Globalization of Local Lives:
Performing Self-Authenticity as Personal, Local and Social Process in Zadie Smith's *NW*

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Abstract

This research aims at investigating the social and local relevance of the process of self-authenticity in Zadie Smith's *NW*. The novel imagines a complex network of relationships ranging from individual association with occupation to friendships and families, and to participation in local and public oriented interactions, all bring individuals to experience multiplicity of identifications with others in complex ways. With regard to density and complexity of overlapping social relations this essay indicates how self-authenticity is a social process determined by confirmation with and from other's as well as one's own experiment as means and results of social interactions while acting as a local process operating in practice and in relation to local relevance. The study interrogates to what extent locality acts as a firm framework of reference in construction and maintenance of self-authenticity and identity formation in the current context of increasing global dynamics. It follows the concept of critical cosmopolitanism that assumes individual's capacity for self-reflexivity as integral to formation of self-authenticity and necessitates the emergence of a cosmopolitan consciousness that views self-authenticity as dependent on situationally-relevant conditions of time and place rather than on pre-give social patterns.

1. Introduction

In the present condition of growing globalization, sociologists stress the necessity of identity work in the search for authenticity where identity formation and worldview formations must include reflexivity and choice (Beck 2003; Robertson

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1992). Sociologists have put an emphasis on the culturally constructed nature of authenticity indicating how the term is not any more based on an inherent, natural property of an individual or in "conformity to social forces" but as "rooted in creativity and self-expression (Vannini and Williams 2). One of the social patterns with reference to which individuals have been supposed to invigorate their self-authenticity is locality or neighborhood, however, globalization with its homogenizing in terms of loss of diversity has been assumed hostile to internal cultural differences and local sources of authority. Ulrich Beck believes that globalization has changed the relation between the local and global in melting the distinction between these terms ("Theory"18). Beck theorizes globalization as a "non-linear, dialectic process in which the global and the local do not exist as cultural polarities but as combined and mutually implicating principles", he defines this process as "cosmopolitanization", a process through which global concerns enter the everyday local experiences and moral life worlds of people, one that denies the dichotomous view of the local and the global as "anti-thetical categories" in asserting that "there is no cosmopolitanism without localism" ("The Cosmopolitan" 19).

NW (2012) explores what challenges globalization has brought about for locals in Smith's management of strictly local scope. It imagines a complex network of relationships ranging from individual association with occupation to friendships and families, and to participation in local and public oriented interactions, all bring individuals to interrelations with others in yet more complex ways. The novel tells the story of four protagonists, Leah Hanwell, Natalie De Angelis (former Keisha Blake), Felix Cooper and Nathan Bogle, all grown up in public housing neighborhood; Felix in the Holloway district of north London and the other three in Caldwell council estate in Willesden, northwest London. The novel is divided into five sections, while part three, "Host", begins when Keisha, not yet Natalie Blake, and Leah meet as four-year-old friends, the story then progresses in chronological order, through thirty-one years till 2010 constantly overlapping the previous parts and being continued by part four and five.

Part one, "visitation", focuses on Leah's life and her struggling feeling of entrapment in-between her marriage and job, not going quite well, especially when compared to Natalie's seemingly successful life, career and family. Part two, "guest", is about Felix's visit to his father in NW6, attending his personal and business issues in the center of London, who ends up being murdered in a railway station on his way back into NW6. Part three, "host", is narrating the story of Natalie from age four to thirty-five, revealing her identity crisis and sense of inauthenticity increased due to the diversity that she encounters in her social

and communal connections. In part four, "crossing", Natalie on the edge of a collapsing marriage meets Nathan, her childhood acquaintance, through her lonely walk in her childhood locality, northwest London. In part five, "visitation", Natalie and Leah are discussing the murder of Felix with Natalie's succeeding correct realization that Nathan has murdered Felix. The novel ends with Keisha Blake calling the police as Leah listens.

The present research aims at investigating the social and local relevance of process of self-authenticity in Zadie Smith's *NW*. It indicates how self-authenticity is a social process determined by confirmation with and from others' as well as one's own experiment as means and results of social interactions while also acting as a local process operating in practice and in relation to local relevance. It takes cosmopolitanism as a fertile framework for the analysis of process of self-authenticity and argues for a critical cosmopolitanism that is located at the interface of local and global flows. As well, the essay draws attention to different factors such as class disparities, racial/ethnic tensions, social segregating structures, and complexity of life in present globalization through a sustained concentration on individual interaction with diversity. Following these theoretical framework, the essay will question and thrive to answer how does the social situation at the current globalization largely determine the ways individuals are involved with the idea of self-authenticity? How is self-authenticity constructed out of symbolic interactionism, local allegiances and situational rules? How does individual's immersion in his own world vis-à-vis the world of diversity entail attitudes of doubt, skepticism or cynical disregard towards local, social and global affiliations? Can the locally inauthentic performances in neighborhood setting lead to self-isolation, alienation and uncertainty in self-authenticity and self-identification?

In order to answer these questions, this paper will first provide a literature review of critical studies concentrated on the investigation of Zadie Smith's *NW*. Then, the study will focus on the central dynamics embedded in critical cosmopolitanism. The present research is built upon two main sections, concentrating on the narrative of Natalie Blake. The study of *NW* will first indicate how the interaction affiliations and ranges of engagements with others are transformed exclusively by the conflict between the exposure to segregating policies and personal forces in the search for self-authenticity. Then, it will emphasize the functionality of the local community of neighborhood in constituting a sense of belonging and authenticity. Next, the study will discuss how self-authenticity is being interrupted, reformulated and challenged by the diversification of identification as a result of increasing extent of local and global interrelations and as it is related to the micro dimension of society. By examining

the parallelism of micro and macro level processes of self-identification and self-authenticity, this section of the study argues whether engagement with traditional pre-given social patterns and local belonging are conducive to formation of self-authenticity or whether a reflexive perspective about these patterns is formed, reflecting a possibility of emergence of cosmopolitan consciousness.

2. Literature Review

Critiques on *NW* are mostly concerned with themes of space, location, globalization, financial inequality and identity politics to reveal that local concerns must be treated and understood through the lens of globalization as the novel shows the mutual influence of global and local forces. The novel's limited geography of north–west London is not a unified monolith but is composed of a mixture of transnational characters where Smith incorporates this mixture into her narrative by applying disrupted chronologies, stream of consciousness narration and attending to spatial and temporal narratives. Duly, *NW* has been demonstrated as a highly experimental late modernist novel (Marcus 2013; Knepper 2013). David Marcus defines the novel's style as an example of "experimental realism", which is concerned with the "determined aspects of inequality" and the "painful immobilities of class" that dismisses the sense of "self-definition, of autonym and self-making", which are only possible to those who live in "middle and upper brackets of society" (70-71). Marcus argues that *NW* exposes the ways we are not free as we are trapped by boundaries of the class to which we belong. He identifies Smith as an author who tries to "map out more local, more empowering connections" to reveal "those moments of contact those brief human intersections that remind us that while we are each desperately unknowable and alone we are also in this together" (67).

In a similar vein, Wendy Knepper identifies the novel as a "self-consciously experimental work" where Smith "embraces experimentation in order to express alternative, ethically-oriented construction of locality in a globalizing world" (112), as she envisions "new relations to locality through a spatial aesthetics that registers the anxious dynamics of a globalizing neighborhood" (111). This aesthetic that is embedded in the narrative continuously scrutinizes on the idea of individuality and space and requires "a more rigorous interrogation of subjectivity, which recognizes the mutability and contradictions of self" in practicing "strategies of immersion, interaction, intersection and imaginative remapping" where she explores concept of otherness (114, 116).

Smith's limited geographical focus and the interrelation between local and global forces that she demonstrates in *NW* is also explored by Sean Patrick O'brien whose study indicates how in *NW* Zadie Smith artistically and subtly

contextualizes idea of globalization by employing a narrative technique particularly suited to exploring "backgrounded yet paradoxically significant framing role of globalization and complex connectivity in the lives and stories of novel's protagonists" (27). For O'brine, while Smith intends to focus on one specific local, yet she details the "pervasiveness with which locality has become interlaced with the global" (91). In highlighting the interdependent relation between globalization influences and locals, O'brine asserts that "the intensified global networks, connections not pursued, and dwindling degrees of separation between the characters [...] are not part of a separate, globalized way of understanding the world" but "they are globalized parts of the local, the national, and the unremarkable or at least the unremarked on" (144). O'brine's study shows that the globalized influences do not completely overload local but rather engages it in an interdependent relationship that invigorates local allegiances, affiliations and identity politics that lead to a more "thicker version of the local" (96).

In her delicate study of the novel, Kristian Shaw focuses on the limited geographical setting of *NW* in developing the idea that family and local community are more conducive to improvement of cosmopolitan ethical values and localized engagements. Shaw considers *NW* as a "realistic portrayal of emerging twenty-first century relations" influenced by two racially-charged events of 7/7 and 9/11 where Smith places "human morality" and concept of "community" at the center of "postmillennial fiction" in order to acknowledge how contemporary society both feels and functions (94-95). As the novel reflects the local belonging in an environment of intense ethnic diversity, Shaw believes that *NW* should be placed in line with contemporary British fictions which are imagining the "British scene [as] a globalized locality" (29), where Smith points towards the necessity for the emergence of cosmopolitan consciousness attuned to the "diversity and complexity of twenty-first century globality" (iv).

Shaw offers that in *NW* Zadie Smith explores the significance of cosmopolitan empathy in a localized manner as a cosmopolitan value that "positions the cultural performance of tolerance and understanding as integral components of the ethically cosmopolitan subject" (73). While the interrelation between local and global forces has been central to many readings of this novel, not any reading of *NW* has concentrated on exploring the concept of self-authenticity in context of such an intensified interdependence of life worlds. Smith's *NW* explores individual struggles for self-identification and self-authenticity as they emerge as definitive challenges of globalization. The idea of cosmopolitanism that will be interrogated in this reading considers the positive impact of cosmopolitan dynamics of self-identification and world-openness in

development of self-authenticity that operates through interaction and encounter with diversity while being challenged by the intersection of race, economic status and local belonging.

3. Theoretical Background

In the face of global pluralism, individuals search for stability in their identity and a desire to express their authenticity, to attain the meaningfulness and particularity of their identity in encounter with diversity and to solve the problem of identity crisis. Social factors such as ethnicity, local communities, personal history or religion act as the primary sources in defining the individual's self-authenticity. Yet, various types of pre-given social patterns of gender, family, occupation, neighborhood and nation, upon which individuals have always been supposed to create their lives, are undermined and overthrown under the influence of globalization and what Ulrich Beck identifies as "reflexive modernity" or "second modernity", where these patterns are not anymore acting as firm boundaries in development of subjectivities and their social position.

At the wake of reflexive modernity, as a result of technological, economic, cultural and political process of radicalized modernization and the growing globalization, the subjects no longer have a firm point of reference to recognize to which collectivity they belong, consequently, they have to decide individually with reference to "changed probabilities and new stereotypes" ("Theory" 24) . The basic units of society whether household, family or community, are being redefined and re-operationalized in second modernity. They are reacting to the diversification and temporality of needs and situations, wherein, in a constant encounter with a variety of challenges the individuals intend to lead a life outside the boundaries of old bounds of family, ethnicity or class. In their modern version, these social patterns are not anymore institutional orders but individual choices dependent upon individual decisions. In this context, individuals establish the realization that "the diversification of cultural perceptions and the connections people have made for themselves eat away the very foundations on which value communities can feed and constantly renew themselves" (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 18).

Reflexive modernity witnesses an offloading of functions onto individuals. What is heralded by this individualization process is "the end of fixed, predefined images of man. The human being becomes [...] a choice among possibilities, *homo optionis*. Life, death, gender, corporeality, identity, religion, marriage, parenthood, social ties – all are becoming decidable down to the small point; once fragmented into options, everything must be decided now" (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 6). That being so, an individual can be identified as a "non-linear individual" who is defined in terms of his reflexivity in order to "cope with

a world of speed and quick decision making" and who is characterized by "choice" (Lash x). Thus, the individual can no longer be defined as a stable, concrete and unchangeable subject, but as the creator of his/her networks, location, form and situation or as "the author of his self and his biography" (Beck "Theory" 25).

In order to reduce the overwhelming globalized complexity, proliferation of worldviews and relativization of standpoints, sociologists such as Beck and Delanty express the necessity of a cosmopolitan perspective which they perceive as a methodological concept first to replace "methodological nationalism" and second to analyze the new social conflicts, dynamics and structures of globalization (Beck 2006; Delanty 2009). The cosmopolitan perspective understands social reality as socially "constructed" and "relational" (Delanty 2009), thus the nature of authenticity itself becomes an ever negotiable social construct. Cosmopolitanism breaks away from myth of authenticity embedded in specific cultures or histories, as stable realities passed on entirely from generation to generation, and suggests that in contemporary moment of experiencing multiplicity of meaning and values individuals must form and reform their senses of self-authenticity by ways of dialogue, exchange and interaction with differences because individuals are now conceived in terms of "networks and interaction" (Beck "Theory" 24). By rendering a constructionist perspective about the issue of authenticity that goes beyond an essentialist and abstract idea of the concept, cosmopolitanism demonstrates its fluid nature created by individuals acting in real every-day conditions.

One of the central dynamics within critical cosmopolitanism is the interaction capacity of this orientation that opens up new ways to theorize the transformation of subjectivity in terms of relations of Self, the Other and world (Delanty 2009). In doing so, critical cosmopolitanism conceptualizes self as an emergent project grounded in the present and in the process of becoming in relation to sources from the past and the present and their differing relevancies to local, social and global relations. If self is in process of becoming, then authenticity becomes a characteristic of this process as a "form of openness to change and to the endless mutability of self and identity in a changing world and within the context of age-related changes in social roles" (Vannini and Williams 9). Critical cosmopolitanism draws attention to the temporal properties of self-authenticity to be found in self's relations to diversity. In this view, search for authenticity is to be conceived as "a way of adaptation to change and as a strategy of defending the self from the basic threats that change may bring" (10).

Self-reflexivity thus becomes central to self-authenticity and to formation of meaning and autonomy. Critical cosmopolitanism transcends the

conceptualization of self-authenticity with personal identity and connects it into a wider "cosmopolitan consciousness" (4); it questions the traditional assumptions about authenticity by highlighting evaluative nature of the term related to degree of self-reflexivity of the individuals towards social forces as it is demonstrated in processual transformation of self as a process of becoming rather than an obsolete end in itself. From the cosmopolitan perspective, individual's reflexivity in communication with differences, embroiled with his world-opening capacity to design a better future for himself, indicates his growing cosmopolitan consciousness that views social patterns as dependent on situationally-relevant conditions of time and place rather than an absolute entity of specific authority and autonomy.

4. Natalie Blake's Search for Self-Authenticity

Natalie Blake (former Keisha) is a very principled character who has planned to climb up the social ladder in order to escape from the tensions of race, of class and violence of the Caldwell state, one way to which is in freedom to diverge from local loyalties. She questions the authority of her local belonging as she passes Willesden neighborhood "Whoever said these were fixed coordinates to which she had to be forever faithful? How could she play them false? Freedom was absolute and everywhere, constantly moving location. You couldn't hope to find it only in the old, familiar places" (Smith 470). For Natalie her childhood neighborhood is a particular segment of a past time "Caldwell people, Brayton people, Kilburn people, Willesden people. Each marking a particular period" (408). She is willing to reject her impoverished black heritage, her family and her locality to develop her legal career, as well, she is anxious about the imposed segregationist policies on racial others in impoverished parts of Kilburn area where social mobility is the only way to distance her from the negative categorical identifications that she has been exposed to because of her being a Caribbean-English subject and public housing resident. Thus, she becomes determined to formulate a new identity for herself in order to become the "the sole author" of her life (Smith 315).

As Keisha, Natalie "thought life was a problem that could be solved by means of professionalization" (Smith 286). She gets the chance to achieve such a goal at the university where Natalie assumes that she has to be "exceptional" like Michelle Holand, "a math prodigy" and one of the few from Brayton in the university who like Natalie was born and raised in "brutal high-rise towers of south Kilburn'' with no access to "the luxury of mediocrity" (Smith 300). Natalie tracks the progress of Michelle, yet as she hears about Michelle's decline and fall, halfway through the final year, "this was Natalie's conclusion" that Michelle fails to "pass the entirety of herself through a hole that would accept only part" (301).

As she interprets Michelle's failure, Natalie herself fails to do so. At university she becomes "crazy busy with self-invention" as she wants to be the sole author of her life (296). Yet, her desire to establish self-authenticity is allegedly triggered by external tensions in her relation to a variety of social and local structures and a pressure on her to surpass these challenges. As she succeeds in her career and becomes a successful barrister, Natalie attempts to connect herself to the wider public sphere of London, especially upper middle class people, facilitated by her new career, yet, she continues to face the unwelcomed boundaries formulated by her gender, class, and race. This is very well exemplified in her conversation with a fellow colleague about her career in law where her colleague reveals that:

> When some floppy-haired chap from Surrey stands before these judges, all his passionate arguments read as "pure advocacy". He and the judge recognize each other. Very like went to the same school. But Whaley's passion, or mine, or yours, reads as "aggression". To the judge. This is his house and you are an interloper within it. And let me tell you, with a woman it's worse: "aggressive hysteria". The first lesson is" turn yourself down. One touch. Two. Because this is not neutral […] This never neutral. (Smith 341)

The persistent presence of social exclusionary politics and gender inequalities are setbacks to legitimate implementation of Natalie as an active agency in the wider public sphere of London, where she is considered as an "interloper" who has to adjust her behavior and actions in relation to the public sphere that mostly defines her as racial other. In doing so, the novel demonstrates how globalization does not lessen segregation or inequality as much as it increases integration and interconnection.

With marrying up Frank, much wealthier than her, and moving to an affluent neighborhood and a Victorian house, Natalie believes that she has finally accomplished every goal she has ever set for herself. Comparing her interrelation with Caldwell, where in the absence of her friend Leah, she "felt herself to be revealed and exposed", with middle-class surrounding of her new residence, she notices a break from Caldwell where she considered herself as an "anomaly" who was "peculiarly afflicted" with "the profound isolation and loneliness she now knew to be the one and only reality of this world" (Smith 269). However, in her new residence, Natalie enjoys such isolation that is devoid of any association with undesired aspects of her past. Her social mobility has provided her with "[p]rivate wards. Private cinemas. Christmas abroad […] Security system. Fences. The carriage of 4×4 that lets you sit alone above traffic. There is a perfect isolation out there somewhere; you can get it, although it doesn't come cheap" (Smith 119). The luxuriousness of her new residence complicates her preference for local affiliations, as it allows her to delimit interaction with ethnic minorities of lower class of her previous neighborhood.

In order to adjust herself to changes in her life due to her career and marriage, Natalie betrays her own ethnic bounds in ignoring her racial and local particularity which also ensures that ethnic ambivalence is central to her self-authenticity. Whatever relates Natalie to her racial and local background appears to function on surface level. While, usually, she keeps to the same theme of clothing "gold hoops, demine skirt (and) suede boots with tassels" (Smith 415), she orders outfits for local outgoing via online purchase, picking up a local outing through the internet, choosing an outfit in which "she felt African ... although nothing she wore came from Africa except perhaps the earrings and bangles, conceptually" (366). For Natalie these are cultural symbols, by means of which she can compose an authentic identity for herself, yet, despite her articulation of her local and ethnic belonging as it appears in her choice of dress or in decorating her house with African ornaments, she fails to empower her sense of self-authenticity.

In neglecting her local belonging, she creates rapture between her past and present, breaking the bridge between her local and global connectedness. In doing so, she fails to organize a comprehensive pattern for her identity out of these connections. By prioritizing her new identity and undermining her cultural allegiances and suppression of localized ties in favor of adherence to high class society, Natalie's identity remains fragmented and fragile. When watching her newborn for the first time, Natalie looks into the black eyes of her daughter and feels that the baby is not in any way "identical with the entity Natalie Blake, who was, in some sense, proof that no such distinct entity existed. And yet was not this being also an attribute of Natalie Blake? An extension?" (Smith 387). Natalie's experience of inauthenticity with regard to her newly constructed identity as Natalie Blake results at her estrangement and distance from the world.

Unable to process her new identity, Natalie begins to require local validations to maintain her self-authenticity. Upon her marriage problems with her husband, Frank, she, instantly, returns to the very locality that she has continually avoided. Now she is nothing more than a "phenomenon of walking" in her neighborhood. Failed as Natalie Blake, as the narrator describes "she had no name, no biography, no characteristics. They had all fled into paradox. Certain physical memories remained" (Smith 428). As she notices on her lonely walks in her former neighborhood "her relation with each person was now unrecognizable to her and her imagination – due to a long process of neglect, almost as long as her life – did not have the generative power to muster an alternative future for itself" (290). She seeks some sign of "perforation" on Caldwell's boundary wall to "break back in" (429) and to "pass the entirety of

herself through a hole that (now) would accept only part" (301), as she had reflected on Michelle's failure to adjust herself to the boundaries of race and class in university.

5. Localized Community

5.1. *NW* as a Site of Intertwined Global/Local Connections

There is a working relationship between Natalie and her locality; she cannot completely cut herself from local bounds. In a retrospective thought about her family, her neighborhood and herself, Natalie barely includes the greater context of London; she tries to avoid even leaving the northwest side of London. To live in northwest London feels much more at home. When asked for a charity speaking engagement across the Thames, Natalie protests that "I don't go south" (Smith 344). Indeed, for Natalie, her relationship with her locality engenders a sense of certainty in balancing the ambivalences in her identity formation. While her social upgrade allows her to change her working-class neighborhood to a middle-class environment, she prefers to inhabit an area close to Caldwell. As the narrator observes in Leah's thoughts "Leah passes the old estate everyday on the walk to the corner shop. She can see it from her backyard. Nat lives just far enough to avoid it" (Smith 89). Natalie relinquishes ties to her community in order to be the soul author of her identity.

Natalie cares for her family and community; she does pro bono death row cases in the Caribbean islands of her ancestry and splits ten per cent of her income between charitable contributions and supporting her family. Natalie assumes her benevolent action as "remnants of her faith that made her fretful and suspicious that these good deeds were, in fact, a further, veiled, example of self-interest, representing only the assuaging of conscience" (Smith 362-63). She is not content with her own intentional dislocation from her former vicinity that appears as a bad conscience; however, her benevolent action can be identified as a cosmopolitan virtue, an ethical engagement with her local community, which also affirms to her partial loyalty to her former neighborhood community.

Attachment to the local community links Natalie with meaning and value. Indeed, Natalie expresses a tendency to engage with people of her vicinity to extend her sociability. As the narrator informs, walking down her neighborhood, Kilburn, "Natalie had a strong desire to slip into the lives of other people. It was hard to see how this desire could be practicably satisfied or what, if anything, it really meant 'slip into' is an imprecise thought"; Natalie wants to engage in any conversations "to be heard in city of London", yet, "listening was not enough. Natalie Blake wanted to know people. To be intimately involved with them" (Smith 399). For Andrew J. Weigert "self is emergently and interactionally social

— a process where meanings of self-as-individual emerge" for that reason, self-identification is a "social process" determined by confirmation with and from other's as well as one's own experiment as means and results of social interactions (39).

The local community acts as a motivational force rooted in Natalie's self-identification with a particular meaning as a source of self-authenticity. She does not want to give away her communal attachment which is threatened by current controversies in the larger community. Her desire to engage with the diversity of her local environment, with "the Russian lady at the bus stop", "the Ukrainian gangster" and "many more engaging conversations to be heard in the city of London" (Smith 400) validates a potential for cosmopolitan engagement, it demonstrates a communal sensibility, reflective of a cosmopolitan consciousness which overcomes the dividing force of globalization. In this manner the novel indicates that the experience of globalized influences does not entirely overpower the local, but involves it in an interdependent relationship.

5.2. Multiplicity of Identification and the Ambivalences of Boundaries

Natalie's process of self-identification lives on the borders of her cultural heritage, neighborhood attachments, education, occupation and social position which never completely fuse and constantly assign her with different identifications in formation of her identity and her self-authenticity. When one of their childhood friends, Felix, is murdered, Natalie and Leah suspect Nathan Bole of murdering Felix. In bewilderment Leah asks Natalie "Why not us? Why that poor bastard on Albert Road? It doesn't make sense to me" to which Natalie responds "We worked harder […] we were smarter and we knew we didn't want to end up begging on other people's doorsteps. We wanted to get out. People like Bogle — they didn't want it enough" (Smith 473). Natalie has separated herself from a community that according to her does not fit a smart lawyer like her; she has created boundaries to differentiate herself from members of her local environment which provides the ground for exclusion of others as it is clear in her lack of any sympathizing identification with Felix's murder.

As the novel exemplifies in her reaction to Felix's murder, Natalie attaches herself to any opportunity, here her professionalism that would assign her with meaning and authenticity, thus she fails to develop any capacity to self-reflexivity which results at her egocentric and particularistic view of others and her estrangement from her local community. The novel demonstrates her exclusionary behavior as Smith contrasts Natalie and Leah's way of responding to this tragic event. While Leah feels sorrow for Felix and cannot engage herself with a comprehensive logic like Natalie's to cope with this tragic event, Natalie's expresses class-centered perspective about the people of her childhood vicinity

fails to engender her with any empathetic identification with her childhood friend Felix and his murder.

As Beck argues the boundaries between "Us and the Others" are "multiplied" ("Theory" 19), these boundaries are ambivalent, while they can be the source of formulating an identity by differentiating self from the other, but they can be viewed as internally fragmented and fluid which makes it difficult to conceptualize what makes identity when it is such a fluid and slippery concept. When she decides to call the police to report Felix's death, Natalie shifts to speak in her local language, although, as a barrister she is aware of the literature of the legal system, she chooses to speak as her former working-class self, Keisha, adopting the voice that she used when she lived on the council estate. The turn of language instances a moment of Natalie's recognition of the relationality she has with her locality and its inhabitants, her shifting and partial perception of her local identity is the result of a "relational inter-subjectivity full of ambivalence and occlusions" that posits an idea of self which is not fully accessible or intelligible to herself and others around her (Stacey 35).

As it is evident in her constantly shifting identification with different classes of society, different people and places, Natalie's successful marriage, her local affiliations, her neighborhood and career fail to act as firm points of references in her attempts to construct her new identity. While she attempts to assent with diversification of identity sources, Natalie's palpable belief in the concrete nature of identity and self-authenticity avoid the suggestion that the intelligibility of her identity is not any more in its being concrete as an unchangeable entity but rather in its flexibility to adjust to multiplicity of patterns such as occupation, neighborhood and class which do not anymore function as fixed categories in determining on process of identity formation but are constantly open to change.

6. Conclusion

In *NW* Zadie Smith suggests skepticism of idealistic assumptions about self-authenticity and identity formation that are retained by the consciousness of living in a globalized world, where uncertainty takes the central stage in individuals' sense of their identity, status and relationship with their surroundings. Smith shows that there are multiple identities that depend on contexts and relations with others rather than a singular unitary coherent identity. Through Natalie Blake's search for self-authenticity, Smith acknowledges that the term is of personal, local and social relevance and is progressed through self's participation in community and social practices both being related to personal motives and motivational sources. Therefore, she suggests a different definition of self-authenticity, the feasibility and practical application of which is in adopting a cosmopolitan consciousness that develops

capacities of self-reflexivity and being open to change, since the contemporary use of the concept of cosmopolitanism acknowledges that self-authenticity is dependent on the degree of adaptation of self to changes which is only attainable through a willingness to being open to experimentation with multiple identities which provide the security and stability that individuals need for the development of their self-authenticity and self-identification.

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