

## Scrutinization of Characters and Silhouette in Zadie Smith's *N/W*

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### Abstract

*The motive of this paper is to look at NW, Zadie Smith's fourth novel, through the notion of crossings, which maybe considered as moral connections among characters however also as geographical trips throughout London, actions alongside the social scale, multicultural encounters, weavings of numerous literary traditions and lineages, in addition to intertwining of high and famous culture. In every of those areas, the query this is raised in relation to Smith's novel is whether or not it's far viable to step throughout the traces that strictly divide people, districts, races, social lessons and cultural items into separate classes and are available up with an invigorating mélange, or if inflexible traces of separation nonetheless persist. The argument will draw from David Lodge's metaphor of the crossroads (whilst he puzzled which directions the novelist of the second one 1/2 of the 20th century should take), in addition to from Deleuze and Guattari's principles of traces of "segmentarity" and features of flight, alongside which individual and collective lives are ordered or fractured. The purpose might be to try to delineate the contours of British modern society and identification as depicted.*

**Keywords:** *ethics, identity, multiculturalism, popular culture, postmodernism, social class.*

### Introduction

NW (2012) is Zadie Smith's fourth novel after *White Teeth* (2000), *The Autograph Man* (2002) and *On Beauty* (2005). Back in 2000, Smith changed into hailed as the image of multicultural, multiracial London and her first novel constituted a crucial landmark in British literature, within side the identical manner as Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* had inaugurated a brand new sort of writing in 1984 in each Indian and British literary production. *White Teeth* additionally holds a primary location in what has been called "London Black British writing", collectively with Hanif Kureishi's *Buddha of Suburbia* (1990) and *Black Album* (1995), however additionally Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* (2003) and Andrea Levi's *Small Island* (2004). Talking to an American audience in Philadelphia, Smith jokingly defined herself as "an English creator of third-man or woman comedian fiction, a scribbler of epic narratives populated via way of means of a colourful crowd of zany characters fighting with a number cultural issues, all speak

me in the ponderous dialects of a international a long way eliminated out of your own" (2001).<sup>1</sup>The multicultural measurement is a primary and chronic feature in Smith's four novels, and even though her writing ought to now no longer be decreased to that unique perspective,

NW maintains to Characteristics multiracial groups in London. Other recurrent subject matters and worries in her paintings also can be determined in NW such as the difficulty of social class, the experience of location, as well as questions of identity, authenticity and self- invention. Smith can pay close attention to various her narrative Strategies and strives to make sure a faithful transcription of discussion and neighborhood slang, a component that specially inspired her in Zola Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes were watching God* (1937), which she examine at the age of fourteen. Finally, Smith develops an entire array of modes and technique which might be partially indebted to realist, modernist and post modernist practices.

NW is split into 5 sections, every specializing in characters whose lives sometimes cross, and every written in a particular narrative mode and literary tradition. All of the 4 fundamental characters come from the identical fictional district of North West London, Caldwell: Leah Hanwell<sup>2</sup> and Keisha Blake — who renames herself Natalie whilst at university<sup>3</sup> — are formative years buddies who attended the same college as Nathan Bogle, now a homeless junkie, who will homicide the former drug addict and alcoholic Felix Cooper whom not one of the others knows. While the primary part (“visitation”) specializing in Leah from April to August 2010 is mainly written in a stream-of-cognition method acquainted to readers of Virginia Woolf and James Joyce, the second one part (“guest”) is a greater conventional third-individual narration, an analepsis throughout which we comply with Felix’s wanderings in London over the path of 1 day, August 27th, 2010, on the quit of which he is killed.

This method of a one-day narrative bears apparent echoes of Ulysses and Mrs Dalloway however additionally of Ian McEwan’s Saturday (2005). The 0.33 part (“host”) dedicated to Keisha/Natalie’s existence from her formative years withinside the overdue Seventies and Nineteen Eighties to August 27th, 2010, is split into 185 quick numbered and titled sections, the fragments perhaps reflecting the fragmentation of her identification and normal of a morepostmodernist vein — or greater simply, performing because the elements of the “scaffolding” that Smith says she desires to keep her novels up (2009b, 105). The fourth part (“crossing”) takes area at the identical day, after the homicide, as Nathan and Natalie are cris crossing North West London collectively and taking drugs, Nathan hiding from the police, Natalie having momentarily misplaced manage of her existence. The final part and coda (“visitation”) is a quick, pretty traditional narrative that takes area two days after the homicide and ends with Natalie and Leah phoning the police to denounce Nathan. Natalie’s final words — “I were given some thing to inform you” (294) — surprisingly echo the name of Hanif Kureishi’s novel *Something to Tell You* (2008). In addition, NW because the chronicle of a dying foretold (that of Felix, introduced in

partone) is packed with a feel of doom now no longer alien to a number of McEwan’s novels, and the last pages wherein Natalie falls right into a panic as she fears her kids have

The analysis of Smith’s novel shows that many of the theoretical concepts proposed by Bourdieu for the better understanding of how social divisions are created and maintained in Society can rather successfully be applied to literary analysis as they help to elucidate the divergent social trajectories of the characters. Using Bourdieu’s theoretical framework enabled to achieve a clearer understanding of how class boundaries are created in the fictional context and why some characters remain underprivileged while others thrive. Bourdieu’s insistence on the relational nature of the different types of capital is also exemplified in the social reality of the characters as their chances depend not only on economic resources but also on cultural and social resources.

There is no single reality for society as a whole, only specific ways of seeing it and the way we see it depends on our location in social space. Bourdieu’s theory helps to understand the relative nature of reality and explain the characters’ diverging life trajectories as the creation of individual social positions depends not only on economic resources but also on cultural and social resources. Differences are created between individuals by their different capital portfolios. Bourdieu’s theory also helps to understand why class is still a relevant concept in British society where social inequalities persist. Bourdieu explains the persistence of inequalities though the prism of inherited privilege — not only economic but also cultural and social inherited privilege result in closure of ranks and enduring social divisions, which is one of the main reasons why working-class people struggle when they attempt to achieve greater social mobility. Therefore, class matters because it precludes us from being the sole authors of our lives as privilege is reproduced.

In the novel, economic privilege intersects with cultural and social privilege, for instance, in the creation of Natalie and Frank’s lifestyle, and for the lack of access to the same high amounts of all of those types of capital, Michel and Leah cannot reproduce their lifestyle. Low amounts of embodied cultural capital also result in the characters feeling uncomfortable in the university environment. Both

Leah and Natalie feel as if they do not belong while studying at university, a phenomenon Bourdieu explains through the lower levels of cultural capital possessed by working-class children entering university.

The issue the characters have with figuring out with the lives of these individuals who belong to a socioeconomic magnificence exceptional from their personal is likewise supported with the aid of using Bourdieu's belief that an individual's monetary function is probable to blind them to the cloth situations of lifestyles skilled with the aid of using different individuals of society. Not most effective do the rich have issue with figuring out with the situations of the terrible, however the terrible additionally battle to apprehend the situations wherein the economically higher off stay.

While Natalie has forgot what it seems like to be terrible with the aid of using the stop of the unconventional as she has emerge as so conversant in her present day situations of lifestyles, Felix unearths it hard to apprehend how each person may even stay in an area like Pimlico, suggesting that monetary instances lead to social alienation among exceptional companies of individuals. Smith regularly makes use of implicit markers of sophistication belonging to suggest the differing social positions of the characters and counting on Bourdieu's theoretical framework can assist to decipher the hidden that means in the back of such implicit references. For instance, a informal remark approximately the first-class of training presented at a positive faculty exhibits Leah's neighbours as center-magnificence dad and mom with out the writer explicitly citing their magnificence heritage since the center training placed more emphasis on their children's training as a method to keep and strengthen

their social function. Smith additionally makes use of adjectival markers along with poshto suggest a character's magnificence belonging. She additionally makes use of references to region in geographical area as markers of sophist.

It's able to conclude that in contrast to the bulk of literary works produced in Britain Smith's novel does now no longer have middle-magnificence awareness as the radical centres on people occupying very exclusive factors on the social spectrum not withstanding dwelling in such near quarters, displaying hoe plenty individual live scan vary even inside an unmarried small area. In the fictitious context of the radical, magnificence may be visible as an implicit however pernicious phenomenon which can significantly have an effect on the characters existence chances, depriving them of the possibility to end up the only authors of the dictionaries that outline them.

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