



Reconstruction of Female Identity Through Unattainable Beauty Standards in Zadie Smith's White Teeth

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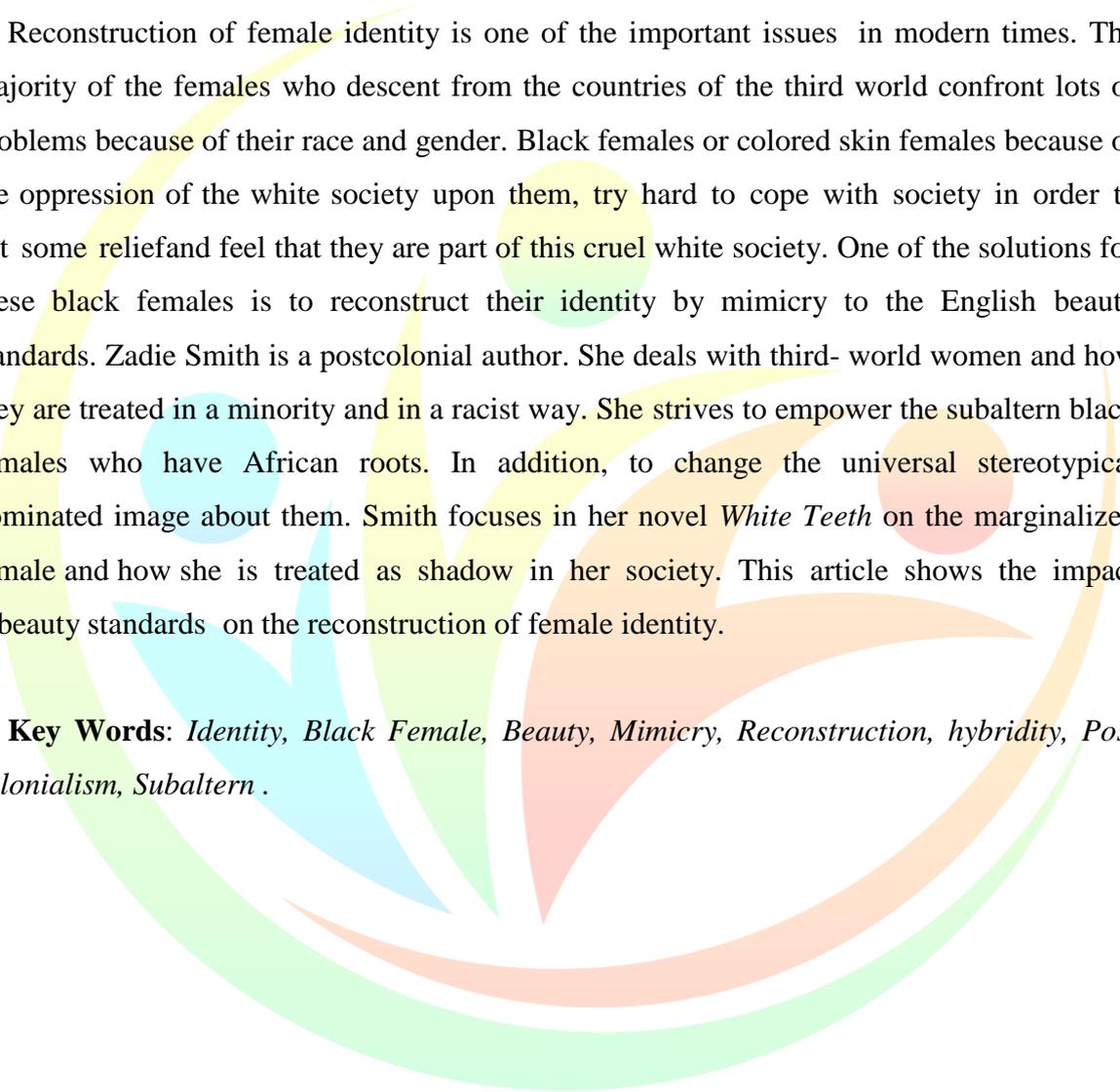


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ABSTRACT

Reconstruction of female identity is one of the important issues in modern times. The majority of the females who descent from the countries of the third world confront lots of problems because of their race and gender. Black females or colored skin females because of the oppression of the white society upon them, try hard to cope with society in order to get some relief and feel that they are part of this cruel white society. One of the solutions for these black females is to reconstruct their identity by mimicry to the English beauty standards. Zadie Smith is a postcolonial author. She deals with third-world women and how they are treated in a minority and in a racist way. She strives to empower the subaltern black females who have African roots. In addition, to change the universal stereotypical dominated image about them. Smith focuses in her novel *White Teeth* on the marginalized female and how she is treated as shadow in her society. This article shows the impact of beauty standards on the reconstruction of female identity.

Key Words: *Identity, Black Female, Beauty, Mimicry, Reconstruction, hybridity, Post colonialism, Subaltern .*

The logo for the International Journal of Research in Social Sciences and Humanities (IJRSSH) is a large, stylized graphic. It features a central orange shape resembling a flame or a stylized letter 'S', surrounded by several curved, overlapping shapes in shades of green, blue, and yellow, creating a sense of movement and energy. Below the graphic, the acronym 'IJRSSH' is written in a bold, orange, sans-serif font.

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The most urgent subject in the postcolonial era and literature is the identity problem. The postcolonial time, and the hazardous situations that gone up against recently liberated countries in their mission for the course of action of their distinguishing identity. The problem of identity becomes a phenomenon in the postcolonial period, as Mercer discusses where –character just turns into an issue when it is in crisis, when something thought to be altered, intelligible and stable is dislodged by the experience of uncertainty and instability (1990,p 43); along with World War II, the decolonization of countries under colonial principle encouraged significant progress toward recreating individual and social identities.

Most of the researchers and scholars of the postcolonial age have given huge significance to the issue of identity. For example, to Sheoran, the seekfor identity, plus the bewilderment concerning their culture, which has penetrated the life of colonial matters, has been the main subject explored in a greater part of written literary works in the postcolonial period, in company with the changes brought because of the results of imperialism on the local population (Sheoran, 2014,p 1). The identity crisis can be found clearly in the Caribbean culture as Guruprasad affirms: "Caribbean culture bears the abuse

of the colonial legacy and its misuse"(2006,p 27). Mahmood Mamdani agrees with Gurupraad's point of view when he remarks: "in Africa colonialism was not just about the identity of who controlled the power, white or European; it was considered about the establishments they made to empower the minority over the majority (2008,p 16). The mix of different societies and cultures has almost brought unused cultural identities in the postcolonial era. In this way, the thought and the existence of modern significance and difficulty of personality and identity came to being, a mix that shows up as the consequence and effect of colonizer and colonized(Tiffin, 1995, p 95).

The critics and and theorists of postcolonial theory have considered the subject of identity is very important and one of crucial substitute, and the genuine topics in development written in the postcolonial time, especially the work of fiction, have been the breaking down of the personality and the disaster practiced by formerly colonized citizens, the fundamental impacts of colonialism on the home culture (Sheoran,2014,p 1). Adding to this, the novelists of postcolonial time revealed and communicated the states of the predicament and problem of identity that appeared in this phase. The postcolonial novel *White Teeth* that has been selected for this study define the

colonized female's dilemma in finding, building, and reconstructing her real identity. One should disconnect her from what the colonial framework that she puts in. Furthermore, this novel deals with the expression of the colonist's search for identity as confronting the difficulty of recognition and trying to illustrate her identity through behavior and other things like mimicry by imitating the beauty standers of the western world.

Since this study is dealing with female identity and beauty as one of the important causes of the reconstruction of her identity so, the concept of beauty needs more elaboration. One should start with the definition of this term. So, Beauty as defined by the OED (2006) is –a combination of qualities that is very pleasing to the senses or the mind. In other Germanic dialects, the term beauty has a Latin source as in current Sentiment dialects. This term comes from the vernacular Latin language "state of being handsome"; from the Latin language "lovely, nice-looking, charming" in traditional Latin utilized particularly for ladies and children, or affront for men. The recently presented Latin word and replaced the Ancient English word *wlite*, in which its real interpretation "a beautiful woman", the vat was registered for the first time within the delayed 14c.(Ben – Nun,2016,p 11).

Beauty is the value of being agreeable, particularly to look at, or somebody or something that gives immense happiness. Adding to this, beauty standards have altered over time. Beauty has depended on the changes in the values of culture. Body image is considered as one of the most important elements of psychological and physical health. It was H. Dittmar et al., who establishes that unrealistic physical standards begin to shape at the very beginning of age. For instance, what happens with girls at the age of five to seven years, playing with dolls of Barbie-sort may make them to be displeased with their bodies and attempt to become slimmer (Dittmar,2006,p 283–292). Beauty and beauty standers are different from one culture to another and from one country to another since the dawn of history.

There are many reasons behind the motive of female's anxiety about beauty such as the advertisements of beauty, inborn sense of uncertainty and pressure by peers, etc. Also, the beauty industry has a negative influence on female's status and self-confidence, body image, self-respect in society, and even the understanding of beauty. During the different periods, female's identities are influenced by the idea of beauty. Because it forms their feelings of value and beauty. Furthermore, the females are misled by the idea that

beauty and physical features are the main sources of shaping their identities and their status in society. In her book, *The Beauty Myth*, Nomi Wolf, argues that females are so ambitious to become slim by losing fifteen or twenty pounds of their weight in order to gain a perfect body image and beautiful complexion. This is their main aim, they want to fulfill their dreams of gaining well physical features and appearance more "than having power, money, and scope"(1991,p 10).

The main reasons behind female's obsession with slimness and concern with body image are communal marketing and the mass media. Also, these things always have a relationship with self-esteem. The age, the weight, the way way to be young are the most important points that motivate female's confidence and their status in society. Adding to this, many females want to change their identities or reconstruct them through changing their shape like a racial nose, the color of skin, and kind of hair. For that reason, female's identity is always threatened by the requirements that imposed by society, by which female from their identity and self-esteem(Okopoy,2005,p 19). Most of the women put on make-up in order to be more beautiful and attractive. So putting on make-up and using cosmetics helps women to be confident in their speaking about their personality, revealing their own

stories and identities. Sometimes, in order to make a relationship between internal beauty and external beauty, women should rely on the products of cosmetics. Also, this link through things stimulates relationships among people and makes them attracted to one another (McCabe et al.2017,p 13). Many aspects of female's beauty ideals are not expressing frankly, but are related to the beauty of Western females. Modern standards of women's beauty mix features of whiteness, slimness, and young age (Zones,2000,p 92).

In a nutshell, both women themselves and society view that females with makeup are more beautiful, attractive, and overestimated than females without. Also, the females themselves feel that they are more physically attractive and are more self-confident. In other words, females feel that they are respectful with makeup and underestimating without makeup as Cash et al. argue that, " the more women appeared to believe in the beautifying effect of cosmetics, the more makeup they tended to apply on a daily basis"(1989,p 351). So, putting on makeup and using cosmetics are so significant for females to gain their real status in society as they think because they believe that they can gain physical and facial attractiveness the beauty, and well appearance through using cosmetics. Consequently, females will be

more confident and more respected in the eyes of society.

In *White Teeth*, the postcolonial novel, in which most of its characters are searching and struggling for finding their real identities in London. They are always trying to find a sense of belonging. Irie is Archie's and Clara's daughter. She is a teenager. She was always bewildered concerning her identity and her roots, also she was depressed by her outside look. (Walters,2014,p 48). "The European proportions of Clara's figure had skipped a generation, and she was landed instead with Hortense's substantial Jamaican frame, loaded with pineapples, mangoes, and guavas; the girl had weight; big tits, big butt, big hips, big thighs, big teeth" (Smith, 2000,p 221).

She dislikes her curly hair and black skin because these things are making her aloof from the children who are sharing her the same age. Irie's mixed-race legacy and all the features of her body lead her to think of herself as a strange person. She despondent tries to be thin with white skin. She believes that straight hair, white skin, and a slim body will give her more status and make her more respected in her society. A Jamaican British female, Irie Ambrosia Jones, tries to know from where her real roots and who is she ? as a female in her society. She is considered as one of the second-generation immigrants in the

1990s in London. Actually, since she has this background this leads to many challenges in her life. Her appearance is one of the most important issues that she must encounter. Zadie Smith highlights the matter of estrangement in order to comprehend the implications that immigrants have in crossing borders of culture. Because of her mixed-race roots and her own challenges, Smith is successful in depicting the experience and life of immigrants (Tancke,2013,p 62).

Many issues have been discussed in *White Teeth*, including the sense of belonging, and the consciousness of an individual's roots. So, these elements have an influence on how one can recognize himself/herself and reconstruct his/her own identity. This matter becomes very important for Smith and Irie as well, during their search for their identities, they will be able to reconstruct many aspects in themselves. One of these is reconstructing of beauty. By this Zadie Smith and Irie can overcome their confrontation with their society.

Irie always feels that she is incompetent in her society and this leads to the destruction of Irie's self-confidence in which makes her cannot see her reflection in a "gigantic mirror", she means the mirror of society. As has shown in the novel " There was England, a gigantic mirror, and there was Irie, without reflection. A stranger in a stranger land"(Smith, 2000,p 222). She

describes England as a gigantic mirror and considers herself as a girl without reflection. She reflects the feelings of other people those who are white they look at her in the same way. This leads Irie to feel with alienation the sense that imposed on her. Since she feels that she is standing out of the group as if she is standing on unstable ground and unknown in her own society. Indeed, "Irie Jones was obsessed"(2000,p 222), with her physical outlook, so because of her shape and features of the body, she describes herself as "all wrong"(2000,p 222). She feels this sense because she is different from other people she lives with them in the same society. Based on Spivak's idea of difference, Spivak represents the voice of difference. She is unlike the other postcolonial theorists who ignore this idea of the difference. She emphasizes this group and called them subaltern. As a result of this consideration to difference, is Spivak focusing on the female subaltern. In New Nation Writers Conference in South Africa Spivak argues:

Subaltern is not just a class word for -oppressed, for [the] Other, for somebody who's not getting a piece of the pie. . . . In post-colonial terms, everything that has limited or no access to the cultural imperialism is subaltern — a space of difference. Now, who

would say that's just the oppressed? The working class is oppressed. It's not subaltern Many people want to claim subalternity. They are the least interesting and the most dangerous. I mean, just by being a discriminated-against minority on the university campus; they don't need the word 'subaltern' (De Kock,1992,p 45).

She is also obsessed with the idea of "Before, After", "A stranger in a stranger land. Nightmares and daydreams, on the bus, in the bath, in class. Before. After. Before. After. Before. After."(Smith,2000,p 222). This means that she was thinking about her appearance everywhere that she goes to, these ideas was controlling her mind. She has obsessed with the notion of losing weight when she has read a sign that is "Lose weight to earn money"(2000,p 222). This has shown very clear when she was drawing diagrams during the class on her books. Because she was always dissatisfied with her appearance due to her Jamaican heritage, she reproaches her sense of wrongness on her Jamaican legacies. She always imagines the shape of her body before and after losing weight. The sense of wrongness comes from Irie's relationship with other people from her society and how they look at her and how they treat her. Adding to this

the supremacy of beauty ideals in her society. One can feel that he belongs to the group when he feels that he is connected to them but, indeed Irie did not feel that, and always she feels that she is out of the standards of her society. She has a sense of dissatisfaction to the extent that she frequently tries to hide part of her body. For the purpose to feel received, Irie tries to present her race and gender as a woman in ways that are accepted by her contemporary society.

Irie suffers from gain overweight, that is why, she puts her right hand on top of her stomach at all times, as if she wants to conceal it. Additionally, she tries to make herself appear more English by mimic them. She tries to change her hair, therefore making it straight, long and beautiful like Western female's hair. As Homi Bahaba asserts: "the desire for a reformed, a recognizable Other, as a "subject of a difference that is almost the same but not quiet" (1994,p 86). She always has a desire to reshape herself to be the same as western females. She is as a subaltern woman feels that this is the only way to express herself and identity and gain a voice through it.

Despite the practice by which femininity occurs, the embodying of standards is an obligatory practice, this does not mean that there is no space for the difference at all (Butler,1999,p 231). One can observe that

this situation is often repeated throughout the novel in many pages, "Irie put her right hand on her stomach, sucked in, and tried to catch Millat's eye"(Smith, 2000,p 223). Also, "She kept her right hand on her stomach"(2000,p 224). Plus, "Irie covered her stomach with her right hand"(2000,p 226). "Her right hand carefully placed upon her stomach"(2000,p 228). Moreover, "She did her best to pull herself together, put her right hand over her stomach and pushed through the doors" (2000, p 232). So, this sentence is repeated in many different places and occasions throughout the novel. To show the readers to which extent that Irie suffers. Because she always thinks that her appearance prevents her from being recognized as a British woman and deprived her of a sense of belonging. In one of the studies which is entitled "*White Teeth* Reconsidered: Narrative Deception and Uncomfortable Truths" by Ulrike Tancke, he clarifies in his article to which extent that Irie's physical features and appearance affected her among people.

Tancke debates that, since Irie is "Unable to transcend the corporeal constraints to which her body subjects her, Irie feels disconnected from England"(2013,p 78). Irie concentrates on the idea of reconstruction of her beauty and appearance according to the standards of English society. She wants to be the "English Rose", therefore, she tries to be

slim. She must do her best to reach the beauty standards as Jha remarks: "the slimness is an essential element in the beauty ideals" (2016, p 22). Irie's wishes and ambitions to be part of English society. She is eager to reach "the essence of femininity" (Wolf, 1991, p 200). This means through slimness she will be able to change herself. She will be another Irie (the English Irie). In other words, she will reconstruct her beauty, appearance, and identity.

Not only, her weight is considered as an obstacle in reconstructing her identity, also the kind of her hair and the shape of her eyes make her away from the beauty standards of her contemporary community. Since her father was wishing before her birth that his daughter will be born with blue eyes and a beautiful face. Yet before the birth of Irie Jones, a preconceived idea about her appearance is existing. As soon as Alsana Iqbal knows about the pregnancy, she asks her husband about the look of the child, she wants to know what the child will look like, "half blacky-white?" (Smith, 2000, p 51). Noteworthy also is the discussion concerning the color of the eyes of the unborn child. Clara argues that with her husband Archie, that maybe the child will be born with blue eyes, the possibility that is what Archie expects will happen from that time and beyond. All of these things are examples to show

how Irie does not reach the expectations of family and friends. Indeed, she is not half white and half black, she was born black-skinned and the blue eyes are no more blue but changed into brown (2000, p 268). As it has mentioned before, Irie insists on being an "English Rose", so this time turns on her hair. Because she thinks, that her hair is the only thing that she may control and she can change it right away (Smith, 2000, p 230).

According to Jha, that the hair is considered as a fundamental part of the beauty of black women, also is very significant in the reconstruction of their identity (2016, p 41). Jha explains that black females are forced to mimic white females in order to be suitable, self-esteemed, feminine, and beautiful (2016, p 44). One can observe that Irie throughout the novel insists on changing her hairstyle, she wants to mimic a white woman's hairstyle because it is considered as a model and it is one of the standards of beauty. Many scholars and writers talk about this matter, one of those is Koben Mercer, who is specialized in British art and visual culture, who explains that the hairstyle of white women is more prosperous than black female's hairstyle. This means that the right standard of hair is to be straight not to be curly or kinky hair (as cited in Thompson, 2005, p 126-127).

In many places in the novel, one can see how Irie scorns the nature of her hair because it is wild and curly. She insists on changing it and one of her wishes she wishes is that she wants to kill the genes that cause her all this suffering by giving her this particular feature. She always hates her African origins and not proud of these genes that provide her with these African characteristics. She wishes to have the features of the white women like "straight hair". Therefore, she is always in a quest for this feature. Throughout the novel, she has asked always whether her hair is straight or not, "Straight hair, Straight straight long black sleek flickable tossable shakable touchable finger-through- able wind- blowable hair. With bangs"(Smith, 2000,p 228). " What is it you want?", " Straight", said Irie firmly, thinking of Nikki Tyler. " Straight and dark red" (2000,p 228). Also, she is frequently asking if her hair has become straight or not, "Is it straight" was the only question that you heard as the towels came off and the head emerged from the dryer pulsating with pain. "Is it straight, Denise? Tell me is it straight, Jackie?"(2000,p 229). "Is it straight? Jackie, is it straight ?"(2000,p 230).

The communication between hairdressers in P.K.'s being poor, no one told Andrea that Irie had washed her hair. Two minutes after

having the thick white ammonia gloop spread on to her head, she felt the initial cold sensation change to a terrific fire. There was no dirt there to protect the scalp, and Irie started screaming (230).

" I just put it on! You want it straight, don't you? Stop making that noise! "But it hurts!"

" Life hurts," said Andrea scornfully, " beauty hurts."(Smith, 2000,p 231).

So, she is obliged to hurt herself in order to be just like white female's hair because she mimics them she has lost her rear hair. " She came to with her head over the skin, watching her hair, which was coming out in clumps, shimmy down the plughole " (2000,p 231). " Hair?" repeated Irie through snot and tears." Fake hair?"

"Stupid girl. It's not fake. It's real. And when it's on your head it'll be your real hair. Go!"

Blubbing like a baby, Irie shuffled out of P.K.'s and down the High Road, trying to avoid her reflection in the shop windows. Reaching Roshi's, she did her best to pull herself together, put her right hand over her stomach, and pushed

through the doors. It was dark in Roshi's and smelled strongly of the same scent as P.K.'s: ammonia and coconut oil, pain mixed with pleasure (Smith, *White Teeth* 232).

Irie is suffering from the pain of the ammonia to the extent that she loses her consciousness, then she discovers that her hair is starting to fall out in clumps. Finally, she gets hair as she wants just only to catch the attention of Millat and make him satisfied with her appearance. As has mentioned in the novel:

Five and a half hours later, thanks to an arduous operation that involved at-teaching somebody else's hair in small sections to Irie's own two inches and sealing it with glue, Irie Jones had a full head of long, straight, reddish-black hair. "Is it straight?" she asked, disbelieving the evidence of her own eyes. "Straight as hell," said Andrea, admiring her handiwork.

"But honey, you're going to have to braid it properly if you want it to stay in. Why won't you let me do it? It won't stay in if it's loose like that" . "It will", said Irie, bewitched by her own reflection. "It's got to. "He-Millat- need only see it once, after

all, just once. To ensure she reached him in a pristine state, she walked all the way to the Iqbal house with her hands on her hair, terrified that the wind would displace it. (Smith, 2000,p 235).

The hairdresser asked her to get her hair plaited, because if it is keeping loose maybe fall out, but she did not work out this advice because she is constrained on impressing Millat and gain his satisfaction and acceptance. One can understand that Millat represents society because she always wants to make him satisfy with her just like her contemporary society, so Millat looks at her with eyes of the society. Actually, Irie here is double colonized. She was colonized by her colonial society and by the dominance of man. This is what Ann Rutherford and Kristen Holst emphasize in their book. They depict their ideas of how females are being overshadowed in their colonial societies. Irie Jones here submits to both the dominance of colonial and patriarchy. Because she endures all of her sufferings and difficulties just to make Millat satisfy with her. But, he never pays attention to her and has affair with another white girl. Finally, after what she encounters and after her disastrous attempt to change the nature of her hair, eventually, she satisfies with her own shape and she can see her

reflection in the mirror. This satisfaction because she can change the same of her African features and feels that she gains some of the characteristics of white people. Also, straight hair is more similar to Western hair, and that is why is recognized as superior. This is the main part of the process of mimicry. As Bhabha explains, in order to stop being considered as the Other, the Other attempts to mimic the controlling group of people to feel that known as equal human beings (Bhabha,1994,p 122).

Actually the matter of hair is so important for black women, more than for black men. Like is shown in *White Teeth*, the section of the male of the hairdresser is "all laughter, all talk, all play," while the section of female "was a deathly thing" and "a competition in agony" (Smith,2000,p 275). Irie feels that she is different now, "Irie walked into the hallway and caught a sneaky glance of herself in the mirror. Still there and all in the right place".

"Can I wait in here?"

"Of Course. You look different , dearie. Lost weight?" Irie glowed.

"New haircut".

"Oh yes.....you look like a newsreader. Very nice."

Irie walked into the living room. "Bloody hell!" screeched Neena at the approaching vision. "What ...do you look like!" She looked beautiful. She looked straight, unkinky. Beautiful (Smith, 2000,p 235-236).

In this respect, Jha insists on the fundamentality of the beauty of hair according to black women and how it is important in proofing the beauty and reconstructing of identity(Jha,2016,p 14). Actually, black female pays more attention to her hair and spends time and money just to fix it and mimic the hair of white females. "Mr. Paul king, the P.K.in question, owned the place. He was a big white guy, in his mid-fifties. ...Looking for a new idea, he read in the lifestyle section of his breakfast paper that black women spend five times as much as white women on beauty products and nine times as much on their hair" (Smith, 2000,p 232). After all, things that happened Irie proofs the idea that the black people are always treated as inferior, underestimated with a lower degree of beauty and cleverness and even they are with fewer achievements than people who are with white skin. They always treated as a subordinate who does not have any role or voice in their society. They are depicted by Spivak as subaltern and secondary as she defines them: "the people or subaltern-

which is itself defined as a difference from the elite"(Spivak,1988,p 285). She wants to show that those Western people see themselves as elite and much superior to black people. For that reason, she constantly endeavors to gain western beauty standards (Hall, R.n.d. cited in Jha,2016,p 57).

Furthermore, the dissatisfaction of Irie with her physical characteristics affects even her relationship; her feelings of love. It is obvious that Irie is dissatisfied with her physical features. She scorns her Jamaican shape. This leads her to hate herself. In this case, if she cannot love herself how can she love others? In her book, *The Beauty: How Images of Beauty Are Used Against Women*, Wolf shows that a female's love is associated with her feeling of self-love, adding to this her feeling of self-love is also associated with the social value (Wolf,2002,p145). As a result of the bad treatment and lower self-respect that due to her Jamaican origins, this strongly leads Irie to feel that she is away from others and cannot express herself in any way. Because she is a subaltern, so she looks at herself as a shadow in her society. As in Spivak's explanation "In the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak"(Spivak,1988,p 287).

Irie falls in love with Millat. she tries to attract his attention to her after changing her shape. In this way as if she gives him a chance to manipulates her in which she fulfills his desire. Because he does not satisfy with her shape and she wants to change it for him. She decides to visit him. She wants him to see her in her new look. She has high hopes to see him. Unfortunately, Millat is not at his house. Only his aunt Neena was there. Her reaction was revulsion and she screams "what ...do you look like!" when she sees Irie's new hair for the first time (Smith, 2000,p 235). When Neena asks her " Irie, will you take some advice? "Ever since I've known you, you've been following that boy around like a lost dog. And in that time he's snogged everyone, *everyone* apartfrom you".

"Haven't you ever wondered why he hasn't snogged you?" "Because I'm ugly. And fat. With an Afro." (2000,p 236-237).

Once more again this makes her profs that her inferior complex, lack of self-confidence, and self-hatred. Then, she starts to think of this question of Neena and the idea that comes to her mind is that one always should be different and distinguish and change himself, by mimic others in order to be just like them. One can observe that because of her Jamaican features which are unsuitable with the

beauty standards of England, Irie decides to change her shape to be like an "English Rose", but she is unable to comply with the beauty standards of her contemporary society. Other standards related to English people like the color of eyes, the nature of hair, and the white skin. All of these standards are unattainable to Irie. She is very desperate because she finds herself among a countless number of people with white skin. She struggles to reconstruct herself and her identity within the multicultural society. Because of her hyphenated identity, she cannot belong to any specific group. For a short moment, Irie thinks that she can see herself when arguing Shakespearean sonnets in a poetry class. Shakespeare's sonnet speaks about a "dark lady" but the English teacher kills Irie's optimism by discussing that the dark lady could not probably be black, "unless she was a slave of some kind" (Smith, 2000, p 237). Because of this racist comment, Irie is obligatory back into her shell once again. She returns to the same idea that she never has a place in the English community. In order to get rid of her sense of "wrongness," Irie attempts to realize as well as mimic English cultural norms and standards (200, p 268). For example, she is dieting regularly to overcome her hourglass-shaped body, and always when she walks around she

puts her right hand on her stomach in order to cover it up incessantly.

Lauretta Ngcobo sees that the idea of finding self-recognition and identity for people who are of mixed-race is very difficult, and that "instead of being drawn to identifying with either half of themselves, they (those of mixed-race) are often pushed one way or another or else repelled both ways" (cited in Thomson, 2005, p 127). So, In agreeing with Ngcobo's assertion, that mixed-race heritage of Irie leads her to be "repelled both ways". She rejects her heritage and at the same time, she wants to separate herself from her mixed-race origins. All her life, Irie tries to cope with the English society only without paying any attention or interest in her Jamaican origins. This enlarges the gap between the two different standards. Her society enforced her to blind mimicry in order to be beautiful and win the acceptance of her society. Homi Bhabha, in his book, *Location of Culture*, writes that

–Colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite. Which is to say, that the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an ambivalence; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference (1994, p 86). Finally, she still

as she is and she cannot cope with the standards of beauty of her contemporary society. To prove that these unattainable beauty standards.

Aunt Neena teaches Irie a precious lesson, she tells her that 'Look: you're a smart cookie, Irie. "You've got to re-educate yourself. Realize your value, stop the slavish devotion, and get a life, Irie. Get a girl, get a guy, but get a life." (Smith, 2000,p 237). What aunt Neena wants to show that she is aware of racial stereotypes and standards in society. She is always trying to live her life without thinking too much about this society. So, this kind of encouragement was what Irie needed; after the discussion between them, she rips out all her fake hair and is satisfied with her short, real Afro hair. In spite of the fact that Irie made important development in accepting herself and regardless of controlling conceptions of beauty, she is still searching for an essential part of her identity in the course of the novel.

At the very beginning of the novel she was hurting by every insult and comment that she hears, but now she is strong enough to endure these insults and racist comments. Hortense always tries to create and grow a sort of self- confidence inside Irie's personality. She tells Irie that the females of her family are always obliged to be learned by others, but Hortense says

that "dat would be my job! I'd make my own laws an' I wouldn't be wanting anybody else's opinions"(2000,p 409). She informs Irie that she is strong enough in a constructive way, and this is considered a new thing to Irie. Irie is very captured by Hortense's way of living and thinking. Hortense performs her gender as a woman regardless of social standards. She is big with heavy weight plus she has Afro hair but does not give these matters any significance and attention at all. Actually, this leads the readers to the one fact that she is now no more interested in the idea of mimicking standards of English beauty and trying to be free of her sense of being as the Other in her society. Also, she is satisfied with her identity. Irie recognizes the significance of her remain at Hortense's house for her own identity, also states: "she is as curious as everyone else to see what kind of Irie would emerge" (2000,p 399).The stories by Hortense about the culture of Jamaica make Irie has a sense that as if she belongs there. So, Jamaica becomes the new obsession of Irie and she starts to be indifferent about England and its standards and practices anymore. Now Irie likes and respects her Jamaican origins. Hortense is the only person in the novel who ensures Irie that she will be at peace with her Jamaican Background. Hortense learns Irie that her Jamaican heritage is

equal to the English one. There is no difference between them.

Eventually, Irie starts to admit that she has a hybrid identity near the ending of the novel. She realizes that both her Jamaican and her English heritages are significant to her as a human being. She has disunited "the symmetry and duality of self/other, inside/outside" (Bhabha,1994,p 165). Then, she does not mind about the appearance of her hair at all and turns to keep it as it is natural, curly, and short. Irie also becomes more confident and stops putting her hand on her stomach to hide it. She never makes herself to feel the Other anymore, indeed she does not want to mimic the beauty standards of western. She completely adapts and admits her hybridity. At this position, she "reflects the everyday nature of hybridity in the present" (Moss,2003,p 13). Lastly, Irie decides to return to Jamaica in which in this place no one can force her to change her physical characteristics. Now she knows very well how to reconstruct her identity without changing her physical appearance. Finally, Irie realizes that she can reconstruct her identity in the present in Jamaica when she lives" sitting by a Caribbean sea" with her grandmother Hortense with her daughter also (Smith, 2000,p 426). Actually, she describes Jamaica as a " paradise" and finally can

find her homeland in which no one can underestimate or look her down because of her color skin or kinky hair, or her physical appearance. Eventually, Irie has been educated on how to feel contented with her own identity, does not care about how society looks at or thinks of her.

CONCLUSION

In *White Teeth*, the main character is Irie Jones. She fights with her hybrid identity. She goes through a long journey of suffering from her position. She tries to find the most appropriate way. She resorts to the beauty standards of western society to change her appearance. She tries to mimic those white people in order to be just like them. She feels that she is 'Other' in her society and other white people are 'Self'. In the beginning, she fluctuates between the matter of root and rootless. She tries to ignore her African Jamaican roots by changing her appearance in different ways. In a moment of realization, she chooses to live with her grandmother in Jamaica. She starts to see Jamaica as a paradise and her grandmother Hortense makes her feels self- valuable and makes her appreciates her Jamaican origins. This leads Irie to satisfy with her hyphenated and hybrid identity at the end of the novel.

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