

Transcultural Memory and the Diasporic Imagination: A Study of White Teeth by Zadie Smith

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Abstract

This paper examines diasporic writing and transcultural memory through the novel *White Teeth* by Zadie Smith. The paper sheds light on the identity, cultural memories, and struggles of immigrant families in London in the novel. It explores the experiences of first- and second-generation immigrants, the transformation of cultural heritage from parental memory to children, and the impact of personal and historical memories. *White Teeth* shows how immigrant narratives affect the individual, cultural imagination, and how memory brings together cultural, historical, and modern life. The second-generation characters, particularly Millat and Magid Iqbal, attempt to forge their own identity within British cultural and social life, separated from their parents' memories and heritage. This sheds light on themes of intergenerational cultural conflict, the transmission of memories, and the creation of hybrid identities. The novel *White Teeth* demonstrates that transcultural memory is not limited to individual experiences, but is intertwined with historical events, social change, and the imagination of immigrant communities. Drawing on Homi K. Bhabha's 'Third Space', Stuart Hall's concept of cultural identity and Marianne Hirsch's principles of post memory, this study shows how the experiences of migrant families affect subsequent generations through memory and cultural heritage. This sheds light on the struggles, cultural mixing and imagination of multicultural life in the lives of the characters in the novel, which is a foundation for the study of migrant identity in modern British society.

Keywords: Diaspora, Transcultural Memory, Identity, Multicultural London, Hybrid Identity, Generational Conflict

Introduction:

White Teeth is the 2000 debut novel by British author Zadie Smith. It focuses on the later lives of two wartime friends—the Bangladeshi Samad Iqbal and the Englishman Archie Jones—and their families in London. In the novel *White Teeth*, first-generation immigrant characters, such as Samad Iqbal and Archie Jones, attempt to preserve their original cultural heritage, while second-generation characters, such as Millat and Magid, struggle to forge their own distinct identities as they grow up in British society. This allows for a deeper analysis of intergenerational cultural conflict, the transmission of memories, and cultural hybridity. The purpose of this research paper is to examine transcultural memory and diasporic imagination in *White Teeth*. Drawing on the concepts of Homi Bhabha's Third Space, Stuart Hall's concept of Cultural Identity, and Marianne Hirsch's concept of Post memory, the novel's historical conflict is explored in terms of cultural and social context.

Theoretical Framework:

Homi Bhabha – The concept of Third Space, where cultural hybridity and identity are recreated.

Stuart Hall – Cultural Identity – An identity that is constantly changing and shaped by social context.

Marianne Hirsch – Post memory is the generational transmission of memories, experiences in which individuals, even if they are not themselves participants, become part of their cultural identity.

Analysis of the White Teeth:

White Teeth is a novel by Zadie Smith set in multicultural London, focusing on the lives of two immigrant families – the Iqbal family (Bangladeshi-Muslim) and the Jones family (British-European). The novel's plot features first- and second-generation immigrant characters grappling with their cultural heritage and struggling to adapt to modern British society.

The main characters in the novel are Samad Iqbal and Archie Jones. Samad tries to hold on to his Bangladeshi roots, but he constantly struggles with modern life in London and the differences he has with his children (Millat and Magid). Archie Jones, despite being English, provides an important friendly and personal support in Samad's life.

On New Year's Day, 1975, a recently divorced, middle-aged man named Archie Jones tries to commit suicide inside a parked car. A local halal butcher discovers Archie and saves his life. Archie and Clara marry just six weeks after they meet. Clara has immigrated to London from Jamaica with her mother, Hortense Bowden, a devout Jehovah's Witness. Clara turns away from Hortense's religion. After Clara marries Archie, Hortense rejects Clara for marrying a white man.

Archie and Samad's friendship goes back to World War II when they served in a British Army tank battalion. During that time, Samad and Archie helped capture a Nazi scientist, Dr. Perret, and had the chance to execute him. The Jones and Iqbal families maintain their friendship for the next 25 years. Alsana Iqbal and Clara Jones become friends, at first just because their husbands spend so much time together. Alsana and Clara give birth at the same time. Alsana has twin boys, Magid and Millat. Clara has a girl, Irie. The three children play together, go to school together, and compete with each other. Samad makes this decision without consulting his wife, and Alsana responds with years of anger and silence.

Irie Jones is obsessed with Millat from the time she enters puberty. Marcus Chalfen is a genetic engineer who is creating a new species, FutureMouse, to produce specialized cells at predictable times. Samad's decision to separate his sons has unexpected consequences. Magid, the older son in Bangladesh, becomes pro-British, anti-religious, and interested in science. In London, Millat moves from wanting to be a gangster to becoming a religious terrorist.

Marcus and Magid set up a public demonstration of Future Mouse's genetic evolution, which will begin on December 31, 1992. KEVIN, FATE, traditional Muslims like Samad, and the Jehovah's Witnesses all oppose these experiments

Conclusion

The novel *White Teeth* is a classic literary example of immigrant writing and transcultural memory. Memories are not limited to personal experiences but are linked to historical events, cultural heritage and social change. The novel vividly depicts intergenerational conflict, cultural mixing and multicultural life. This research shows that transcultural memory and diasporic imagination make immigrant identities in modern British society deeper and more complex.

White Teeth is a novel about the complexities of London's multicultural society, its immigrant history, and the complexities of family. Through the lives of the Iqbal, Jones, and Chalfen families, Zadie Smith explores the intersections of heritage, religion, ethnic, and cultural differences, as well as the conflict between traditional values and modernity. A person's identity is constantly changing depending on their experiences, family history, and changes in society

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Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper

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