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'ARE WE CASTRATED?': LACAN FINDS ANSWERS IN ZADIE SMITH'S WHITE TEETH

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ABSTRACT
This article explores the journey of desire towards 'castration' in the context of Samad Iqbal's migration from Bangladesh to London in Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* (2000). Drawing on Jacques Lacan's theory, this article writes a psychoanalytic analysis of Smith's text, focusing on Samad Iqbal's psychic structures of desire in order to find answers to how he remains castrated in both native and host cultures. Contrary to the conventional understanding of 'castration', this article postulates that though Samad Iqbal tries to find the real object of desire, he cannot find the real lacking object of desire in anything attractive or desirable, and this leads his psychic state to fall into the domain of 'castration'. Thus, this article reveals that both lack and the idealised fascinating images of the mind do not contain the real object of desire, but rather lead the psychic state of a character to 'castration' in Lacanian sense.
KEYWORDS: Lacanian lack; 'castration'; Other

INTRODUCTION

'Castration' plays an important role in framing literary narratives and psychological theories like Oedipal complex etc. In Sigmund Freud, it refers to the fear of losing one's genitalia, while in Jacques Lacan it refers to accepting one's loss of the desired object. "Limit, lack, loss: these are central to Lacanian logic, and they constitute what Lacan refers to as castration" (Fink, 1995, p. 101). In literary and cultural narratives, loss and vulnerability symbolize 'castration'. It is also considered as a metaphor for the fear of losing something essential or being rendered powerless. In movies and novels, a character's psychic struggles under societal pressures or confrontation with authority stand for 'castration'.

In Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* (2000), migration is a metaphor for 'castration' in Lacanian sense. In the novel, Samad Iqbal migrates from Bangladesh to London along with his wife, Alsana Iqbal. In London, he loses interest in everything, but finds interest in life after befriending his sons' pretty music teacher, Poppy Burt-Jones. He soon loses his interest in her, and starts focusing on the future of his sons. He sends his one son, Magid, back to Bangladesh to be raised as a proper Muslim, but he comes back to London to follow the norms and values of the English culture. His other son, Millat, lives in London, and remains thoroughly anglicized, but later becomes a religious fundamentalist. Samad Iqbal cannot control his sons on the basis of his own likes and dislikes. He finds himself frustrated and forlorn in the remaining years of his life. He laments for his past glorious life in Bangladesh, and considers his migration to London just a futile search for finding satisfaction in the glamourous western world.

Critical studies of Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* have explored the influence of the past on characters in the novel (Ali & Ibrahim, 2019; Čechová, 2014; Gustar, 2010; Kumar, 2012; Sell, 2006), the use of the palimpsest (Glasgow & Fletcher, 2005), the use of Bakhtinian dialogism (ÖZTOP HANER, 2016), and themes of postcolonialism (Bağlama, 2019; Beukema, 2008; Moss, 2003; Procter, 2006; Trimm, 2015; Wille, 2011) through different perspectives.

London stands for multicultural Englishness in the novel represented through the "personal stories from characters with a variety of ethnic cultures and backgrounds" (Bentley, 2007, p. 496). It also portrays characters having different cultural backgrounds, and still being "all English, Londoners" (Nichols, 2001, p. 65). Instead of the idealisation of London, Isaacs (2005) focuses on the linguistic hegemony over the use of language in the novel, and argues that "'Englishness' is maintained through immigration policies, racist attitudes, and even the use of language" (p. 40). Bantum (2013) substantiates the previous view, and maintains that the novel "articulates the tensions and limits of becoming British, and the many ways such a transformation remains impossible within the confines of the British Isles" (p. 665). For Su (2016), this novel "has attracted intensive critical attention mostly for its vibrant representation of an evolving, multicultural London" (p. 127). Unlike the previous critics, Bastan (2018) focuses on the title of this novel, and argues that "[T]he whiteness of teeth could also be seen as a feature which unites all mankind and thus becomes a symbol of tolerance and equality" (p. 138). McQuillan (2007), however, focuses on the use of genetics in this novel, and states that the novelist defends in this way "not only the novel's 'artificial' plot, but the capacity of fiction to explore and to represent science in the twenty-first century" (p. 18).

Critical responses of the critics reveal that this novel has not been analysed through Lacan's psychoanalytic perspective so far. Drawing on Lacan's theory of 'castration', this article analyses the text of the novel, and tries to get a new understanding of the psychic structures operational during the character's voyage of desire towards the psychic state of 'castration'. It explores how Samad Iqbal migrates in the novel from Bangladesh to London in the hope of finding the missing object of desire. It also explores how he considers Poppy-Burt Jones as the desired object of his mind. It further explores how he alienates not only from Poppy-Burt Jones but also from his own sons. In this way, it develops a critical analysis of Samad Iqbal's 'castration' after his desire fires and frustrates in an endless cycle of lack, attraction, and alienation without finding the real lacking object of desire.

In the next section, this article examines Jacques Lacan's theoretical concept of 'castration' in relation to lack and phallus. Following that is the critique of the novel's text, focusing on Samad Iqbal's 'castration' due to some unknown lack of his desire. The last section 'conclusion' sums up the whole discussion, and reveals the significance and future implications of this study.

'CASTRATION': A LACANIAN LENS

In Lacan's theory of psychoanalysis, 'castration' and 'desire' are closely connected, for both originate in some unknown lack. In Lacanian sense, desire "is a relation of being to lack. This lack is the lack of being properly speaking. It isn't the lack of this or that, but lack of being whereby the being exists" (Lacan, 1991, p. 223). It originates in lack, and "seeks to return continually to the experience of lack" ((Todd, 2007, p. 81). In the same way, 'castration' also refers to accepting the continuing sense of lack or loss of something unknown.

Jacques Lacan's conceptualisation of 'castration' is different from Sigmund Freud's 'castration complex'. In Freud, it is related to the child's discovery of the lack of penis. "The castration complex is thus the moment when one infantile theory (everyone has a penis) is replaced by a new one (females have been castrated)" (Evans, 2006, p. 22). The male child lives in the constant fear of his penis being cut off by his father. The female child is a victim of penis envy, and, therefore, desires to have a baby so that she can fill the lack of her penis. In this way, Freud's 'castration complex' is sexual and biological, while for Lacan it is purely an imaginary phenomenon.

In Lacan, 'castration' does not refer to lamentation for the lack of one's penis. Rather, it refers to the lack of one's phallus which refers neither to male or female reproductive organs, and nor to any concrete or tangible thing or object. Rather, it stands for the signifier of different concepts which can activate but cannot satisfy desire. The phallus, therefore, "is the privileged signifier of that mark in which the role of the logos is joined with the advent of desire" (Lacan & Sheridan, 2004, p. 220). It plays an important role in a child's journey of desire toward 'castration' in the sense that it signifies all those attractions, powers, attributes, and privileges which frame not only the desire of the mother but also that of the child. It fires

desire due to its attractiveness and desirability, but it frustrates desire due to its illusiveness, slipperiness, and unattainability. "If the desire of the mother is the phallus, the child wishes to be the phallus in order to satisfy that desire" (Lacan & Sheridan, 2004, p. 221). However, the child can neither become nor attain the phallus, and, therefore, enters into the psychic state of 'castration'.

In other words, 'castration' in Lacan is the psychic state when the child gives up the search for the phallus. It is also tantamount to accept one's lack. In this sense, it is one of the three types of lack. The other two types of lack are frustration (an imaginary lack of a real object), and privation (a real lack of a symbolic object). Castration, on the other hand, "is a symbolic lack of an imaginary object" (Evans, 2006, p. 23). The imaginary object stands for the idealised object of the imaginary order which creates a continuing sense of loss, lack, and alienation in the symbolic order. In this way, 'castration' in Lacan is the acceptance that one cannot find the lack in anything fascinating or desirable. However, it perpetuates desire in an endless cycle of pleasure and pain without any chance of finding the real desired object of the mind.

WHITE TEETH: VOYAGE OF 'CASTRATION'

In Lacan, 'desire' and 'castration' are intertwined due to the common element of lack. We see that 'desire' originates and exists "in the chain of signifiers that renew the lack in which it originates time and again" (Haute & Geyskens, 2016, p. 53). In Zadie Smith's *White Teeth*, Samad Iqbal's voyage of desire triggers and frustrates due to some unknown lack. He is not happy in Bangladesh due his feelings of loss and lack. He cannot see any tangible satisfying object of desire. This triggers his sense of desire to migrate to London in the company of his wife Alsana Iqbal in the hope of getting the real desired object of his mind. He does not know that the journey of his desire starts in lack, and will lead his psychic state toward 'castration'. However, he settles in London and passes time in the company of Archie at O' Connell's. He also convinces Archie to marry again after his Italian wife, Ophelia, leaves him. He even remains a witness in Archie's second marriage with Clara, but his friend cannot do anything to fill the lack of his mind. He finds the job of a petty waiter at a restaurant, but is not fit for this job because he cannot get tips from the customers. He should remain silent, but he "had instead the urge, the need, to speak to everyman, and, like the Ancient Mariner, explain constantly, constantly to reassert something, anything" (Smith, 2000, p. 58).

The moment Samad Iqbal starts living in a different culture, his sense of lack frustrates him more than earlier. He is not aware that lack "thrusts the child into the larger social and cultural world" (Bernstein, 2012, p. 229) without having any tangible satisfying object. He is not able to either help Alsana in her pregnancy, or take money from his cousin Ardashir to cope with his family's shifting from Whitechapel to Willesden. He comes back home without having any money. He cannot frame an answer to his wife. He deliberates on how to control a young woman. "But Alsana was not … no, she was not easy" (Smith, 2000, p. 61). He fights with his wife that evening. He is worried and frustrated. He cannot do anything to feed his wife in a proper manner. He cannot bear to see his wife in such a state, and, therefore, goes out of the house for the time being. In Lacanian sense, his psychic state starts shifting to 'castration' because he cannot say anything other than "expressing his unpleasure at a state of tension that results from a lack" (Celdran, 2002, p. 172).

Samad Iqbal's desire frustrates due to the warning signals of 'castration' till the attractions of the phallus triggers his desire to find fascination in Poppy Burt-Jones. He lacks the attractiveness of the phallus for his wife. Alsana Iqbal talks to Archie's wife, Clara, and says that Samad and Archie do not have any attractions. "'Twenty-five years they live before we are even born. What are they? What are they capable of?'" (Smith, 2000, p. 77). She does not like the voice and face of her husband even. "'Now, every time I learn something more about him, I like him less'" (Smith, 2000, p. 78). Samad Iqbal is also aware of his inabilities to do something, but he still has big dreams at the back of his mind.

In Lacan, lack is the signifier of 'castration', and is not the absence of a known thing. Rather, it is the absence of some unknown thing. "For Lacan, desire only comes about when one *doesn't have something"* (Murray, 2016, p. 151). Here 'something' *does not refer to any physical object or person. Rather, it refers to a thing that is the source of satisfaction, but in Lacan's theory, there is not anything to satisfy desire. In the novel, the signifiers of 'castration'*

often lead Samad Iqbal's desire to fly back again and again to the nostalgic memories of his past life. He remains in this condition even when he serves as a wireless operator during the war in 1945. He identifies himself with Mangal Pande in spite of fighting in the British army. He is proud that his "'great-grandfather Mangal Pande … was the great hero of the Indian Mutiny!'" (Smith, 2000, p. 87). Due to this reason, he wants to prove that the Muslims of Bengal are better and stronger than the Sikhs. In the war, his right hand becomes useless, and his skin turns brown. He thinks to die, but then he desires to be the man "[H]e once was: erudite, handsome, light-skinned Samad Miah; so precious his mother kept him in from the sun's rays" (Smith, 2000, p. 111).

Samad Iqbal's life starts in London again. He cannot bear the psychic burden of 'castration'. He is not able to face the reality, and, therefore, he develops his social and cultural circle with children. "By 1984 at least 30 percent of his social and cultural circle was under the age of nine" (Smith, 2000, p. 125). He is not happy in the company of his wife; and, therefore, visits his sons' school off and on. There is a clear contradiction in what he desires for his sons, and what he himself does in practical life. He desires to make his sons the models of Islamic teachings, but finds the music teacher of his sons very attractive.

Samad Iqbal finds a new-found desirability in the shape of Poppy Burt-Jones again. He does not know that it is the *objet petit a* in the shape of illusive fascinations of the phallus which just "prevents the circle of pleasure from closing, [and] it introduces an irreducible displeasure" (Žižek, 1992, p. 48). Anyhow, the attractions of the phallus arouse his desire whenever he thinks about her. He even focuses on her arm. "She extended a long, pale, lightly freckled arm" (Smith, 2000, p. 131). He peruses her beauty – age, slimness, breasts, dress, hair, neck and smile. He becomes sure that she is really pretty. He confirms her slimness and softness. He enjoys her long breasts in his imagination. He kisses her neck in his mind. Above all, he becomes extremely happy when he thinks about her pleasant smile. "A very pleasant, slightly goofy smile which she was showing Samad right now" (Smith, 2000, p. 132).

Samad Iqbal remains castrated as long as he is not in the company of Poppy Burt-Jones. His desire jumps to an ethereal world as long as he is with Poppy Burt-Jones. She smiles at him, and tucks a piece of her hair behind her ear, and then she smiles at him again. Right at this moment, his sexual desire gets the spark, and then he thinks about his "well-toned 57-year-old stomach" (Smith, 2000, p. 132). She tells him that the Indian festivals are more pleasing than the English festivals. She speaks in line with his desire, but he is worried that she may not have any erotic interest in him. He jingles his car keys in a disturbed manner, but then he "felt a cold thing land on his heart and knew it was fear of his God" (Smith, 2000, p. 133).

Samad Iqbal considers the music teacher of his sons as the desired object of his mind, but the constant pricking of 'castration' in the form of the Other frustrates him in Lacanian sense. However, the seeming beauty of his heart dominates his feelings for the time being. He feels that this woman is the solace of his heart, but is also worried because he feels himself sexually aroused. He thinks about the repercussions of his sex with her. He tries to avoid the arousal of his sexual desire, "for something more bestial than his will was now doing the talking" (Smith, 2000, p. 133).

Samad Iqbal's psychic state operates in the fascinations of the phallus when he meets Poppy Burt-Jones. He does not fear God when his sexual desire arouses. He again starts masturbation after a long time. He thinks that his earlier contract with God is not important, and, therefore, strikes a new contract with the animal magnetism of Poppy Burt-Jones. He recommences masturbation on emergency basis, and for those "two months, between seeing the pretty red-haired music teacher once and seeing her again, were the longest, stickiest, smelliest, guiltiest fifty-six days of Samad's life" (Smith, 2000, p. 140).

Samad Iqbal's psychic journey of 'castration' also passes through the state of *jouissance*. In Lacan, it alludes to feelings of pleasure and pain in "the circular movement which finds satisfaction in failing again and again to attain the object" (Žižek, 1992, p. 48). Samad Iqbal cannot avoid the 'castration' of his mind in spite of passing through the feelings of pleasure and pain. He gets pleasure from the pretty images of Poppy Burt-Jones, but he passes through pain in her absence. He has almost lost his senses, for he sees her image wherever he goes. He feels her when he starts doing something. He meets her in imagination when he shakes hands with someone else. He is in a "kind of synaesthetic fixation with the

woman" (Smith, 2000, p. 140). He starts going to the mosque but hears her colour in his thoughts. He takes the tube but feels the smell of her hand from it. He starts doing something, but feels her innocent smile. He gets the erection even if she is not with him. He almost visits every public toilet in London, and this "led to a kind of masturbation that even a fifteen-year-old boy living in the Shetlands might find excessive" (Smith, 2000, p. 140). The reason is that his lack of the mind is too big to surfeit. He neither wants his family, nor likes the O' Connell's, and nor wants to be with Archie. It is only at the restaurant that he can enjoy her in his imagination.

Samad Iqbal's psychic voyage of 'castration' also becomes frightening. His psychic state cannot retain the edifice of pleasure without the feelings of pain and fear. He is not able to find a way out. He tells Shiva that he likes the music teacher of his sons. He tells her that his body and thoughts work in opposite directions. He is embarrassed and ashamed, but is not able to free his thoughts from the attractive web of Poppy Burt-Jones. His fears are unbearable. He cannot differentiate between fear and guilt. He thinks about her attractiveness, but the feelings of regret predominate. He tells Shiva that the English culture makes him immoral. He tells her that his sons are also morally bankrupt.

Samad Iqbal's psychic state flashes back to the imaginary order to get some relief in the castrating journey of his desire. In Lacanian sense, he remains in a mirage, for he is not aware that "The Imaginary order never exists in complete independence from the Symbolic order, since the child's experience is indirectly structured by the Symbolic order from before birth" (Bracher, 1993, p. 31). In the symbolic order, he does not want to be a modern man. He aspires to be back in the East again and repents that his sons are away from God. He is ashamed for his weakness in protecting his sons from the strayed condoms. His longing for the past remains for a short period of time, and then his desire soars again to the illusive fascinations of Poppy Burt-Jones.

Samad Iqbal's desire to build the future of his sons also leads his psychic state towards 'castration'. He starts avoiding the pretty girl step by step, but feels himself embarrassed when he thinks about his sons. He is not aware that he can never control his sons. It happens that a few white-coloured boys ask for Mark Smith, and Magid says Hi to them. Samad is dumbfounded, and gets the feelings that his dream image will break into pieces. He tries again and again, but Magid does not want to copy the Bangladeshi culture, for he neither likes his family and nor the cockroaches in his house. He "wanted his mother to make the music of the cello, not the sound of the sewing machine" (Smith, 2000, p. 151).

Samad Iqbal fears that the future of his sons is not bright. It is because of that Magid wants a piano, and does not like to visit his aunties. Rather, he wants to visit France for biking in holidays. He does not like his father to be a waiter. Rather, he dreams that his father should have been a doctor. He participates in the Harvest Festival against the wishes of his father. Samad Iqbal becomes furious but he cannot stop his son to be a part of it. However, he tries to control his son by telling him, "You come with me on haj. If I am to touch that black stone before I die I will do it with my eldest son by my side" (Smith, 2000, p. 152).

Samad Iqbal's 'castration' reveals itself step by step. He does not want his sons to do what he does always. He wants his sons to do what he tells them. He acts contrary to what he tells them, and they act in line with what he does in actuality. It is due to this reason that he cannot make a choice between Poppy Burt-Jones and his sons. Soon his desire again soars to the attractions of the phallus when he sees Poppy Burt-Jones in the Orchestra. He does not know the ins and outs of it, but he feels himself elated. He focuses on her back, and desires to have a glimpse of her bare feet. He is very much interested in her protruding backside. He feels himself in an ideal world. He feels like he is about to catch the desired object of his mind. However, the ethereal journey of desire tolls his psychic state back to 'castration' when he asks himself "*Why, in the name of Allah, am I here?* And then the answer returned once more with the persistence of vomit: *Because I simply cannot be anywhere else*" (Smith, 2000, p. 153).

Poppy Burt-Jones is the embodiment of the phallus for Samad Iqbal. She triggers his desire when she starts a kind of Indian music which transports his desire back to Bangladesh. He sees his image in a garden surrounded by marbles. He looks secretly at Poppy Burt-Jones, while she "wound flirtatiously in and out of some fountains; sometimes visible, sometimes not" (Smith, 2000, p. 155). In his imagination, he sits and observes her attractive legs.

He says yes to her every question, and starts to kiss her soft lips.

Samad Iqbal feels that he can satisfy the lack of his mind in Poppy Burt-Jones, but he is not aware that one's lack cannot be satisfied in another person. However, he feels himself satisfied when the pretty girl reciprocates his advances. After feeling the taste of her kiss in his fantasy, he wants to meet her in a secret place where he cannot be seen by his family members. He enjoys the memories of her kissing and the holding of her breasts again and again. He meets her at Harlesden, and then sees a woman. He tells her not to come close to the woman because she is dangerous. He says "'We are split people. For myself, half of me wishes to sit quietly with my legs crossed, letting the things that are beyond my control wash over me. But the other half wants to fight the holy war. Jihad!'" (Smith, 2000, p. 179). Samad Iqbal takes Poppy Burt-Jones away from the woman, but then his psyche flashes back to the memory of his great-grandfather, Mangal Pande.

The attractiveness of the phallus dominates every other fascination of Samad Iqbal's mind for the time being. He talks to Poppy Burt-Jones about Delhi and St. Albans. He shifts the subject of conversation to the choice of suitable boyfriends, and then talks about Millat's interest in obscenities. Right at this moment, his desire again fires when she shows her interest in him. "She sat closer to him on the bench and kissed his ear" (Smith, 2000, p. 181). He is with her for the whole long night, but then he gets somewhat inkling of the reality that she is not the desired object of her mind. He feels himself alienated from her. It is because of that 'desire' is not constant in Lacan. Rather, it is slippery and leads but the psychic state of 'castration'.

The ethereal world of the phallus is about to end, and the castrating journey of Samad Iqbal's desire is about to begin again. He sees that his sons are rebellious. "[T]here is a rebellion in them, Archie. I can see it – it is small now but it is growing" (Smith, 2000, p. 190). He is worried for his sons' smoking of marijuana. He is disturbed because his sons are not going to the mosque. He tells his sons to respect the Bangladeshi tradition, and, therefore, decides to send at least one of them, but still the "matter of choosing the child" (Smith, 2000, p. 194) remains. He decides to send Magid back to Bangladesh, but before doing that he phones Poppy Burt-Jones that "there would be no more kisses in the afternoon, no more guilty walks, no more furtive taxis. End of affair" (Smith, 2000, p. 201). He sends Magid back in a secret manner. "'And then Magid is going on a trip with auntie Zinat'" (Smith, 2000, p. 209).

Samad Iqbal's sense of alienation also leads his psychic state toward 'castration' in Lacanian sense. He is very much frustrated when he thinks that his wife is not happy because of her son being sent to Bangladesh. In her opinion, it is not a liveable place, as people there die of hunger and natural calamities. Her son Magid is safe and sound in the Chittagong Hills, but she hates "the thought that Magid should be as she had once been" (Smith, 2000, p. 211). She is depressed and dejected, and starts reading Rabindranath Tagore "(*Night's darkness is a bag that bursts with the gold of the dawn*)" (Smith, 2000, p. 213). For six days, she cannot think about anything. "But on the seventh day came light: the news arrived that Magid was fine" (Smith, 2000, p. 213). Samad Iqbal feels happy and thinks the ideal image of his son is about to take the shape of reality.

In Lacanian sense, Samad Iqbal unknowingly takes the shape of the big Other, but he is not aware that "the big Other will never be able to provide the satisfaction that the subject lacks" (Todd, 2007, p. 80). He is not aware that it is just another signifier of 'castration' in Lacan. In the novel, he tries to mould the desire of his wife, but he cannot do it as long as Magid is in Bangladesh. Alsana does not answer him in clear 'yes 'or 'no'. She answers him in 'may be' or 'might be'. She wants to make him uncertain, and her boycott remains for a long time. "That was her promise, that was her curse upon Samad, and it was *exquisite* revenge" (Smith, 2000, p. 214). He forgets the words 'yes' or 'no', and is not able to reply anyone in the restaurant. He "hardly knew how to respond, he had come to forget what those two elegant signifiers meant" (Smith, 2000, p. 214). He becomes frustrated whenever he listens to Alsana. He gets somewhat respite when he reads Magid's letter that he is going to be a true Muslim. He argues "'Rubbish! My son is for God, not men. He is not fearful of his duty. He is not fearful to be a real Bengali, a proper Muslim'" (Smith, 2000, p. 215).

Samad Iqbal forgets his other son Millat who is considered a rude boy, and his image changes from place to place, person to person, and situation to situation. It takes the form of "sweet-as, safe, wicked,

leading kids up hills to play football, downhill to rifle fruit machines, out of schools, into video shops" (Smith, 2000, p. 217). The discussion often revolves around the point, "*The Trouble with Millat*, mutinous Millat aged thirteen, who farted in mosque, chased blondes, and smelt of tobacco" (Smith, 2000, p. 218). Samad Iqbal feels that the lustre of the future image of Millat in his mind is also dim. He considers the English culture responsible for it, and reiterates that his decision of sending Magid back to his native land is correct. "No doubt about it, on reflection, sending Magid back was the best thing. I would recommend it" (Smith, 2000, p. 219).

In Lacanian sense, Samad Iqbal's role as the big Other starts to weaken, and his psychic state remains in the web of 'castration'. His sense of desire reverts to his previous state of alienation and lack, but he is not aware of this psychic transformation. It occurs that a storm rages and crumbles his house into pieces. He has no option but to shift to Archie's house along with Alsana and Millat. He is not aware of his son's sexual relation with Archie's daughter, Irie. He does not know that his son participates in the protests against Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*. Rather, he is furious at home while watching the protest on the television. "'[T]he writer denies blasphemy, and argues that the book concerns the struggle between secular and religious views of life'" (Smith, 2000, p. 235). Suddenly, he sees Millat in protest on television screen much to his surprise and consternation.

Samad Iqbal's thoughts reveal that his desire passes through the experiences of 'castration' in Lacanian sense, but he does not accept it so far. He loses his influence on his sons. He just talks to his sons without the courage of taking any practical steps. The reality is that he knows his position, but he still wants to keep his impotency secret. He is in delusion and remains in a self-formed illusion. It is also true when he watches the fall of the Berlin Wall on the television. He differs from the common opinion just for the sake of showing that he has still the authority in his house "'It is not that I disagree with rebellious acts *per se*. It is simple that if you are to throw over an older order, you must be sure that you can offer something of substance to replace it'" (Smith, 2000, pp. 239–40).

Samad Iqbal's 'castration' in Lacanian sense becomes bigger and bigger with each passing moment. He lives in a fantasy world of his own. He considers himself the encyclopaedia of wisdom and experience, but his desire tolls back to the reality of 'castration', for he is fully aware of this very fact that neither Millat, nor Magid, nor Alsana, and nor Arie agree to what he says and thinks. He is considered by Alsana as an old man without knowing the modern trends. In this situation, the only thing he can do is to visit O'Connell's, and discuss his failures and anxieties with Archie.

The sense of alienation in Samad Iqbal's psychic state leads his desire to find a safe haven in recalling his past at O'Connell's. He opts to go there for sharing his miserable condition with Archie. It is a place where he can go, talk, and relax without his family. He can re-tell, miss, remember, and re-visit his earlier thoughts. These are some of the reasons that he likes to go to this place again and again. "Something to rationalize, to explain, why one would keep returning, like Freud's grandson with his *fort-da* game, to the same miserable scenario" (Smith, 2000, p. 244). In simple words, he visits this place to think about his frustrations and desperations. Finally, he finds somewhat solace in the form of Mickey.

Samad Iqbal is happy to be alone at the O'Connell's. "And this is where they both came, New Year's Eve, 1989" (Smith, 2000, p. 245). In his state of loneliness, his psychic state soars back to his idealised image of Mangal Pande again. He requests Mickey to display his picture at the front who later agrees to display it just for a week. Samad Iqbal feels himself relieved, and he starts a debate with Archie. He agrees to Archie's definition of labelling Mangal Pande a mutineer, but he does not agree to his other two definitions. "'But traitor? Coward? The dictionary you show me is old – these definitions are now out of currency. Pande was no traitor and no coward'" (Smith, 2000, p. 251).

Samad Iqbal becomes a victim of loss when he thinks about Millat. In a way, his psychic state thoroughly enters into the world of 'castration'. He frustrates after the realisation that his hopes in the future of his son is just a mirage and a delusion. His lack intensifies, and he begins to alienate from the idealised image of Millat. The reason is clear from the description in the novel. The narrator intrudes:

He [Millat] was so big in Cricklewood, in Willesden, in West Hampstead, the summer of 1990, that nothing he did later in his life could top it … He was

simply too big to remain merely the object of Irie's affection, leader of the Raggastanis, or the son of Samad and Alsana Iqbal. (Smith, 2000, p. 269)

For Samad, Millat is 'good for nothing'. The reason is that he does not act according to what Samad thinks for him. Rather, he is often with the bad boys and passes time in the company of tobacco smokers at school. He also becomes the head of the Cricklewood branch of the KEVIN – Keepers of the Eternal and Victorious Islamic Nation – to the bitter resentment and frustration of Samad.

Samad Iqbal is so frustrated that he cannot bear the burden of his 'castration'. His lack intensifies and he cannot ask Millat to break relations with the Chalfens. He cannot do anything even when his wife tells him again and again that they mislead his son away from family, culture, and religion. He cannot stop his son from following the English culture. He cannot answer to his wife's wake-up call, for he is hopeless in the case of his sons. For him, Millat "was neither one thing nor the other, this or that, Muslim or Christian, Englishman or Bengali" (Smith, 2000, p. 351). He is aware of Millat's relations with many English girls and his blow jobs in different places, but cannot do anything.

Samad Iqbal yields in to his continuing sense of loss, lack and alienation, and which, in Lacan, is nothing but 'castration'. The heart rendering voyage of the castrating aspect of his desire appeals to the feelings of pity and sadness. He is clad in white on the way to the restaurant. He is "crumpled and creased like a disappointed saint" (Smith, 2000, p. 405). He weeps and asks for Irie's help in convincing Millat to come back to his parents. He tells her that he is with the green-tie people in a Sports Centre at Chester since long. He wails and laments, for he cannot see any hope in either of his sons. He does not consider himself the encyclopaedia of wisdom and knowledge. He is so frustrated that he even seeks Irie's advice regarding his mental condition.

The voyage of Samad Iqbal's 'castration' does not stop here. He also accepts his disappointment in Magid. He is fearful of his son's intention of coming back to London. "He wants to enforce the laws of man rather than the laws of God" (Smith, 2000, p. 406). In his opinion, his son does not value the Islamic way of life. His wife is happy, but he is dejected. His sons are the main cause of his desperation and anxiety. "More English than English. Believe me. Magid will do Millat no good and Millat will do Magid no good. They have lost their ways" (Smith, 2000, p. 406). He worries that his sons will marry white English women. His imaginary images of the two good Muslim sons shatter into pieces. He sends Magid back, but he comes back and turns out to be a thorough Englishman. The other one Millat "'I keep here is fully paid-up green bow-tie-wearing fundamentalist terrorist'" (Smith, 2000, p. 407). He introspects and accepts his fault in migrating to London. He realizes that he has never been welcomed here. He thinks himself so weak in physique that he does not consider himself suitable for going back to Bangladesh. He thinks that his sons do not have the flavour of the East. He is an emotional cripple, and, therefore, he forsakes the idea of belonging. He is in the whirlpool of the identity crisis, and, therefore, he accepts that he belongs to nowhere.

Samad Iqbal does not get the real object of his desire. Rather, his desire circles in a never-ending cycle of loss, lack, and alienation. He is disappointed, worried, and anxious when Magid comes back to London. Magid shakes the very fundamentals of his parents. His mother is not able to recognize him. "Samad says this is some clone, this is not an Iqbal" (Smith, 2000, p. 424). Magid does not care about his bother in spite of their separation for eight years. He has the same hair-cut as that of Millat's, but his father tries to hide him from his friends and relatives because of his jeans and bow-tie. He is thoroughly English in looks and manners which is in stark contrast to what Samad Iqbal boasts earlier in him.

The castrating burden of Samad Iqbal is so intense that he cannot take interest in his wife's talking even. "The curse was lifted. No more *may be Samad Miah*, no more *possibly Samad Miah*" (Smith, 2000, p. 425), but this is not sufficient. He acknowledges his failure in life, but his pain is beyond his understanding. He cannot look straight to anyone in the restaurant. He tries to ignore questions about his sons. His inner fragmentation is clearly seen from his facial features. He tells Archie that both of his sons have left him. He tells this in such a melancholy tone that "Archie suspected he was quoting poetry" (Smith, 2000, p. 425).

Samad Iqbal remains castrated from the start to the end in Lacanian sense. It is not because of that he longs for any physical thing. Rather, it is because of

that his desire does not get psychological relief in anything, and he accepts in his mind that he cannot find the real object of his desire in anything. His son proves to be a thorn in his foot. He takes Magid to the O' Connell's. His heart shatters after Magid orders for a bacon sandwich. He just questions his son "'Do you never read the Qur'an? Do you not know the duties a son owes to his father?'" (Smith, 2000, p. 453). He fails in reuniting his sons. Magid and Millat meet at last in an empty room after eight long years. They find that "their genes, their prophets of the future, have reached different conclusions" (Smith, 2000, p. 463). He is aware of the sexual craze of both of his sons. He is aware of the pseudo-Islamism of Millat. He is aware of the Englishness of Magid. He is aware of his sons' sex with Arie in close succession. He is aware of everything, but he cannot have the guts to do anything. He accepts that his dysfunctional sons are nothing but a curse for his past actions and decisions. "All his life he wanted a Godfather, and all he got was Samad. A faulty, broken, stupid, one-handed waiter of a man who had spent eighteen years in a strange land and made no more mark than this. *It just means you're nothing*" (Smith, 2000, p. 506). He is not able to find anything desirable, and his psychic state remains shut in a continuing sense of loss, lack, and alienation.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the Lacanian analysis of Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* (2000) reveals Samad's Iqbal's 'castration' from the start to the closing years of his life. He is in search of the desired object of his mind, but the dissection of his psychic structures reveals some unknown lack of his mind. He remains frustrated, but the fascinations of the phallus fire his desire in the form of finding Poppy Burt-Jones. He does not get satisfaction in her, and assumes the role of the big Other to control his wife and sons. He again gets nothing but frustration and disappointment, and, therefore, accepts his 'castration' after failing to find the desired object of his mind. In this way, this study finds that the imaginary idealised images and the attractions of the phallus just lead the psychic state to 'castration' because they do not contain the real object of desire. It also finds that a character's journey of desire toward 'castration' in the novel can also be considered as any person's journey of 'castration' in real life.

The significance of this study lies in the sense that it develops a new way of interpreting 'castration' in fiction. It also provides a new psychoanalytic dimension of reading this novel from Lacan's perspective. In this way, it not only highlights the literary interpretative potential of Lacan's theory of 'castration' but also adds to the treasure of literature the novel's validation of Lacan's theories. Thus, it invites further research not only in this novel but also in other novels of migration from Lacan's psychoanalytic theoretical concepts.

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