers as vested in assimilation, Samad resolves to bring up his children according to strict Muslim rules. However, Magid and Millat, through the narrative, develop their own conception of assimilation and nationality. Magid never considers himself as a hyphenated subjectivity since he has no first-hand experience with his ethnic homeland. As a child, Magid often fantasises about having a family that is more 'English':

> Magid really wanted to be in some other family. He wanted to own cats not cockroaches, he wanted his mother to make the music of the cello, not the sound of the sewing machine, he wanted to have a trellis of flowers growing up on one side of the house instead of the ever-growing pile of other people's rubbish, he wanted a piano in the hallway in place of the broken door off cousin Kurshed's car, he wanted to go on biking holidays to France, not day trips to Blackpool to visit aunties; he wanted the floor of his room to be shiny wood, not the orange-and-green swirled carpet left over from the restaurant; he wanted his father to be a doctor, not a one-handed waiter [...] (Smith *White Teeth* 176)

Magid's desire for a more 'normal' life is reflected through the light of mainstream Englishness. His dissatisfaction stems from his ethnic difference to which he holds much weaker ties than his first generation immigrant parents, and his conception of the English notion of class. Magid cannot reconcile with his father's class position and cannot follow him as a model. Magid's disinterestedness in constructing a hyphenated identity transgresses geographical space. Even when he is sent in exile to Bangladesh, he is "influenced by the

values he was raised up with rather than the ones that are imposed on him in Bangladesh" (Mirze 195). Being an exile shapes him as a free thinker, denouncing faith and fatalism on the basis of their escapist implications. He "swallows [England] as a whole and is determined to build an alternate future that transcends his father's limitation as an immigrant (Smith *White Teeth* 188). Unlike his brother Millat, Magid has been absent in London throughout most of his teenage years, during which Millat experiences the trauma of being 'different' in London. In the absence of racial/ethnic discrimination in Bangladesh, Magid eschews every aspect of his life which runs against his conception of western ideals. The sameness which arises out of the difference between Samad and Magid implicitly deconstructs the essentialists' perception of difference in terms of race which Paul Gilroy is so keen to eschew. The sameness lies in the fact that while being uprooted from the home they have known all their lives, and the place where certain values have been instilled in them while growing up, they cling to the opposite ends of the ideological spectrum, despite the sameness of their race.

Gilroy's humanist polemic version of identification registers a flexible kind of sameness, a sameness that is perhaps heterogeneous: when people imagine themselves in each other's situations or identify with one another, they acknowledge that they are all British, and what it means to be British becomes correspondingly more capacious and different from itself. Convivial identification involves an empathetic openness that does not assume or move toward homogeneity. *White Teeth* is driven by just such a logic of identification and openness, which ultimately transforms the social whole created by identification into a constantly redefined community. Gilroy's concept of sameness is exemplified in the verbal fight between Irie Jones and her mother, Clara, when Irie seeks for the permission from her mother to take a year off in the Indian subcontinent and Africa, after her A-levels and before taking up dentistry, which would make her the first Bowden or Jones

ever to enter university. After three months of 'coldwar' between the mother and daughter followed by Clara's objection, Irie says to her mother:

> 'I don't just *want* to have an year off, I *need* one. It's essential – I'm young, I want some experiences. I've lived in this bloody suburb all my life. Everyone's the same here. I want to go and see people of the world […]
>
> But Clara was adamant even though she could hardly speak without her false teeth, and when Irie pressed on for her permission, she lost her temper:
>
> 'Permishon for *what*? Koo go and share and ogle at poor black folk? Dr. Livingstone, I prejume? Iz dat what you learnt from da Shelfenz? Because if thash what you want, you can do that here. Jush sit and look at me for shix munfs!'
>
> 'Its nothing to do with that! I just want to see how other people live!'
>
> 'An' gek yourshelf killed in da proshess! Why don' you go neksh door, dere are uvver people dere. Go shee how dey live!' (Smith *White Teeth* 377-378)

Smith's play with the concept of 'sameness' and 'difference' in the passage further resonate what Gilroy elsewhere observes: "all parties […] have come to share an interest in magnifying racial, cultural and ethnic differences so that a special transgressive pleasure can be discovered in their [*spectacular overcoming*]" (*There* xxii). Irie can see the 'sameness' and spectacularly overcome the racial, ethnic and cultural difference of the inhabitants of Wilesden Green. Irie's practical knowledge of her surrounding transgresses the essentialist's ethnic and cultural differences. For Irie, the inhabitants of Willesden Green share uniformity, in their being different. She is so familiar with the difference of the people around her whether they are white and solid middle class like the Chalfens, whether they are Bangladeshi and struggling, or mixed, or black. Nevertheless, the 'spectacular overcoming'

of difference between the self and the other is also evident from Clara's standpoint; while accentuating malaria, poverty and tapeworm somewhat stereotypically as Western citizen, she also relates herself to the 'other people' and an object to be ogled at by her daughter while denoting the sameness in spite of the difference.

The second generation immigrant characters face the complexity of belonging to the national sphere in a very different manner. These characters are born British and fail to perceive the categorisation between Britishness and Englishness. Britain is home to them but they are denied the right to belong in their own homeland. In the case of Irie Jones who is born of an 'English' father but who inherits the body of a Jamaican grandmother, a hyphenated national identity is imposed upon her for not subscribing to the Eurocentric notion of what is beautiful:

> The European propotions of Clara's figure had skipped a generation, and [Irie} was landed instead with Hortense's substantial Jamaican frame, loaded with pineapples, mangoes and guavas [...] ledges genetically designed with another country in mind, another climate. (Smith *White Teeth* 265-6)

As she grows up, Irie develops a heightened sense of self awareness in terms of her appearance as every teenage girl does. She does not fit into the body she inhabits and she feels lost in the national sphere: "But Irie didn't know she was fine. There was England, a gigantic mirror, and there was Irie, without reflection. A stranger in a stranger land" (Smith *White Teeth* 266). The way the characters identify themselves and one another gives an insightful glimpse into how they perceive their relationship to the society, particularly with regards to issue regarding assimilation. Irie's inability to perceive her reflection in the mirror world exemplifies her sense of unbelongingness in the national sphere.

Zadie Smith contrasts the conception of "Englishness' to which the Iqbals subscribe to with that of the Chalfens. The Chalfens consider themselves as the perfect English family

because of the fact that they descend "after a fashion immigrants too (third generation, by way of Germany and Poland, née Chelfenovsky)" (Smith *White Teeth* 32). Joyce and Marcus Chalfen continually try to assert their Englishness by marking the Otherness of Irie and Millat. Despite their celebration of difference, the Chalfens choose to incorporate themselves under the umbrella of Englishness by refusing to identify themselves as hyphenated and conflicted subjects. Joyce Chalfen is a horticulturalist, who embraces the state policy of multiculturalism by valorising diversity and hybridity in biological language while lacking intimate contact with the Other.

Through her narratives, Smith engages with hybridity discourse in a heavily satirical hand. Dalleo asserts, "*White Teeth* argues that contemporary London imagines itself not through the government sanctioned management strategy of multiculturalism […] but through the complex and self-conflicted lens of hybridity" (95). However, Smith does not dismiss the influence of the official multiculturalism altogether, but critiques the over-enthusiastic attitude of people like Poppy Burt-Jones and Joyce Chalfen, and also the school system, toward valorisation of diversity and hybridity. These people are exposed as laughable, idealistic and naïve while more complex characters oppose them from a variety of viewpoints; the most remarkable opposing viewpoint being Samad, in his search for traditional and religious purity. While presenting hybridity not as an ideal but the reality of the situation, Smith reveals the foolishness of praising it or striving for it.

The characters who represent hybridity are in fact the people who feel the urge to draw the border line between difference. And they seem to be expert at simplification while dealing with the cultural metamorphosis. At the PTA meeting, the organizer momentarily realises that she may be acting "unfair, or undemocratic, or worse still *racist* (but she had read *Colour Blind*, a seminar leaflet from the Rainbow Coalition, she had scored well on the self-test), racist in ways that were so deeply ingrained and socially determining that they

escaped their attention. But no, no" (Smith *White Teeth* 106). The pamphlet has assuaged her conscience; the issue had been dealt with and can be swept aside. On the part of Poppy Burt-Jones, the admonishing hint of her condescension against "other" culture, when she chides, "I don't think it is very nice to make fun of *somebody else's culture* […] Sometimes we find other people's music strange because their culture is different from *ours* […] But that doesn't mean it isn't equally good, now does it?" (Smith *White Teeth* 129), implicates the vanity of her acknowledgement of difference. While attempting to impart mutual respect for other cultures among her students, she reveals the impossibility of defining what in a culture is British and what is not. She is so intent on the idea of multiculturalism that she fails to realise that the cultural image she projects onto Magid and Millat does not resemble their reality, and that their reality is not that different from their's. Poppy is adamant in wanting her Other othered. Even after this incident, Poppy cannot acknowledge cultural syncretism, she still perceives everything through the lens of difference. She simply assumes Magid's black dress and refusal to speak have its religious explanation, "I mean what *day* is it; I mean, for Muslims". Out of embarrassment, Samad is forced to make up an outrageous story of the day of "closed-mouth worship of the Creator" (Smith *White Teeth* 159).

Joyce Chalfen shares the same viewpoint with Poppy Burt-Jones, and is depicted as the most satirical and ludicrous character in *White Teeth* for being adamantly invested in the celebration of hybridity through her gardening advice:

> Cross pollination produces varied offspring, which are better able to cope with a changed environment […] If my one-year-old son is anything to go by (a cross pollination between a lapsed Catholic horticulturalist feminist and an intellectual Jew!), then I can certainly vouch for the truth of this". (Smith *White Teeth* 258)

The irony and the seemingly authorial message of the passage seem to be that when confronted with the reality of the hybrid Millat, dark skinned, but born and raised in London one of England's so called "immigrant" who never really immigrated, she is not sure how to proceed:

Joyce: "Where are you from, if you don't mind me asking?"

Millat: "Willesden."

Joyce; "Yes, yes, of course, but where *originally*"

Millat; "*Oh*, you are meaning where from am I *originally*."

Joyce: "Yes, *originally*."

Millat: "Whitechapel, via the Royal London Hospital and the 207 bus." (Smith *White Teeth* 319)

While Joyce is extremely proud of her experimentation in hybridisation and is outwardly fascinated by Millat and Irie because of their cultural backgrounds, she is incapable to trust that they are in fact "better able to cope" with their situations and insists on trying to patch things up. Her surface-level interest in other cultures, being divorced from any deep understanding of historical realities comes off as lacking sincerity and does more harm than good. The irony and the incredibility of Joyce's experimentation when related to the human condition is exemplified in the utter inability of Joshua Chalfen, her eldest son, to cope with the changing environment of his family which the presence of Millat and Irie ensues.

As much as it is an exploration of British multiculturalism and the definitive aspect of the national identity, *After Empire* is purported by Gilroy at the first instance, as a fight against racism in Britain. In doing so, he strives to dismiss race talk and racialisation in biological terms from the aspect of conviviality. In order to bring to the foreground her critique of biological racism, Zadie Smith brings to light the slippage between the metaphor

of cultural syncretism and the literal idea of genetic crossbreeding, which haunts hybridity discourse. The novel plays up the resemblance between eugenics and the Chalfens' engagement with terms like pollination, genetics and hybridization. Marcus Chalfen describes FutureMouse© in naked biological terms, saying:

> But if you *re-engineer* the actual gnome, so that *specific* cancers are expressed in *specific* tissues in *predetermined* time in the mouse's development, then you're no longer dealing with the *random*. You're eliminating the *random* actions of a mutagen. Now you're talking the *genetic program* of the mouse, a force activating oncogenes *within* cells […] and its only with transgenic mice, by adding experimentally to the gnome, that you can understand those kind of differences. (Smith *White Teeth* 340)

The passage echoes eugenic's objective to eliminate the random. From a Foucaudian perspective, eugenics is an important mechanism of biopower in Western societies. Foucault says that biopower fosters life and it "focused on the species body, the body imbued with the mechanics of life and mortality, the level of health, life expectancy and longevity with all the conditions that can cause series of interventions and regulatory controls: a biopolitics of the population" (*History* 139). Since power has been working at the level of population, power is internalised by the population in the name of science and technology to eliminate the growth of certain group of the population. Although the narrator of *White Teeth* ironically denies the relationship between eugenics and FutureMouse© project: "Nowhere in [Marcus's] book did Marcus even touch upon human eugenics – it wasn't his field, and he had no particular interest in it" (Smith *White Teeth* 419). However, the resemblance cannot be swept under the carpet, whether of programming a mouse in order to remove the random, the random chance of disease from its future, of cross pollinating plants to create new and more resilient species, of taking the strengths from different cultural groups to form a stronger culture, or of"

choosing who shall be born and who shall not – breeding persons as if they were so many chickens, destroying them if the specifications are not correct" (Smith *White Teeth* 119). By the end of the novel, FutureMouse© is a failure, the escape of the genetically modified mouse denotes that the future lies with the next generation, but it will not be genetically minded racial couplings that produce a better coping hybrid super-race.

In *Zadie Smith*, Phillip Tew responds to James Wood's criticism of Smith's authorial strategy, and says that the central point of *White Teeth* is the critique of fashionable multicultural discourse and the multicultural reality. Tew notes that Smith does sometimes speak over her characters, and that she does so to "cultural shibboleths such as liberalism, political correctness and multiculturalism" (50). Tew's perception is also viable to the other novels by Smith. In *On Beauty*, the voices of characters like Howard Belsey and Zora Belsey and Monty Kipps are always accompanied by irony. Howard's conviction to liberalism; Zora's good will initiatives for Carl Thomas, a fellow student, have been limited in their convictions. On finding a woman from the parish at his father's home in Cricklewood, Howard reflects the shallowness of his conviction to liberalism by revealing his intolerance toward people with "belief":

'Why do you let these bloody people in? they are just bloody proselytizers'.

[…]

'Christian mutters – pushing their crap on you' (Smith *On Beauty* 295)

Zora stands up for the underprivileged unregistered students of Wellington college against the authority, only to make herself feel important and to look intellectual. Much like her father, throughout the novel, Zora prefers to experience things second handed; her mother, Kiki Simmonds, notices at the concert when Zora listens to her discman playing the lecture on Mozart's *Requiem* instead of experiencing the actual performance, Kiki notices that "Zora lives through footnotes" (Smith *On Beauty* 70).

According to Paul Gilroy, racial essentialism and ethnic absolutism have been problematic in Britain because the younger generation of the nation, in particular the city of London has much more in common regardless of their ethnicity rather than with the elders of the communities from which they come (*Black Atlantic* xii). In his attempt to dismiss racist environment, Paul Gilroy further posits that "the mainstream Britain has been required to be fluent in the anthropological idiom of multiculturalism" (*There* xxii) in order to foster convivial multiculturalism. The elder generation who esteem themselves in Samad's conception of "Englishness" are often faced with the problem of negotiating with politically correctness. As Britain is still in the process of cultural transformation, the older 'English' generations are nostalgic toward the past eminence of the empire.

Zadie Smith exemplifies this postcolonial melancholia by highlighting their essentialists' perception of race and ethnicity. In *White Teeth*, when the children Irie, Millat and Magid are on their way to Kensal Rise to visit an elderly Mr. JP Hamilton, as part of the celebration of the Druid festival, Hamilton engages with the Conradian description of the Congo back in the First World War while discussing the importance of good teeth:

> 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, if you see what I mean. Horrid business. Dark as buggery, it was. And they died because of it, you see? Poor bastards. Or rather I survived, to look at it in another way, you see? [...] Terrible times. All these beautiful boys lying dead right in front of me, right at my feet. [...] So quick, children. So brutal. Biscuits? (Smith *White Teeth* 171)

The visit which is intended by the school authority as part of the policy of multiculturalism “morphs into an emblematic encounter with the ever present spectre of racism” (Tancke 31).

In Gilroy's analysis, postcolonial melancholia has two components: first, it involves mourning an old, homogenous British culture that is threatened by immigrants who never inhabited such a place. Second, melancholia manifests in cultural documents that project an image of Britain as victim rather than an imperial aggressor; his primary example is Linda Colley's 2002 work of popular history, *Captives: The Story of Britain's Pursuit of Empire and How Its Soldiers and Civilians Were Held Captive by the Dream of Global Supremacy*, which, as the title suggests, argues that Britain was the victim of its own imperial expansion. Such melancholic works often imagine World War II as the archetypal moment that established British national identity: the British were attacked and became the morally upstanding victims of a violent, obviously evil aggressor, and they showed remarkable resolve and unity in the face of trauma ("the spirit of the Blitz"). These citations of World War II simultaneously long for the return to an earlier moment in history, when "national culture - operating on a more manageable scale of community and social life - was [...] both comprehensive and habitable" (Gilroy *After* 89). Mr. Hamilton is an old-school imperialist, who is disinterested in the contemporary multicultural reality. The melancholic sensibility of people like Hamilton, are embedded in their refusal to subscribe to “the official multiculturalism”. When Magid and Millat recite their father’s experience as a squad member in World War II, Mr Hamiltin dismisses their story by saying, “there were no wogs as I remember-though you’re not probably allowed to say that these days are you?” (Smith *White Teeth*). It is evident in the conversation between Hamilton and the kids that not everyone in contemporary Britain is and wants to be fluent in the official multicultural idioms. People like Hamilton cannot come to terms with the present cultural syncretism: he is

not unaware of what he is saying, but simply chooses to ignore it in his private sphere where he is not monitored by the state authority.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

This chapter focuses upon the projection of multiculturalism in the works of Zadie Smith. The conclusion thus, sums up the parameters of multiculturalism which have been deliberated upon in the previous chapters.

Religion is a significant aspect in tracing the dynamics of multiculturalism. Throughout English literary history, religion plays an important part as the moral and cultural aspects for English novelists. Smith recognises the importance of religion while projecting a panoramic snapshot of contemporary life. In her novels, she sets out to deconstruct the myth of religious purity as manifested by early English novelists, especially in terms of Christian morality. However, Smith critiques any form of extremist ideologies that are inherent in institutionalised religion. In doing so, Smith does not dismiss religion altogether, but uses it as a force to do away with essentialists' binary spectrum and absolutism. According to Magdelina Magzynska, "Smith's fiction is populated with characters who acquire, reject and redefine traditional beliefs and practices, illustrating the various uses to which religion can be put in a purportedly secular modern world" ("That God Chip" 127). Smith is acutely aware of how question of religion is bound up with question of nationality, race and class. The use of religion in contemporary society has been rightly perpetuated by Foucault: "Historically, what exists is the Church. Faith, what is that? Religion is a political force," (*Power* 107). The characters of Zadie Smith's novels relate to religion to cater to their political affiliation.

Following the denouncement of multiculturalism by David Cameron, Kenan Malik investigates on the reason behind the perceived failure of the policies of multiculturalism in Britain. Many reasons can be attributed as to why many youths have been drawn to jihadism in Britain during recent years. According to Kenan Malik, it is not the policies of difference itself but the manner in which it has been carried out, that is the problem. Malik questions the concept

of otherness in contemporary British nationality, as he claims that "the other" has always been a part of British cultural history; the Other was initially determined in term of class and then it came to be determined in terms of race and ethnicity. The first generation of Muslim immigrants:

> [...] thought of themselves not as Muslims first but as Punjabis or Bengalis or Sylhetis. Although pious, they wore their faith lightly. Many men drank alcohol. Few women wore a hijab, let alone a burqa or a *niqab* (a full-faced veil). Most attended mosque only occasionally. Islam was not, in their eyes, an all-encompassing philosophy. Their faith defined their relationship with God, not a sacrosanct public identity.
>
> Members of the second generation of Britons with Muslim backgrounds were even less likely to identify with their religion. [...] Religious organizations were barely visible within minority communities. The organizations that bound immigrants together were primarily secular and often political; in the United Kingdom. [...] Only in the late 1980s did the question of cultural differences become important. A generation that, ironically, is far more integrated and westernized than the first turned out to be the more insistent on maintaining its alleged distinctiveness. (Malik "Failure" n.p)

As Mirze denotes, "[w]hat used to be about race [...] is now replaced by discourse on religion" (187). Just as Kenan Malik pointed out, it is evident in Smith's narrative that there is a deep correlation between national belongingness and religious seclusion. The growth of Muslim fundamentalism intensifies the perception of cultural difference in terms of religion by the 'white English' people. The more a Muslim embraces Islamic values as a way of life, the more he or she

is alienated from the national sphere. Initially Samad could balance his categorical identity between race and nationaility, but once religion figures as another aspect of indentification, Samad loses his footing. Religion becomes a defense mechanism through which Samad searches for his lost roots. Similarly, for Millat who experiences the problematics of difference, religion becomes a coping mechanism through which he finds his own space of belonging. Millat associates himself with a religious fundamentalist group. In this aspect Muslim beliefs and their way of life can be interpreted as power mechanism in a Foucaudian sense which comes from below. Millat and his friends appropriate Islamic tradition which has been imposed upon them in order to cater to their cause. This power mechanism in turn gives them voice, although through the use of violence, in the national sphere.

Smith juxtaposes Muslim fundamentalism with the faith of the novel's Christian Jehovah's Witnesses, which is also associated with violence; the Jehovah's witnesses relish the propect of watching sinners "sink under the hot and terrible fire that shall separate their skin from their bones, shall melt the eyes in their socket, and burn the babies that suckle at their mothers' breasts" (Smith *White Teeth* 20). Furthermore, Smith also brings to light the problems of extremist ideology in association with scientific atheism. Just as Smith critiques the negative impact of religious fundamentalism, she also dismisses the rigid fundamentalism of Magid's atheist world view. Magid pronounces his reversive conversion to atheism (which is inherent in all novels of Zadie Smith) while describing Millat's resentment toward his brother: "I have converted to Life. I see his god in the millionth position of *pi*, in the arguments of the Pheadrus, in a perfect paradox" (Smith *White Teeth* 354). However, Magid's scientific conviction is treated with irony in that he further relates his fascination with scientific certainty in the very terms he had dismissed: "no second guessing, no what-ifs, no might-have-beens. Just certainty. Just

certainly in its purest form. And […] what more is God than that?" (Smith *White Teeth* 406). The escape of the brown mouse, which represents scientific certainty and purity in Magid's term, reveals the author's rejection of purity and certainty.

In *The Autograph Man*, Smith engages in the same thematic conern of contemporary hybrid religious experience and the shifting paradigm between religious categorization and the mundane everyday life. It also brings to light the power of reverse conversion. Magdalena Maczynska comments, "Smith's novel explores the inter penetration of the secular, the sacred, the private, and the communal in a multicultural 'secular age' in which adhering to the religion of one's parents is only one of many available choices" ("Toward" 78). However, Alex remains sceptical of the choices that are available to him in most part of the novel. At the end of the novel, the epiphany of Alex-Li Tandem closely echoes the conversion of Magid Iqbal from being a born Muslim to being an atheist who vehemently believes in the power of scientific thought. Unlike that of Magid Iqbal, Alex's conversion to atheism does not dismiss, but rather recognises the significance of religion in contemporary life. Religion is not rendered just for the purpose of thematic concerns in the second novel, but it is employed as a tool for metatextual structuring devices. The narrative is divided into two books: the ten chapters of Book One (*Mountjoy: The Kaballah of Alex-Li Tandem*) corresponds to the ten branches of the Jewish Kabbalistic Tree of Life; Boot Two (*Roebling Heights: The Zen of Alex-Li Tandem*) follows the trajectory of the Ten Bulls, a Zen parable recorded in the twelfth century by Chinese Zen master Kakuan. The novel is framed by a prologue entitled, *Zohar, The Wrestling Match*, and an epilogue, *Kaddish*. This elaborate intertextual structure positions the narrative in dialogue with the religious text it appropriates. In doing so, Smith deconstructs the distinctive differences between different religions and strives to draw a common thread which runs through different religions.

In all of the three novels under study, religious terminologies have been employed by the author in order to do away with the binary paradigm between the sacred and the profane in postmodern life. Marcus Chalfen in *White Teeth* repeatedly refers to the FutureMouse© project in religious terms. Likewise, Alex-Li Tandem also has the propensity to sacrilise the mundane, which is mirrored in the culture that surrounds him. The auction room where Alex trades his autographs is described as a mock temple; "It is not a real place but a sort of cathedral or synagogue to which Alex comes every other week and speaks by rote" (Smith *The Autograph Man* 87). The autographs themselves are revered as precious materials, their functions are equated with relics and their authenticity is debated with fervor of those worthy of sacred scripture. Through the strategy of paradox rendering of events (between the serious and the comical), the narrative of Smith distances itself from conventional religiousity and simultaneously recuperates the transformative potential of religious vocabulary.

The same thread of contrast between religious and atheist fundamentalism runs through *On Beauty* as well. Since the subsequent novels of Zadie Smith after *White Teeth* have been written in the post 9/11 resurgence of religious rhetoric in the public sphere, the manner in which the aspect of religion is dealt with undergoes transformative process. Smith introduces a new preoccupation: the relationship between religion and aesthetic (in other words, the sacred and beauty). While referencing to Elaine Scarry's title *On Beauty and Being Just* (1998), Smith explores the relationship between the good and the beautiful and also juxtaposes the religious and materialistic understanding of art. Like in other novels, Smith refuses to settle for any particular perspective, and in doing so, she bars proponents of either sides of the spectrum to fully experience the aesthetic delight. However, the flexible open-minded characters take pleasure in their experience of art works. Smith also introduces characters like Carlene Kipps, in

contrast to her husband's rigid Christian "moral" stance; who, at first glance, is a stereotype Christian femininity, supports the cause of LGBT against her religious belief, while saying, "Life must come first after the Book. Otherwise, what is the Book for?" (Smith *On Beauty* 178).

As denoted earlier, the study has analysed the dynamics of multiculturalism, and how they are manifested in the selected fictional works of Zadie Smith. In the process, it pays close attention to the power mechanisms and the functions of power in multicultural societies wherein Smith creates her fiction. The study has evaluated the paradigm shift in the definitive process of culture and national identity in contemporary societies with special reference to Britishness.

It has been successfully established that apart from its governmental use, multiculturalism has become a cultural phenomenon, where people belonging to diverse cultures interact with each other and form a new space. As culture is in an ever-evolving process, the outcome of the interaction perpetually takes on new forms. Therefore aspects of multiculturalism: politics of difference, politics of recognition and identity politics undergo profound change with time and cultural intractions.

Through her fiction and non-fiction works, Zadie Smith strives to eschew the labeling of her works based on her race, gender and ethnicity. In contemporary British society, the hyphenated British writers like Zadie Smith, Salman Rushdie, Andrea Levy, Monica Ali to name a few, have been included along the British literary canons for dealing with the quasi-Dickensian quotidian life of British society. Their difference, however, lies in the manner in which they deal with certain problems of daily life due to the transformative characteristic of cultural and national identity.

The study of Smith's novels identifies that the politics of difference in multiculturalism is the central point of debate in multiculturalism. While doing so, it also points out dynamics of

power which influence the contestations surrounding the politics. Smith is acutely aware that the term ‘difference’ in itself is problematic, and recognises the impossibility of arriving at any deterministic end in defining its meaning. It is therefore discernible that in all the novels under study, Smith seeks to establish a middle ground while contrasting entrenched dualistic ideologies.

The study has also discerned aspects of marker of difference including religion; race/ ethnicity; blackness; and history/rootedness. Smith’s novels are populated with immigrants who are required to forge their own conception of meaning out of the hodge-podge contemporary postmodern life. They are endowed with the sensibility of disconnectedness to the cultural spaces that they inhabit. Every character perceives a sense of difference in his/her own term which is impacted by his/ her experience of reality. The binary paradigm which brings to light difference among cultures have been deconstructed as people who affiliates to these opposite ends of the spectrum always end up being not so different from each other. Through the analysis of the politics of difference, the study identifies that a character’s perception of difference, and experience of reality, always have a political edge. This personal perception works through mechanisms of power.

Smith's works brings to light the use of irony and humour by the author so as to reveal the vanity of the characters who valorize difference without deep understanding of the Other. It also ridicules and brings to light the failure of the characters to develop due to their fixation to roots, tradition and history. For Smith, the multicultural scenario of contemporary society is inevitable and she concludes that, the attempt to establish a definitive solution to the complexities arising out of diverse cultural interaction will always end as a failure.

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APPENDICES

NAME OF CANDIDATE : **Lalhlupuii Ralte**

DEGREE : **M.Phil.**

DEPARTMENT : **English**

TITLE OF DISSERTATION : **Dynamics of Multiculturalism in Selected Works of Zadie Smith.**

DATE OF PAYMENT OF ADMISSION : **30.07.2014**

(Commencement of First Semester)

COMMENCEMENT OF SECOND SEMESTER/ DISSERTATION : **01.01.2015**

APPROVAL OF RESEARCH PROPOSAL –

1. BOS : 15.05.2015
2. SCHOOL BOARD : 21.05.2015
3. REGISTRATION NO. & DATE : MZU/M. Phil./208 of 21.05.2015
4. DUE DATE OF SUBMISSION : 30.05.2016
5. EXTENSION IF ANY : 1.01.2016 – 30.06.2016 (For the duration of one Semester)

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Class	Board/University	Year of passing	Division/Grade	Percentage
X	CBSE	2003	I	63.40%
XII	CBSE	2005	I	64.60%
B.A.	Mizoram University	2010	II	51.87%
M.A.	Mizoram University	2012	II	51.00%
M.Phil.	Mizoram University	Course work completed in 2014	I 'A'Grade Awarded. 10 pt. Scale grading System, 'A' Corresponds to 6-6.99 pts	Corresponds to 65.60% in terms of Percentage conversion.

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Other relevant information:

I) Under the category of Persons with Disabilities (Partially Blind)

II) Currently working on M.Phil. dissertation entitled, "Dynamics of Multiculturalism in Selected Works of Zadie Smith" under the supervision of Prof. Margaret L. Pachuau, Professor, Department of English, Mizoram University.

ii) Awarded the UGC-NET Junior Research Fellowship from the date of admission on 30th July 2014.

iii) Visited the following out-of-state libraries for the purpose of the research:

a. British Council India Library (Kasturba Gandhi Marg, New Delhi)
b. Delhi University Central Library (University Enclave, New Delhi)
c. Jawaharlal Nehru University Library (New Mehrauli Road, New Delhi)