

Juggling With Identity in Zadie Smith's *White Teeth*

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Abstract

"I am having difficulties myself- we are all having difficulties in this country, this country which is new to us and old to us all at the same time. We are divided people, aren't we." (Smith, *White Teeth* 179)

The above statement by Samad Iqbal in *White Teeth* brings out the anxiety that an expatriate faces in a new country. Unable to find a balance between his own culture and the new culture in which he has stepped in, he feels divided. Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* masterfully explores the complexities of identity through the intertwining lives of three ethnically diverse families in London. The novel delves into the multifaceted nature of identity, examining how personal, cultural, and historical elements intersect and clash. Central to the narrative is the struggle of first and second-generation immigrants to reconcile their heritage with the pressures of assimilation in contemporary British society. It also is vocal about the legacy of Colonialism and how even today, it manipulates the shaping of the identity of individuals from a Third World Country. Characters such as Archie Jones, Samad Iqbal, and their children grapple with conflicting loyalties and the search for self-definition. Smith employs humor and sharp social commentary to highlight the tensions and absurdities that arise from these identity conflicts. By weaving together various narratives and perspectives, *White Teeth* presents a rich tapestry of the immigrant experience, ultimately suggesting that identity is a dynamic, ever-evolving construct. The paper thus tries to explore the fact that in a multicultural world, identity is not a fixed attribute but a continuous act of juggling between past and present, tradition and change and Smith's *White Teeth* is vocal about this issue.

Keywords: identity, multiculturalism, globalization, expatriate, immigrant, hybridity, ambivalence, mimicry

White Teeth by Zadie Smith is a multi-layered narrative that explores themes of identity, race, culture, and family through the lives of two families in London. Set against the backdrop of post-war Britain, the novel follows the intertwining stories of Archie Jones, a middle-aged Englishman,

and Samad Iqbal, a Bangladeshi immigrant. The novel begins with Archie's failed suicide attempt and taking up advice from his friend, Samad, Archie marries Clara, a much younger Jamaican woman. Samad has also married a much younger girl Alsana, a headstrong woman from his hometown in

Bangladesh. Samad, who is a Bengali waiter and has recently shifted to England. As the narrative progresses, it delves into the complexities of cultural identity and the struggles faced by immigrants in navigating their place in a changing society. Through the characters of Archie, Samad, and their families, Smith explores the clash between tradition and modernity, the search for belonging, and the impact of history on individual lives. The characters of this fiction are facing the issues of modern colonialism. This cultural loss is symbolic of Modern Colonialism as stated by Ania Loomba. (Loomba 9)

The story also follows the lives of their children, Irie and Millat, who grapple with their own identities and desires amidst the cultural expectations placed upon them. Irie, who is of mixed-race heritage, struggles with her appearance and her sense of self, while Millat becomes involved with a radical religious group, grappling with questions of faith and rebellion. Throughout the novel, Smith weaves together multiple perspectives, jumping back and forth in time to explore the complex web of relationships and histories that connect the characters. The narrative is both humorous and poignant, capturing the vibrancy and diversity of London while also addressing the underlying tensions and prejudices that exist within society. As the story unfolds, secrets are revealed, relationships are tested, and the characters are forced to confront the consequences of their actions. Ultimately, *White Teeth* is a richly textured exploration of identity, belonging, and the enduring bonds of family in a rapidly changing world.

The very first chapter of *White Teeth* begins with the failed marriage of Alfred

Archibald Jones. Archie has taken a New Year resolution, as it is 1st January of 1975, and disheartened by his life, he resolves to commit suicide. Although the suicide attempt somehow fails, he stumbles upon a new life course and a second marriage. In the very first scene, we see myriad people, though not significant characters but their names invoke the feeling of a multicultural England. We meet Hussein-Ishmael and Arshad at Halal Butchers and then Archie's wife Ophelia, is also introduced who is an Italian. Archie's marriage with Ophelia Diagilo continued for thirty long years till one day it could no longer continue. We are also introduced to Maria-Santa, the Spanish home help of Ophelia. Ophelia is also mentioned as going mad and the readers are reminded of 'Ophelia's madness' from Hamlet. The question remains as to whether the madness is real or feigned. Plus, we see Archie in Hamlet's condition of, "to be or not to be".

In the very first chapter, we are also introduced to the old friend of Archie, Samad Miah Iqbal, a Bengali Muslim who was his wartime friend. They had fought together in the World War and met after thirty years when Samad shifted to England with a young twenty-year-old wife Alsana Begum. Also to mention the fact that Samad always throughout the novel keeps on invoking his great-great-grandfather, Mangal Pandey. A revolutionary who was namely the first revolutionary in India's First War of Independence. This claim is again ambiguous and quizzes up the identity crisis even more as Mangal Pandey was a Hindu, serving in British-ruled India as a soldier, who denied the use of ammunition made by cow flesh as it had to be bit by mouth and cows were sacred to the Hindus. Mangal Pandey although a Hindu is referred to as the great-

great-grandfather of Samad, who is a Bengali Muslim. Identity questions thus keep on brewing throughout the text and these confused identities are the central theme of the novel. An English Archie is friends with a Bengali-Muslim Indian Samad Iqbal; Archie, who was married to an Italian, Ophelia Diagilo finally by the end of the chapter ends up marrying Clara Bowden, a Jamaican. The identity issue moves on to puzzle the second generation of individuals as well as Clara and Archie. Along with Samad and Archie the third couple whose family crosses paths with the Samads and Jones is The Chalfens. The Chalfens, who initially were the representation of the perfect parents. Their amiable family life and the way they groomed their children, they were looked up for inspiration. To bring back the strayed away Millat back on track, as a routine course Millat and Irie are ordered to spend time with The Chalfens. Chalfens, who seems to be the most sorted kind of family, where the couple had love between them unlikely Archie and Samad. Marcus Chalfen, the scientist is working on The Future Mouse project, whereas his wife Joyce Chalfen is a horticulturist, who believes in chimeran identity and the survival of the hybrid plants. It is through Joyce Chalfen that we come to read the mind of Zadie Smith. Joyce can be seen as the mouthpiece of Smith as she advocates for hybridity and the necessity for adjustment. The adjustment of the plants also pertains to the adjustments of a hybrid individual made in this multicultural world. Millat becomes Joyces' target objective. She wants to bring him back on the right track from the ruggedness that has seeped into him. However, the affinity that Joyce has for Millat is more of a feeling of pity for the boy whose family is not up to the mark and

inherently not an amiable place for a child to be raised. Although talking about cross-pollination in the plant world and an affinity for the multicultural world, we still feel that the affinity Joyce has for Millat is because she also looks at him as the "other" and she is a prey of racial stereotypes. The course of actions ironically brings out the failure of The Chalfens, as Millat is never back on the right track as well as their son Joshua Chalfen. He openly rebels against the Future Mouse project by his father as he feels it to be against animal rights and joins an organization called FATE. FATE, is an organization that fights for animal rights and is against the experiments done on meek animals and fights for their rights. Their main target is Marcus Chalfen himself. Thus, Smith very wittingly proves the point that in the present-day multicultural world, one can only be redeemed by embracing the multicultural world around. Failing the same the world becomes a more complex place to reside in.

Identity issues affect the second generation of individuals so much so that, Irie, wants to change her looks to impress and catch the attention of Millat. Irie, the daughter of Clara and Archie, was born to a Jamaican mother who has a Black complexion and curly hair. There is a certain point when we see Irie trying to get her curly African hair straightened to look more European. Irie to reshape her identity and to please Millat, thought that getting her curls straight and coloring it red would be the best possible action. So, after a class by Mrs. Roody and just after the mention of the Shakespearean sonnet about the dark lady, who chooses to embrace her darkness and wire-like hair and does not want to hide her complexion with makeup. Irie makes up her mind to not follow Shakespearean preaching.

Quoting from *White Teeth*, "Irie...intent upon transformation, intent upon fighting her genes, a headscarf disguising the bird's nest of her hair..." (Smith, 273). This shows the crisis a hybrid individual faces and the need to combat his/her genes. Irie is also intent upon to trace her maternal genes and starts to live with Clara Bowden's mother, a Jamaican lady namely Hortense Bowden. Hortense, who is again a lady too much rooted in her religion and her belief in The Judgement Day. Although born to an English father, we can see the shifting identity of Irie, who also owns her genes to a Jamaican mother, and the juggling with identities continues till the end.

On the other hand, we see Magid and Millat, the twins of Samad Iqbal. *White Teeth* is a complex story of entwined identities and just like Irie we also witness Millat and Magid and their shifting identities. Samad although migrated to England, indulged in extra-marital affairs, and defied the commandments of his religion is seen again torn and wants to trace back his roots. To do it right, feels Millat is a lost case but having faith in Magid sends him back to Bangladesh. Although it creates a great strife in his domestic life and Alsana never forgives Samad. Still, Samad believes that Magid's staying in his motherland will make him a more religious and rooted individual. Millat in the meanwhile has gone astray and has joined the Raggistani group, a group of youngsters with hip-hop appearance but a pseudo claim on religion.

It was a new breed, just joined the ranks of the other street crews: Becks, B-boys, Indie kids, wide-boys, ravers, rude-boys, Acidheads, Sharons, Tracies, Kevs, Nation Brothers, Raggas and Pakis; manifesting itself as a kind

of cultural mongrel of the last three categories. Raggastanis spoke a strange mix of Jamaican patois, Bengali, Gujarati and English. Their ethos, their manifesto, is it could be called that, was equally a hybrid thing. (Smith, *White Teeth* 231)

Millat holds a protest against writers who write against Allah or Islam and although is claiming his roots but ruggedly, is not appreciated by Samad. On the other hand the son in whom Samad had his trust; Millat, returns from Bangladesh transformed in a way that is more English than the English. He has been in touch with Marcus Chalfen and now they are together in the Future Mouse project, The Gene project, which is even more disturbing and infuriating to Samad. The question of shattered identities and hybridity, thus keeps on establishing itself, more and more.

White Teeth: The Name Game

White Teeth, the title of the fiction points towards several aspects, most importantly the fact that the whiteness of the teeth brings out the racial stereotype attached to it. The pure whiteness of the teeth is the striking feature of African identity. It is mentioned by Smith as a character trait of identity demarcation. Althusser talks about ideology of dominance, here the identity crisis faced by the individuals are symbolic of ideology of dominance orchestrated by the West. (Althusser 15) The title *White Teeth* of Zadie Smith's novel carries multiple layers of significance, reflecting various themes and motifs in the book. The whiteness of the teeth is the symbol of Identity and Heritage. Teeth, especially their whiteness, can symbolize purity, health, and beauty. In the context of the novel, teeth might represent the diverse

cultural identities and mixed heritage of the characters, who grapple with their past and present identities in multicultural London. Teeth are also a hereditary trait passed down through generations. This ties into the novel's exploration of family legacies, the impact of the past on the present, and how genetic and cultural inheritances shape the characters' lives. *White Teeth* can be seen as a symbol of uniformity, representing the pressures to conform to societal standards of beauty and normalcy. The characters' diverse backgrounds and experiences contrast with this idea, highlighting themes of diversity and the tension between assimilation and individuality. Teeth can also signify decay and the passage of time, reflecting the characters' struggles with aging, change, and the preservation of their cultural identities in a rapidly evolving society.

Teeth, serve as a metaphor for Smith, she even names the fifth chapter “The Root Canals of Alfred Archibald Jones and Samad Miah Iqbal,” by doing so she delves into the fact that the whole system of analyzing someone can be metaphorically represented by the term root canal. Teeth is seen as the metaphor for history, identity, and culture, as represented by Smith. the title of the chapter, “The Root Canals of Archie and Samad Iqbal,” metaphorically suggests the deep-seated issues and histories that both men carry. The chapter delves into the intricate and interwoven lives of the two main characters, Archie Jones and Samad Iqbal. Just as a root canal addresses problems deep within a tooth, the chapter delves into the deeper, often painful aspects of Archie and Samad's lives and identities. Cultural Identity: The chapter highlights the complexities of maintaining cultural identity in a foreign land and the impact of

immigration on personal and familial relationships. The chapter explores the deep friendship between Archie and Samad, which dates back to their time serving together in World War II. Their shared experiences during the war created a bond that has persisted despite their differing backgrounds and current life situations. Their friendship serves as a microcosm of the broader themes of cultural exchange, loyalty, and the struggle to maintain one's identity in a multicultural environment. Friendship and Loyalty can be seen as the traits on which the relationship of the multicultural world depends and Samad and Archie are examples of this. Archie and Samad's enduring friendship underscores themes of loyalty and how personal bonds can transcend cultural and racial differences. They also endure in the multicultural world and tend to preserve their identity. Both of the characters show struggle and resilience. Both characters' struggles with their respective lives illustrate the broader theme of resilience and the human capacity to adapt and find meaning despite challenging circumstances.

“The Root Canals of Archie and Samad Iqbal” is a rich and multifaceted chapter that sets the stage for the exploration of identity, friendship, and the immigrant experience that permeates *White Teeth*. The root canal also signifies the attempt to preserve and heal, much like how both men try to navigate and reconcile their pasts with their present lives.

Teeth are prominently referenced throughout Zadie Smith's *White Teeth*, not only in the fifth chapter, “The Root Canals of Archie and Samad Iqbal” but also many other chapters appearing in the novel are titled based on the theme of teeth such as “Teething Trouble,” “Molars,” and “Canines: The Ripping

Teeth.” Given the novel's focus on integration, immigration, ethnic culture, and identity, these markers hold special significance. In one notable episode, Millat, Magid, and Irie are lectured by an old man about his wartime experiences in Africa. He recounts how, in the darkness of the jungle, soldiers identified enemies by the whiteness of their teeth. The African soldiers, with their exceptionally white teeth, were easily spotted and killed. This is the racial stereotype that Smith highlights with the representation of teeth. This Caucasian man is insensitive to the fact that he is recounting this story to ethnic minorities, who would more likely identify with the African soldiers rather than with him, a fearful old white man hesitant to let them in to deliver charity items. It brings a sense of insecurity in the minds of the migrants and the African expatriates residing in European countries. They will always remember that the whiteness of their teeth and the darkness of their colour will always be seen as a hurdle in their assimilation into the mainstream of society. The children, despite their differences, bonded together due to their shared experiences as immigrants, minorities, and neighbors. This also highlights the fact that History is personal and often divisive. History can have multiple narratives and their representations based on the positioning of the subject of History. Later in the novel, the high school that Millat and Irie attend is depicted as being filled with smokers. A lengthy prose section details this habit, concluding with a comment on how the smoke is turning “white teeth yellow.” Smoking, a culturally significant act at the local level, symbolizes a larger self-defining trend among ethnically diverse students.

Smoking serves as a means for the students to assimilate into a culture of their

own making, symbolically eliminating the marker of their isolation and difference—white teeth—in the process.

In Zadie Smith's “White Teeth,” Clara Bowden's hidden teeth carry symbolic significance that ties into themes of identity, self-image, and personal transformation.

Teeth are also seen as a metaphor for the shaping of Clara's character. Clara Bowden, who is initially introduced as someone who hides her teeth due to dental issues, symbolizes transformation and concealment. Her dental problems and the act of hiding her teeth reflect her broader struggles with identity and self-perception. Her desire to hide her teeth can be seen as a metaphor for her attempts to mask aspects of her past and her true self, particularly as she navigates her new life and identity within the Jehovah's Witness faith and her marriage to Archie Jones. The condition of Clara's teeth and her tendency to hide them also serves as a commentary on societal standards of beauty and the pressures to conform. In a culture that places value on perfect appearance, Clara's dental issues underscore her feelings of inadequacy and her struggles with self-worth. This concealment can be viewed as part of a larger theme in the novel where characters grapple with their self-image and how they are perceived by others in a multicultural and often judgmental society. Clara's hidden teeth can be interpreted as a symbol of the personal struggles and hidden truths she carries. Just as she conceals her teeth, she also hides the complexities of her past, including her troubled upbringing and the challenges she faces in reconciling her faith with her desires. It symbolizes her journey toward self-acceptance and personal growth. Her eventual openness and acceptance of her

imperfections parallel her broader process of coming to terms with her identity and past. Clara Bowden's hidden teeth are a potent symbol of themes related to assimilation and ethnic identity. Thus, by naming the novel *White Teeth*, Zadie Smith encapsulates these complex themes, using the image of teeth to delve into issues of race, identity, family, and the interplay between past and present. This is the anxiety that a marginalized section faces in the multicultural world. As put by Bhabha,

“I do not mean, in any sense, to glorify margins and peripheries. . . it spurs you to resist the polarities of power and prejudice, to reach beyond and behind the invidious narratives of center and periphery” (Bhabha, xi)

History and Past Identity:

In Zadie Smith's *White Teeth*, the story of Mangal Pandey is recounted by Samad Iqbal, who sees Pandey as a hero and a symbol of resistance against British colonial rule in India. Samad's admiration for Pandey influences his sense of identity and his struggle to maintain his cultural heritage while living in London. He shares Pandey's story with his children, Magid and Millat, to instill in them a sense of pride in their ancestry and to emphasize the importance of resisting assimilation into British society. This story becomes a pivotal element in the novel, reflecting themes of cultural identity, resistance, and the complexities of living as an immigrant in a multicultural society. The story of Mangal Pandey holds significant meaning for Samad Iqbal and serves as a powerful narrative thread that underscores the novel's themes of cultural identity, resistance, and the immigrant experience. Mangal Pandey was a soldier in the British

East India Company's army, known for his role in the Indian Rebellion of 1857. He became a symbol of resistance against British colonial rule when he led a mutiny and attacked British officers. Pandey's actions are seen as a catalyst for the larger uprising that followed, making him a martyr and a hero in Indian history. Samad is deeply influenced by the story of Mangal Pandey. Although rationally thinking Mangal Pandey, being a Hindu, and Samad being a Bangladeshi Muslim can have no common ancestry but still Samad claims to have the lineage from Mangal Pandey. This also focuses on the ambivalent nature of history itself. As in the works of Hayden White, “events in the same set are capable of functioning differently to figure forth different meanings- moral cognitive, or aesthetic- within different fictional matrices.” (White, 127)

He views Pandey as a symbol of resistance and bravery against oppression. Samad's reverence for Pandey is intertwined with his struggles to maintain his cultural identity and heritage in a foreign land. Living in a multicultural and often unwelcoming London, Samad grapples with the pressures of assimilation and the desire to preserve his roots. He sees Pandey as a reflection of his resistance to losing his cultural identity. Samad's admiration for Pandey's defiance becomes a lens through which he views his own life and decisions. Samad is determined to pass on this sense of heritage and resistance to his twin sons, Magid and Millat. He frequently shares the story of Mangal Pandey with them, hoping to instill a sense of pride and a connection to their ancestral history. This story is part of Samad's broader effort to ensure his children do not forget their roots, even as they navigate the complexities of growing up in a different

culture. The story of Mangal Pandey symbolizes the broader themes of cultural conflict and the tension between assimilation and resistance. Samad's reverence for Pandey highlights his internal conflict and the broader immigrant experience of holding on to one's identity while facing societal pressures to conform. Samad's obsession with Pandey influences his actions and decisions throughout the novel. It drives him to make drastic choices, such as sending one of his sons back to Bangladesh to be raised with traditional values, hoping to preserve their cultural identity. This decision has profound and unforeseen consequences for his family, reflecting the complexities and often unintended outcomes of trying to navigate cultural preservation in a diasporic context. The story of Mangal Pandey in *White Teeth* serves as a powerful narrative that encapsulates the themes of resistance, cultural identity, and the immigrant experience. For Samad Iqbal, Pandey's legacy is a beacon of pride and defiance that shapes his worldview and his attempts to instill these values in his children. Through this historical reference, Zadie Smith explores the multifaceted nature of cultural identity and the ongoing struggle of immigrants to balance the preservation of their heritage with the realities of life in a new country.

Gender-identity:

Smith, also explores Gender identity in her fiction through the character of Neena Begum. Alsana Iqbal's cousin, Neena Begum, is a lesbian. Neena is an important character who adds depth to the novel's exploration of identity, culture, and societal norms. Neena is openly lesbian, a fact that sets her apart within her traditional Bengali

Muslim family. Her openness about her sexuality contrasts sharply with the more conservative values held by her relatives, particularly Alsana and Samad. Neena, nicknamed "Niece-of-Shame" by Samad, challenges the traditional gender roles and expectations within her family and community. Her character represents a form of resistance against the restrictive norms imposed by her cultural and familial background. She serves as a confidante and advisor to Alsana, providing a more liberal perspective on life and relationships. Neena's advice often clashes with Alsana's more traditional views, highlighting the generational and ideological divide within their family. Neena's presence in the novel allows Smith to explore themes of sexuality and cultural conflict. Her character brings to light the struggles faced by LGBTQ+ individuals within conservative immigrant communities, emphasizing the broader theme of identity and belonging. Her relationship with Maxine, a white woman, further complicates her position within her family and community, addressing issues of interracial relationships and the intersectionality of race, culture, and sexual orientation. Neena's interactions with Alsana and other characters in the novel often provoke critical reflection and dialogue about cultural traditions, gender roles, and personal freedom. Through Neena, Smith explores how individuals navigate their identities in the face of societal and familial pressures, adding to the novel's rich tapestry of diverse and complex characters. Neena Begum, plays a crucial role in *White Teeth* by highlighting the intersection of sexuality, culture, and family dynamics. Her character challenges traditional norms and provides a broader commentary on the struggles of maintaining

one's identity within a multicultural and often conservative environment. Through Neena, Smith enriches the narrative with themes of resistance, acceptance, and the multifaceted nature of identity.

Religious-identity:

Smith is also vocal about religion as the pivot for shaping one's identity and we have seen the effect of religious fanaticism on Millat as well as Samad Iqbal. Another such character is Clara Bowden, who is torn between the religious obligations of her mother. Clara Bowden, a Jamaican immigrant, converts to Jehovah's Witnesses in her early life. Her conversion is partly influenced by her desire to escape a troubled past and to find a sense of purpose and structure. Clara's faith is initially a source of stability and hope, but over time, her commitment becomes more conflicted. As she grows older, she struggles with the demands of religion and its impact on her personal life and relationships. Clara's experiences with religion are marked by doubt and internal conflict. She grapples with the strict doctrines of Jehovah's Witnesses, particularly as they clash with her desires and personal aspirations. Her skepticism and eventual estrangement from the faith reflect a broader theme in the novel of individuals struggling with institutional beliefs and their identities. While Clara initially adheres to the apocalyptic beliefs of Jehovah's Witnesses, which include the expectation of an imminent end of the world, her faith in these doctrines wanes over time. Her changing views on doomsday mirror her broader disillusionment with religion and her struggle to reconcile her past beliefs with her current life. On the other hand, Hortense Bowden, Clara's mother, is a devout Jehovah's Witness who strictly

adheres to the religion's teachings and doctrines. She is a staunch believer in the imminent arrival of Armageddon and lives her life in preparation for this event. Hortense's faith is characterized by a rigid and unwavering commitment to religion, which often leads her to impose her beliefs on others, including her daughter Clara. Hortense's obsession with doomsday is central to her character. She is deeply invested in the belief that the end of the world is near and that living a righteous life according to Jehovah's Witnesses' teachings is crucial for salvation. Her fixation on Armageddon reflects her fear of the outside world and her attempt to find meaning and security in the certainty of her faith. The generational and ideological conflict between Hortense and Clara is a key aspect of their relationship. Clara's eventual questioning and distancing from the faith create tension with her mother's unyielding beliefs. This conflict underscores the novel's exploration of how religious beliefs can shape and sometimes fracture familial relationships. The contrast between Clara's evolving faith and Hortense's strict adherence highlights the novel's exploration of religious belief and personal identity. It reflects the broader theme of how individuals negotiate their beliefs within the context of family, culture, and personal experience. Both characters illustrate how religion can deeply impact one's sense of self and place in the world. For Clara, religion becomes a source of conflict and personal growth, while for Hortense, it provides a sense of order and certainty amidst a chaotic world. The concept of doomsday in the novel serves as a metaphor for broader themes of existential fear and the search for meaning. It represents the tension between hope and despair, certainty and uncertainty, and the

personal and collective struggles to understand one's place in the world. In summary, Clara and Hortense Bowden's differing approaches to religion and doomsday in *White Teeth* provide a rich exploration of faith, identity, and the impact of belief systems on personal and familial relationships. Their contrasting views highlight the novel's broader themes of cultural and religious conflict, personal growth, and the search for meaning.

Future Scope of Identity:

In *White Teeth*, Marcus Chalfen, a geneticist, spearheads a controversial scientific initiative known as the "Future Mouse" project. This project and its implications are central to the novel's exploration of themes related to science, ethics, identity, and control. The Future Mouse project involves genetically engineering a mouse with a predetermined lifespan and specific genetic modifications. Marcus Chalfen aims to control the mouse's growth, development, and diseases to better understand and eventually manipulate human genetics. The project's goal is to advance scientific knowledge about genetic diseases and potentially lead to groundbreaking treatments for various conditions. The Future Mouse project raises significant ethical questions about genetic manipulation and the boundaries of scientific experimentation. The idea of creating a life form with a preordained fate sparks debates about the morality of such control over living beings. Marcus Chalfen's ambition and confidence in the project often come across as hubristic, reflecting the novel's critique of the overreach and ethical blindness that can accompany scientific pursuits. The Chalfen family, particularly Marcus and his wife, Joyce, become

entangled with the Iqbal and Jones families through their interactions with Irie Jones and Millat Iqbal. Irie works as an assistant for Marcus, while Millat initially becomes involved with the Chalfens through his rebellious actions. Millat, who later joins the radical group KEVIN (Keepers of the Eternal and Victorious Islamic Nation), becomes vehemently opposed to the Future Mouse project, seeing it as an embodiment of Western arrogance and a threat to the natural order. The Future Mouse project symbolizes the novel's exploration of control versus chaos. Marcus Chalfen's desire to control genetic outcomes contrasts with the unpredictable, chaotic nature of human life and identity. The project also touches on themes of fate and predestination. The genetically engineered mouse, with its predetermined life course, serves as a metaphor for the tension between free will and determinism in the lives of the characters. The climax of the novel revolves around the public unveiling of the Future Mouse project, where various factions, including scientists, activists, and religious radicals, converge, leading to a dramatic confrontation. The event underscores the novel's critical examination of the intersections between science, religion, history, and politics, as well as the personal conflicts and reconciliations among the characters. The Future Mouse project is a pivotal element that encapsulates the novel's themes of scientific ambition, ethical dilemmas, and the complexities of identity and control. Through Marcus Chalfen's controversial project, Zadie Smith delves into the moral questions surrounding genetic engineering and the broader implications for humanity, providing a rich narrative that challenges readers to consider the limits of

scientific progress and the nature of human existence. Zadie Smith in her *White Teeth* is thus voicing identity issues in a very subtle way where she is vocal about resistance as well as acceptance. As summed up in the

works of Philip Tew, “Smith both applauds the novel’s capacity to incorporate marginal voices while recognizing it denies the individual the right to silence and privacy.” (Tew, 7)

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