

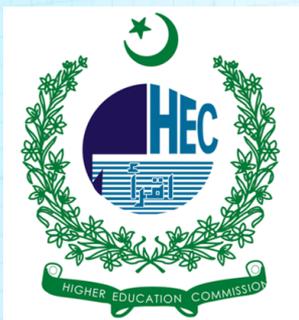
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**Mapping Multicultural London: A Sociological Exploration of Urban
Space as Character in *White Teeth***



Dr. Iftikhar Alam

PhD in English (Applied Linguistics), Head of the English
Department, Northern University, Nowshera
Email: iftikhar.alam@northern.edu.pk

Duaa Hassan Rana

MPhil in English Literature, Fatima Jinnah women
University Rawalpindi Email: duaahassanrana9@gmail.com

Fahim Sajjad

Bachelor of Studies in English, Hazara University, Mansehra
Email: Fahimsajjad07@gmail.com

Abstract

This study investigates the representation of multicultural London as an active narrative agent in Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* (2000), contending that the city functions as a shaping force influencing character development, identity formation, Sociological and ideological conflict. Drawing on postcolonial and spatial theory, the research employs qualitative textual analysis to examine how neighbourhoods, schools, religious institutions, domestic spaces, and the Future Mouse laboratory serve as contact zones where migration, memory, tradition, science, and modernity intersect. The findings indicate that London structures coincidence and confrontation, compels intercultural interaction, and generates hybrid identities that challenge fixed ethnic and national categories. First-generation immigrants encounter the city as a site of displacement and cultural anxiety. At the same time, the second generation negotiates belonging within a dynamic urban environment characterized by diversity and historical layering. The study further demonstrates that London embodies postcolonial continuity, reflecting the enduring impact of empire alongside contemporary multicultural transformation. Ultimately, the research concludes that urban space in the novel operates as a socially constructed and ideologically contested character, directing narrative movement and thematic meaning, and contributing to broader debates on multiculturalism and spatial representation in contemporary British fiction.

Keywords: Multicultural London, Urban Space, Hybridity, Identity Formation, Sociological, Postcolonial Fiction

Introduction

In Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* (2000), London becomes more than just a backdrop; it becomes an active participant in shaping social relations, identities, and the plot itself. Smith's diversity in *White Teeth* is a determining factor in the National Book Award's nomination. An important aspect of the National Book Award is its focus on celebrating the diversity of multicultural British society in post-Empire Britain. Smith has been recognised for her ability to eloquently elaborate on the vast and complex diversity of the characters' ethnic and religious backgrounds and their interactions in North-West London, making the city a microcosm and a multicultural society (Güneş, 2024). Smith's London presents only a multicultural society as a simple mosaic of separate cultures; it actually reflects a society engaged in a continuous process of negotiation, overlap, and hybridisation of various cultural traditions (Ismail, 2023; Alnajm, 2019).

Building on that, many scholars argue that *White Teeth* has established a dynamic construct of urban space where the living history of different social relations exists simultaneously. The integrated living history of dense urban environments, along with London's multicultural character, presents the characters with a juxtaposed value system and conflicting world views, forcing a re-evaluation of core aspects of belonging and identity (Ismail, 2023; Senchuk & Zhen, 2023). Smith's use of the city as a living space for her characters (school, street, café, home...) clearly indicates where the central negotiation of cultural difference and hybrid identity occurs (Senchuk & Zhen, 2023; Güneş, 2024).

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White Teeth uses London as an active participant in the narrative, thereby challenging conventional literary uses of place and identity by demonstrating how urban space shapes the construction of meaning and experience. The city is both a site of comfortable co-existence and a site of structural conflict, and, as such, holds both the potential and the problems of a multicultural Britain (Ismail, 2023; Güneş, 2024). This study views London as a backdrop for the story, but in a more active role as a shaper of character pathways, a mediator of cultural encounter, and a mirror of the wider postcolonial transformations of contemporary British society.

Significance of the Study

This paper adds to the analysis of the postcolonial and urban literature by exploring the operation of multicultural London as a dynamic narrative in the novel *White Teeth*. Although there has been much criticism of identity, race, and hybridity, little has been done to examine whether urban space is an agent in their construction. This study provides a geographical interpretation of the novel by foregrounding the city as a character, thereby clarifying the role of geography in identity creation and cultural negotiation. Another important implication of the research is that it brings out the connection between migration and belonging to a city. The City of London, in the novel, symbolises the real lives of diasporic communities, in which space becomes a place of memory, struggle, and adaptation. This dimension should be explored to enrich the discourse on multiculturalism in modern British fiction. Lastly, the study provides a guideline for understanding urban space in other postcolonial and multicultural narratives. The approach of treating the city as shaping presence, rather than a passive background, expands critical approaches to contemporary literature and lays the groundwork for new research in spatial and cultural studies.

Research Objectives

To examine how London is represented as an active and shaping force in *White Teeth*.
To analyse the relationship between urban space and identity formation among first and second-generation immigrant characters.
To explore how multicultural spaces in the novel reflect themes of hybridity, belonging, and cultural conflict.

Research Questions

In what ways does London function as a character rather than merely a setting in *White Teeth*?
How does urban space influence the construction of identity among the novel's multicultural characters?
How do specific locations within London represent broader themes of migration, hybridity, and national belonging?

Literature Review

White Teeth by Zadie Smith (2000) is a novel that has been well-studied for its complex portrayal of multicultural London and for how people negotiate identity in postcolonial Britain. Scholars often place the novel at the heart of debates on diasporic identity, hybridity, and the cultural dynamics of urban space in modern British fiction. Research highlights how Smith's story complicates the idea of national identity's simplicity by placing characters of various ethnic, cultural, and religious

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affiliations within the cosmopolitan sphere of London (Gunes, 2024). A metropolitan location is never passive; it is an active place, converging histories of empire, migration, and cultural contact to define character lines and narrative outlines (Ismail, 2024).

One of the most valuable areas of criticism is hybridity and its psychological and cultural consequences to the characters in *White Teeth*. Studies that use Homi K. Bhabha's concept of the third space to examine character identity negotiation! The negotiations that characters like Irie Jones, Millat Iqbal, and Magid Iqbal have to navigate identity issues across cultures are more complex in terms of emotions and strain than in culture blending (Norbayeva, 2025). Likewise, research indicates that hybridity is not smooth and does not result in celebration, but rather is both a space of struggle and a place of potential as cultural identities are constantly bargained (Verma, 2022). *White Teeth* portrays diasporic characters as faced with a choice between obeying their roots and heritage and adjusting to the demands of British multicultural society (Guvem/Aldemir, 2025; Nazir et al., 2025).

The role of multiculturalism and identity formation in the novel is analysed using the theme of inter- and intra-family relationships. Studies on family dynamics in *White Teeth* indicate that the spatial arrangement of multiculturalism in London influences how family members set and cross cultural boundaries, and that the identity negotiation process is heavily shaped by individual or collective contexts (Perez Fernandez, 2017). Another aspect of multiculturalism in the text that scholars consider is that it makes the inherent concepts of identity complex, as London is characterised as a dynamic cultural space in which the sense of belonging among the characters can be repeatedly challenged and redefined (Alnajm, 2020).

Research has also examined the role of the colonial past and its effects on identity conflict in the novel. It has been shown that *White Teeth* critiques the residual power structures of British colonialism on social unity and individual identity, and that the characters are forced to face inherited social identities and historical biases (Kara, 2025). As such analyses infer, multicultural London is inadequately understood in the absence of postcolonial legacies that still inform urban contacts and identity politics (Gunes, 2024).

Another important aspect of *White Teeth* is the spatial aspect of identity. In the novel, urban space serves as a site of negotiation of belonging, where various social networks and the city's public spaces form the backdrop to the formation of identities. According to researchers, the central aspect of the study of identities emerging over time is the urbanity of London, specifically how characters navigate the cultural intersection in its cosmopolitan spaces (Ismail, 2024). London is not merely a blank background for cultural affairs and conflicts that encompass society as a whole, but also a stimulus to personal and group identities (Jain, 2025).

Diaspora studies relevant to the novel include alienation, in-betweenness, and the mental health concerns of second-generation immigrants. Through these analyses, one can note that the characters in *White Teeth* struggle with conflicts between culture and modernity, and many feel the need to find a middle ground between different identitarian pressures (Thasleema, 2024). These academic texts situate the novel within the broader diasporic literature, addressing issues of alienation and identity negotiation in transnational space.

Other scholars focus on intercultural communication and acculturation and argue that *White Teeth* does not depict acculturation as a linear assimilation process but rather as

a complex negotiation of suffocating cultures, as acculturation in immigrant families represents broader psychological and sociocultural complexities (Almarkhan, 2025). These conclusions resonate with works that observe generational differences, with first- and second-generation characters viewing cultural differences differently, and the tensions between parents and their children as reflections of society-wide conflicts over identity and belonging (Almarkhan, 2025). Linguistic and cultural expression is also an area that scholars discuss in the novel. The linguistic interpretation of the storyline clarifies that the idea of code-switching and cultural exchange is integral to the characters' identity-building processes. Therefore, linguistic activity reflects other intercultural processes, as evidenced by their language use (Alnajm, 2020). This questioning highlights how language can be viewed as an identity marker and a means of mediation of cultural difference in a multicultural city.

Critics have critically explored the theoretical implications of Smith's work beyond postcolonial literature studies. *White Teeth* is viewed as an example of how urban multicultural fiction can refute essentialist ways of thinking about identity by portraying fragmented yet dynamic identities formed through social exchange and negotiation with space (Nazir et al., 2025). These references help broaden perceptions of postcolonial cities, as expressed in literature, as a space of conflict between the historical past and the present social reality (Reflektif Journal, 2025). On the whole, the literature review demonstrates the importance of *White Teeth* to the literature about multiculturalism, hybridity, identity conflict, and postcolonial urban living. Although numerous studies have examined the nature of identity and multicultural dynamics, the role of London as a force in narrative operation remains largely unexplored, as seen in its influence on both character and theme in modern British fiction.

Research Methodology

Research Design

This examination is qualitative and is based on extended close textual analysis. This involves detecting constructions of Urban space and elucidating the roles of constructive-active narrative elements in Zadie Smith's *White Teeth*. The research is interpretive and analytical, with an emphasis on the articulation of space and identity, and on the formations and functions of multiculturalism in the novel.

Theoretical Framework

The scope of this study lies at the nexus of postcolonial and spatial theory, with a focus on urban space as a character. First, this research explores the idea of hybridity and 'the third space' as theorised by Homi K. Bhabha. Bhabha's idea helps us understand how identities form in a domain of cultural interaction, rather than within the bounds of national or ethnic specificity. This is useful in interpreting second-generation immigrant characters and the multiple cultural identities they possess in London. This study also applies Henri Lefebvre's theory of the production of space. Lefebvre believed that space is a social construct, the result of a combination of political, economic, and ideological structures. This theory is useful for interpreting London as a space of migration, social class, and politically powerful structures, rather than as a void, neutral background.

Relational space, as defined by Doreen Massey, is also taken into account in the study. Massey takes space as dynamic, interrelated, and continually changing. This outlook

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supports the argument that London in the novel is hectic and disputed, filled with shifting identities and interpersonal relations. Another concept discussed in the analysis of the research is Stuart Hall's idea of cultural identity as a becoming rather than an essence. The concepts Hall expresses depict how the characters' identities should be constructed through their intersection with the pluralistic urban space. Taken together, these theories provide the viewer with a solid foundation for understanding that London is a complex narrative agent in terms of character development, wars, and problems.

Data Source

The novel is the main source of data. Excerpts that preannounce descriptions of neighbourhoods, institutions, domestic spaces, and urban spaces are analysed. Special attention will be paid to scenes in Willesden and other urban areas, where cultural interactions and ideological contradictions can be observed. Scholarly articles and books on postcolonial studies, urban theory, diaspora studies, and multicultural British fiction will constitute the secondary sources. These sources support and contextualise the analysis.

Data Collection Procedure

The novel is thoroughly read to identify passages in which the space of cities plays an important role in character behaviour, identity negotiation, or story development. These passages are classified into thematic categories, including hybridity, migration, generational conflict, religion, and national belonging. Data Analysis Procedure: The analysis is both thematic and spatial. The textual evidence is viewed through the theoretical concepts of choice. The paper explores how particular places organise power dynamics, how movement through urban spaces corresponds to changes in identity, and how the entire city of London functions as a dynamic entity that influences the story.

Delimitation of the Study

The portrayal of urban space in *White Teeth* is narrow, and the novel offers little textual or theoretical research on it. It lacks a comparative analysis and an empirical sociological study of other novels. It focuses on the description of literature and theoretical explanation. This part discusses how Zadie Smith develops London as a subject of action in *White Teeth*. Rather than serving as a passive setting, the city proves active by intervening in human lives, creating coincidences, defining identities, and organising conflicts. This part, through an examination of certain passages, presents London as a participatory force that guides the narrative movement and shapes the characters' course.

Data Analysis

Urban Intervention: The City's Regulatory Presence

London claims to be an active participant in human fate. In 1975, Archie Jones attempts suicide to no avail, but is intervened in not by an abstract fate in his life but by the concrete reality of urban multiculturalism. Smith writes: Archie was sitting in his automobile, a carton of a dozen twenty-four-bottle cases of beer on his side, waiting to be killed by the carbon monoxide. However, it was not to be. To the owner of the halal butchers, Mr Hero, had been used to leaving his bones out towards the

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dogs, and the dogs had learned of Archie first before he could learn of his carbon monoxide. They were causing so much noise that “Mr Hero came out as to what was what, and discovered Archie huddling over the steering wheel, and the dogs barking and howling” (Smith, 2000, p. 4). The act of the halal butcher has a deep symbolism. The postcolonial reality brought about by Mr. Hero's presence, as embodied in his name, implies agency. His shop, which sells to the Muslim arjuna in the city, is there due to migration patterns resulting from Britain's imperial past. Moreover, when he says, “We are not licensed for suicides round here. He is not just referring to himself, but this is a respectable neighbourhood, as he puts it” (Smith, 2000, p. 4), this neighbourhood, which is such a corner of London, has been changed by a person and a community. The new reality of the city's demographics literally rescues Archie's life. This scene sets a precedent: London has its own logic, which takes precedence over an individual's will. Archie loses himself in his personal sense of hopelessness amid the city's external, multicultural reality. Archie may have been anywhere in the story, but Smith must go to Cricklewood Broadway, the place of immigrants and their enterprises, and it means something to be exact. This regulatory close-up of the city exists throughout the novel. When Samad tries to preserve his sons' and Islamic identity by sending Magid to Bangladesh, London makes a comeback: Magid returns more English than Millat, changed not by Bangladesh's countryside but by the inevitability of the city's attraction to hybridity.

Spatial Coincidence: City, Organiser of Narratives.

London is a machine that creates improbable meetings, coordinating the relationships among characters based on their spatial proximity. The city's proximity fosters friendship between Archie Jones and Samad Iqbal, which forms the bulk of the novel's action and is aided by the city's crammed social geography. They had been acquainted during World War II, yet their association after the war needed the connective tissue in London:

They were acquainted, they lived close to one another, visited the same pub, and they walked the same streets. They were never mind, familiar with each other, (Smith, 2000, p. 53). The term "each other familiar" suggests that there is more to it than friendship and that the practice of space-togetherness has created a relationship. The neighbourhoods, pubs, and streets of London set the circumstances under which the bond is maintained over decades and across a border spanning different cultures. The spatial structure of the city, the proximity of Willesden to Cricklewood, and the availability of O'Connell Pool Room as a meeting point facilitate their ongoing relations.

This tendency is applied to other relations. Clara Bowden encounters Archie because they are residents of North-West London. It is at the Glenard Oak School that Irie Jones meets the Chalfen family, since the school attracts students in the borough. The ultimate oppositions of Millat and Magid meet in London, where both the mosque and pub, a radical bookstore, and a science laboratory are found. Smith stresses this spatial logic: “And hence these four families became incorporated in the life of North-West London, and their lives became embedded in its streets and houses and schools and shops, in the churches and in the mosques and temples and pubs” (Smith, 2000, p. 162). London is made an active agent through the metaphor of weaving. The city's fabric does not pre-exist its inhabitants; rather, it emerges through their interactions and, in turn, shapes those interactions. Space and social relations are mutually

constitutive, as Massey's relational geography would predict.

Historical Accumulation: London as Archive

Smith explicitly frames London as a repository of imperial history and a site of postcolonial transformation. The narrator's meditation on the twentieth century captures this accumulative function: 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 are on a direct collision course, (Smith, 2000, p. 326) London here is not merely the location where these children play, but the condition that makes their coexistence possible. Generations of migrants come to the city, leave their mark upon it, and depart. It absorbs them. The city reproduces itself. The playground functions as a spatial reflection of London's imperial history and its place within postcolonial migrations.

This archival nature persists elsewhere in the text. While searching for her Jamaican roots at the Willesden Library, Irie recognises that her own history cannot be contained by institutional memory: she wants her roots to be in Willesden, in the library, in the streets she walks every day. She wanted to trace her family back through the generations, to point to a house and say, 'that is where my great-grandmother lived,' and to find her name in the parish records (Smith, 2000, p. 281). The irony, of course, is that Willesden's archives cannot provide her with this continuity because migration interrupts linearity. London archives certain histories and elides others. The city remembers and forgets like any one of its characters. Memories shape identity.

The Neighbourhood as Living Environment

Willesden and environs are not just physical locations. Smith attributes generative capacity to these spaces. Willesden was ... "populated by people whose histories were complex enough to fall into. It had become a place of big new beginnings and death by misadventure, secret love affairs and overdoses, makeovers and windfalls" (Smith, 2000, p. 280). The neighbourhood is storied through its streets. Characters do not just occupy Willesden. Willesden occupies them. It haunts their ability to feel possible. Irie cannot dream of a future without dreaming up the cityscape along with it.

She wishes she could be someone else, have another type of custom-built residential property, and belong to another ethnic group. She wants to belong to the Chalfen family, not just to be adopted by them but to be one of them; to be in their organised, rational, and Chalfenised world (Smith, 2000, p. 287). The Chalfen's world is situated in their Victorian house in a greener, more leafy area of North London, constituting a different urban landscape from Iqbal, Clara, and Archie's residences. Irie's aspirations are both social and spatial; she wants to go to a different part of London.

The sensory texture of a city produces a tangible reminder of its vitality. For example, Smith notes: "The streets reeked with the aroma of curry, roti and samosas, bacon and eggs and fried bread, kebabs and burgers, and french fries" (p. 163). "The air resonated with the sounds of reggae, calypso, bhangra, qawwali, punk, and rock 'n' roll" (Smith, 2000, p. 163). This quote lists not only what can be found in London but also what London actually does. The city creates aromas, sounds, and sensations that surround its residents. Thus, through the physical, sensory experience of the

environment's attributes, identity is developed.

Institutional Spaces: The City Reproducing Itself

Glenard Oak School exemplifies how urban institutions function as extensions of the city's agency. The school brings together students from diverse backgrounds and subjects them to common pressures: Glenard Oak was a comprehensive school in Willesden, North-West London. It was a school of last resort for the children of the Irish, the Greeks, the Turks, the Bengalis, the Jamaicans, the Poles, the Somalis, the Nigerians, the Sikhs, the Hindus, the Catholics, the Muslims, the Jews (Smith, 2000, p. 259).

The school's demographic composition reflects London's migration history, but the institution does not merely reflect it actively shapes it. Curricular choices, disciplinary practices, and informal social hierarchies all contribute to the formation of students' identities. When Irie observes the Chalfen brothers' academic confidence, she recognises that the school has produced different outcomes for different students: The Chalfen boys moved through the school as if they owned it, as if it were their personal property, as if the corridors were extensions of their own home (Smith, 2000, p. 269). Some students think of their school as an extension of themselves, whereas others feel it is not theirs. Like cities, schools distribute resources and support differently to those who attend. The laboratory's representation of scientific rationality, however, also conflicts with other groups who believe there is more than one way to look at the world. For example, the Perrett Institute was located in Bloomsbury, where other large institutions nearby, such as The British Library, The British Museum, and the University of London, represent enlightenment through science and rationality. This attracted many groups of people who have different ways of looking at the world, including Islamic fundamentalists, people protesting for the rights of animals, and Jehovah's Witnesses, to gather together in the same area to protest against one another. The environment will therefore serve as an arena for groups with different beliefs to challenge one another. In the final scene, when the Future Mouse is released into the world, the orderly scientific space created by the Perrett Institute has been transformed into a many-cultured, chaotic carnival.

London as Structuring Consciousness

London plays a huge part in determining how people meet, the types of conflicts that might arise between them, and the possibilities available to them. Smith writes that "London, it must be said, is a city of immigrants. It always has been and always will be" (Smith, 2000, p. 198), thus presenting an important ontological statement about the city. Smith is not simply providing a descriptive account of London; rather, she makes a statement about London as a city and defines its character; this assertion will create an identity that will be passed on from one generation to the next. The story's conclusion further illustrates the effectiveness of London's narrative agency. The prolongation of Future Mouse's state of being, in that he is to escape from the laboratory, signifies a lack of certainty regarding immigrant futures; however, the uncertainty is specifically related to London. The mouse runs toward an unknown destination, just as the city's diverse populations move toward unknown futures. Smith writes: And the mouse ran. It ran through the legs of the scientists and the protesters, the journalists and the spectators. It ran across the lawn and into the street, and then it was gone (Smith, 2000, p. 448). The street receives the mouse. London's

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streets, with their accumulated histories and uncertain futures, become the final image. The city continues to absorb this newest arrival, as it has absorbed so many before.

Table 1

References from White Teeth: Supporting London's Role as Character

Page	Quotation	Analytical Application
p. 4	"We are not licensed for suicide rounds here. This is a respectable neighbourhood."	Establishes London's regulatory intervention through multicultural presence.
p. 53	"They had worked together, lived near each other, drank in the same pubs, walked the same streets."	Demonstrates how spatial proximity generates and sustains relationships.
p. 162	"And so these four families became a part of the fabric of North-West London."	Positions London as an active agent, weaving lives into the urban fabric.
p. 163	"The streets were full of the smell of curry and roti and samosas, of bacon and eggs and fried bread, of kebabs and burgers and chips. The air was thick with the sound of reggae and calypso, of bhangra and qawwali, of punk and rock and roll."	Shows London's sensory production of multicultural identity.
p. 198	"London, it must be said, is a city of immigrants. It always has been. It always will be."	Makes an ontological claim about London's essential multicultural nature.
p. 259	"Glenard Oak was a comprehensive school in Willesden, North-West London. It was a school of last resort for the children of the Irish, the Greeks, the Turks, the Bengalis, the Jamaicans, the Poles, the Somalis, the Nigerians, the Sikhs, the Hindus, the Catholics, the Muslims, the Jews."	Illustrates institutional reproduction of urban diversity.
p. 269	"The Chalfen boys moved through the school as if they owned it, as if it were their personal property, as if the corridors were extensions of their own home."	Reveals differential spatial experience within the same institution.
p. 280	"Willesden was a place full of people with pasts so complicated you could lose yourself in them. It was a place of great beginnings and tragic ends, of love affairs and violent deaths, of fortunes made and fortunes lost."	Characterises the neighbourhood as containing layered narratives.
p. 281	"She wanted her roots to be in Willesden, in the library, in the streets she walked every day. She wanted to be able to trace her family back through the generations, to point to a house and say 'that is where my great-grandmother lived,' to find her name in the parish records."	Shows London's archival function and its limits in constructing a sense of belonging.
p. 287	"She wanted to be a Chalfen. literally not to be adopted by them but to be of them, to be part of their world, their ordered, rational, Chalfen world."	Demonstrates the spatial dimension of aspiration and social mobility.
p. 326	"This has been the century of strangers, brown, yellow, and white... Children with first and last names are on a direct collision course."	Frames London as both a product and a producer of migration.
p. 399	"The Perret Institute stood in the middle of a square in Bloomsbury, surrounded by the intellectual heavyweights	Position scientific space within London's

	of London: the British Museum, the University of London, and the British Library. It was a place of learning, of reason, of progress.”	intellectual geography.
p. 448	“And the mouse ran... It ran across the lawn and into the street, and then it was gone.”	Concludes with London absorbing uncertainty and unresolved tensions.

Note. All quotations are from Smith (2000). Page numbers correspond to the specific edition used in this study.

Urban Space as Dislocation and Attempted Preservation

London is portrayed in *White Teeth* as more than simply being the setting (or stage) for the events that unfold; rather, it is also portrayed in the novel as a living, breathing entity that is constantly changing and influencing people's identities and who they are (or think they are), especially for immigrants from foreign countries living in London for the first time. In the case of Samad Iqbal, London represents the erosion of his cultural heritage, or that which he has known to be culturally "normal," in that he has seen his children being transformed (from Islamic/South Asian boys into English boys) due to "their environment," as he puts it: "I think it is the environment... I think it is the place. They are becoming less and less like me and more and more like the English" (Smith, 2000, p. 145). The repetition of "the place" in Samad's statement reiterates his opinion that one's identity is determined by "their environment." North-West London, and London as a whole, is viewed not only as an agent of physical change but also as an influential environmental factor that both directly and indirectly shapes the "place" by displacing or corrupting one's memories of their culture and identity. Samad cannot identify one (singular) reason why he feels this way, so, in his eyes, the entire spatial environment has become the reason why he is feeling this way. This feeling of anxiety toward the changing environment is also an indication of Samad's desire to find or create a new physical constant, a fixed geographical location, from which he can base his own identity, thereby attempting to escape his cultural crisis through relocation.

The decision to send Magid to Bangladesh highlights the concept of spatial preservation. As Smith notes, "I am sending him away... To Bangladesh. To his roots... before it is too late" (2000, p. 176). The urgency of "before it is too late" characterises London's temporal aggressive stance in hastening assimilation, while Bangladesh is viewed as a static, protective space for the recovery of identity. Alsana presents an alternative view to this fantasy, stating that "You believe that Bangladesh is lying there, frozen in time..." (Smith, 2000, p. 177). Alsana asserts Bangladesh is evolving. Everything changes; thus, there is no return to a homeland that has been absent. Modernity also invades identity; there is no location outside transformation. Likewise, Clara's movement from Lambeth to Willesden represents a migration to an ideological space. She "escaped the house in Lambeth, with its rigid rules...and ran into the chaos, the chaos of Willesden" (Smith, 2000, p. 40). The terms "strict rules" and "chaos" contrast to demonstrate that different urban zones foster distinct identities. Relocation, for Clara, does not protect identity but rather fosters reinvention. These examples demonstrate that urban space functions as an active realm in which identity is either protected or redefined through mobility.

Multicultural Space and the Production of Hybrid Identities

First-generation characters try to create a singular identity through geography and

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place; the second generation shows that urban space creates unanticipated hybrid identities. Samad's spatial experiment is a complete failure; Magid, sent to preserve tradition, returns more English than the English and wants to use "test tubes and laboratories" to make "rational" and "modern" (Smith p 344). In contrast, Millat, who has lived in London, becomes a fundamentalist Muslim (Smith p 344). These differences in the characters demonstrate that space creates more than just direct cause and effect; in London, Space creates multiple forms of identity, rather than uniform assimilation. Because of London's multicultural density, there are multiple forms of identity; these identities can even be formed in opposition to one another, and this is true even within the same family.

The playground exemplifies the urban hybrid nature of this suburb, with "children having their first and last names on a direct collision course" (Smith, 2000, p. 326). A child named Isaac Leung and another child named Danny Rahman symbolise different layers and histories coming together in the same physical space. In addition to this example of urban hybridisation, the playground also represents a place where "ongoing negotiation" takes place regarding identity (Smith, 2000, p. 326). The idea that space influences an individual's self-identity is seen in the story of Irie Jones. At school, she "is aware of her size, shape and colour...aware of everything" (Smith, 2000, p. 247). The visibility/consciousness associated with the school corridor makes it difficult for Irie to separate herself and her identity from others' social gaze. When Irie states she wants "to be a Chalfen" (p. 249), this can be understood as both admiration and an aspiration to a type created by their spatial situation. The Chalfens are a family living in a different form of London, one that provides them with a sense of identity through strong intellectual capacity and middle-class security. Irie's failed attempt to straighten her hair, where she loses hair "in lumps" (p. 252), exemplifies the violence of trying to conform to dominant norms.

Millat, who has been called "a Raggastani, which is an odd combination of many different nationalities" (Smith, 2000, p. 197), comes from the cultural intersections of inner-city London. His participation in KEVIN later gives him "a place, a position, a purpose" (p. 374), illustrating how ideologically associated groups provide people with a sense of spatial structure in areas typically confused by their urban environment. Magid's attraction to Marcus Chalfen's laboratory illustrates the same thing: his desire to have "an ordered space" in a city that is typically unpredictable (p. 345). The novel's closing image of Future Mouse escaping into the street, where "it was gone" (p. 448), reinforces the theme of uncontrollable outcomes. Urban space in *White Teeth* does not fix identity; it multiplies possibilities. Through displacement, collision, and hybridisation, London becomes the very condition for the formation, contestation, and continual remaking of multicultural identities.

Table 2

Urban Space and Identity Formation in White Teeth

Character	Urban Space	Identity Outcome	Key Evidence (Smith, 2000)
Samad Iqbal	North-West London	Views the city as a threat to cultural roots	"I think it is the place" (p. 145)
Magid Iqbal	Bangladesh / London laboratory	Becomes "more English than the English."	(p. 344)

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Millat Iqbal	London inner city	Hybrid “Raggastani”; later seeks belonging in KEVIN	(pp. 197, 374)
Irie Jones	School / Chalfen home	Internalises racial gaze; desires transformation	(pp. 247, 249)

Note. All quotations are from *White Teeth* (Smith, 2000).

Findings

The results show that in *White Teeth*, *White Teeth* London is not a passive environment but is an active shaping force. The city first makes a direct interruption to the narrative in the very first episode when Archie attempts suicide. However, it is stopped by the statement of Mr. Hero, who says, " We are not licensed to commit suicides in this place. It is a decent neighbourhood" (Smith, 2000, p. 4). Such an initial scene defines the city's regulatory and communal power as a multicultural reality that has transformed it. Cross-cultural relations also require us to live closer together, as in the friendship that developed between Archie and Samad, who worked together, lived in the same neighbourhood, visited the same pubs, and shared the same streets (p. 53).

The spaces in London create encounters that would not otherwise occur, underscoring its narrative agency. Schools like Glenard Oak School also serve as microsocieties of multicultural Britain, bringing together the children of the Irish, Greeks, Turks, Bengalis, Jamaicans, Poles, Somalis, and Nigerians (p. 259), thereby stimulating dialogue, tension, and identity bargaining. The analysis also confirms that certain urban sites can be used to highlight broader ideological and cultural tensions in the novel. The Perret Institute, which is situated in the row of the intellectual heavyweights in London: the British Museum, the University of London, and the British Library (p. 399), is the object of clashing visions of science and religion, as well as of activism. This spatial convergence leads to the manic release of Future Mouse, which runs through the lawn and into the street, and then it disappears (p. 448). The mouse's absorption into the city represents the vagaries of identity and the past in multicultural London. All in all, the results prove that London constructs coincidence, heightens ideological opposition, and offers a dynamic space in which the issues of hybridity, migration, and belonging are constantly negotiated.

Conclusion

To sum up, this paper has demonstrated that *White Teeth* London can be viewed in *White Teeth* as a positive power that determines the narrative, identity formation, and ideological struggle. The city places different characters in common areas where negotiation of cultural differences occurs, creating tension and change in the process. The results show that identity in the novel is a spatial construction: first-generation immigrants feel dislocated, and the second generation acquires hybrid identities shaped by schools, streets, and institutions. Efforts to hold onto fixed cultural roots eventually fail, which is an underlying reason identity is dynamic and emerges from the environment. London thus appears not as a location but as a living being that serves as the novel's theme, with migration, hybridity, and belonging at its core.

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