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## PRESENTATION DE JDS

**Le Journal International des Sachants (JDS)** est une revue scientifique pluridisciplinaire dédiée à la valorisation et à la vulgarisation des résultats de recherches innovantes, de découvertes de pointe et de productions scientifiques originales et pertinentes dans divers domaines scientifiques. Disposant de comité scientifique et de lecture, la revue **JDS** offre ainsi aux chercheurs du monde entier, une plateforme de publication de haute qualité en favorisant le partage des connaissances et de la collaboration au sein de la communauté scientifique.

**JDS** est une revue évaluée par des pairs (*blind peer review*) et en libre accès "*Open access*" relevant des Editions Croco. Il publie les articles dans le domaine des Sciences Humaines et Sociales ; Langues et littérature ; Art, patrimoine et culture ; Sciences du Langage et de la Communication ; Sciences Economiques et de Gestion ; Sciences politiques et Juridiques. Dans sa vision d'ouverture, **JDS** encourage la collaboration interdisciplinaire entre les chercheurs de tous les pays africains et du monde.

Les articles proposés doivent respecter la ligne éditoriale de la revue. Ils doivent être originaux et n'avoir jamais fait l'objet d'une acceptation pour publication dans une autre revue à comité de lecture. Ils sont soumis à une sélection initiale par l'éditeur, puis à un processus rigoureux d'évaluation par les pairs en double aveugle avant publication.

## **PROTOCOLE DE REDACTION DE JDS**

*Le Journal International des Sachants (JDS)* n'accepte que des articles inédits et originaux dans diverses langues notamment en allemand, en anglais, en espagnol et en Français. Le manuscrit est remis à deux instructeurs, choisis en fonction de leurs compétences dans la discipline. Le secrétariat de la rédaction communique aux auteurs les observations formulées par le comité de lecture ainsi qu'une copie du rapport, si cela est nécessaire. Dans le cas où la publication de l'article est acceptée avec révisions, l'auteur dispose alors d'un délai raisonnable pour remettre la version définitive de son texte au secrétariat de la revue

### **Structure générale de l'article :**

Le projet d'article doit être envoyé sous la forme d'un document Word, police Times New Roman, taille 12 et interligne 1,5 pour le corps de texte (sauf les notes de bas de page qui ont la taille 10 et les citations en retrait de 2 cm à gauche et à droite qui sont présentées en taille 11 avec interligne 1 ou simple). Le texte doit être justifié et ne doit pas excéder 18 pages. Le manuscrit doit comporter une introduction, un développement articulé, une conclusion et une bibliographie.

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- Le titre de l'article (15 mots maximum) doit être clair et concis. De taille 14 pts gras, il doit être centré.
- Juste après le titre, l'auteur doit mentionner son identité (Prénom et NOM en gras et en taille 12), ses adresses (institution, e-mail, pays et téléphones en italique et en taille 11)
- Le résumé (200 mots au maximum) présenté en taille 10 pts ne doit pas être une reproduction de la conclusion du manuscrit. Il est donné à la fois en français et en anglais (abstract). Les mots-clés (05 au maximum, taille 10pts) sont donnés en français et en anglais (key words)
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## Urban transformation and gentrification in America in Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* and Zadie Smith's *White Teeth*

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### Abstract

This paper examines social inequality, urbanization, and displacement in *The Jungle* and *White Teeth* through a comparative literary lens. It explores how these novels reveal the human experiences behind structural inequalities that continue to shape urban life. Focusing on their urban settings, the study traces patterns of displacement, class struggle, and cultural conflict, using Marxist theory to analyze economic exploitation and class relations, and Postcolonial theory to address racialized and cultural marginalization. The paper argues that both texts depict urban transformation not merely as physical or economic change, but as a process that dislocates vulnerable populations and normalizes inequality. Literature provides insight into the consequences of policy-driven development, showing how economic growth, labor precarity, and cultural fragmentation are experienced at individual and community levels. Sinclair and Smith expose the ideological forces justifying displacement while highlighting resistance and adaptation among marginalized groups. By linking literary analysis to urban policy debates, this study demonstrates how narratives of gentrification and modernization can inform socially responsive approaches to urban development, emphasizing the need to address structural inequities rather than reproduce them.

**Keywords:** Gentrification, urbanization, social inequality, urban expansion, displacement

## Transformation urbaine et gentrification en Amérique : une étude de *The Jungle* de Upton Sinclair et *White Teeth* de Zadie Smith

### Résumé

Cet article examine les inégalités sociales, l'urbanisation et le déplacement dans *The Jungle* et *White Teeth* à travers une approche comparative en études littéraires. Il analyse comment ces romans révèlent les expériences vécues derrière les inégalités structurelles qui façonnent encore la vie urbaine contemporaine. En se concentrant sur les cadres urbains, l'étude met en évidence les dynamiques de déplacement, de lutte des classes et de conflits culturels, mobilisant la théorie marxiste pour analyser l'exploitation économique et la théorie postcoloniale pour les dimensions raciales et culturelles de la marginalisation. Les deux œuvres montrent que la transformation urbaine ne se limite pas à un changement physique ou économique, mais déplace systématiquement les populations vulnérables tout en normalisant les inégalités. La littérature éclaire les conséquences humaines des politiques de développement, en révélant comment croissance économique, précarité du travail et fragmentation culturelle sont vécues individuellement et collectivement. Sinclair et Smith exposent les forces idéologiques légitimant le déplacement tout en soulignant les formes de résistance et d'adaptation des communautés marginalisées. Cette recherche contribue aux débats sur les politiques urbaines et la justice sociale, montrant que la littérature peut approfondir la compréhension critique de la gentrification et encourager des approches urbaines plus sensibles aux inégalités.

**Mots-clés :** Gentrification, urbanisation, inégalités sociales, expansion urbaine, déplacement

## **Introduction**

The urbanization and suburbanization process has had a profound impact on the United States landscape, particularly during the late 19th and early 20th centuries (J. Kenneth T., 1985, pp. 11-15). Cities like Chicago and New York expanded exponentially as a result of industrialization and immigration, and this had severe socio-economic effects on the populations. While these processes spurred economic development, they also intensified social inequality, class divisions, and racial tensions. Gentrification and the transformation of urban character have occupied a priority place in recent debate, as they reflect broader fears about displacement, income inequality, and neighborhood restructuring. The creation of gentrified communities, while touted as redevelopment, is also understood as a process that removes long-time, low-income residents from their homes and their communities.

From a Marxist perspective, *The Jungle* by Upton Sinclair and *White Teeth* by Zadie Smith depict urbanization as a capitalist process that intensifies class exploitation and reinforces social inequality, exposing the marginalization of immigrant labor in industrial cities and the persistence of class divisions in gentrifying, multicultural suburbs. Sinclair's *The Jungle* offers a backward look at the urbanization of America in the early 20th century, exposing the exploitation of immigrant laborers and the social decay caused by rushed industrialization. This article adopts a comparative Marxist framework, drawing on the works of Karl Marx, Henri Lefebvre, and David Harvey, to examine how *The Jungle* and *White Teeth* represent the socio-spatial consequences of capitalist urban transformation in distinct historical and national contexts. While *The Jungle* exposes the exploitation and segregation of immigrant labor in early 20th-century American industrial capitalism, *White Teeth* explores the effects of late-capitalist urban renewal and gentrification on race, class, and identity in contemporary London. By placing these texts in dialogue, the article argues that, despite their differing settings, both novels reveal urban restructuring as a transnational process that reproduces class inequality and social marginalization over time, in line with Marxist theories of capital accumulation and the production of space.

Marxist analyses of urban space have long emphasized the relationship between capitalist development and socio-spatial inequality. Karl Marx establishes the foundational link between capital accumulation and class exploitation, while Henri Lefebvre extends this insight by theorizing the “production of space” as a social process shaped by power and economic forces. Building on these ideas, David Harvey argues that urbanization functions as a key mechanism



for the absorption of surplus capital, often resulting in displacement and uneven development. In literary studies, critics have applied these frameworks to examine how fiction represents industrialization, migration, and class struggle, particularly in American naturalist texts such as *The Jungle* and in postcolonial and multicultural narratives like *White Teeth*. However, few studies adopt a comparative transatlantic perspective that brings these works into dialogue, especially in relation to the continuity between early industrial urbanization and contemporary gentrification. This article addresses that gap by combining Marxist urban theory with comparative literary analysis to highlight the enduring dynamics of class inequality across time and space.

## **1. Urbanization in Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle***

### **1.1. The rise of industrial America and Chicago's transformation**

In the early 20th century, Chicago's industrial expansion illustrates how capitalist urbanization produces social inequality and spatial marginalization. Immigrants arriving from Eastern and Southern Europe were drawn by the promise of employment, yet their labor was systematically exploited in factories and meatpacking plants, particularly around the Union Stock Yards. Rather than facilitating social mobility, the city's rapid industrial growth concentrated workers in overcrowded, unsanitary neighborhoods, reinforcing class hierarchies and limiting access to economic and social opportunities. In *The Jungle*, Sinclair dramatizes these dynamics, showing how the urban environment itself (shaped by capitalist imperatives) both confines and devalues immigrant communities, turning the city into a space of structural oppression rather than opportunity.

In *The Jungle*, the abuse of immigrant workers in Chicago's meatpacking industry is graphically described by Upton Sinclair. The novel unveils the bitter reality of urbanization and industrialization, particularly the bad sanitary conditions and unsafe working conditions of the meatpacking plants. Sinclair vividly portrays the brutal effects of industrial capitalism on immigrant workers, writing: "They were all crowded together in a small, dirty room, and the stench of the open sewers mingled with the odors from the meat-packing plants. They worked for long hours, under the lash of the foreman, their bodies worn and their spirits broken, while the pay barely kept them alive" (Sinclair, 1906: 73). This extended depiction emphasizes not only the physical oppression of the laborers but also the structural mechanisms through which industrial expansion deepened social inequality and reinforced class hierarchies. The workers' concentrated living conditions in slums, combined with environmental degradation from factories, illustrate how urban space under capitalism functioned to confine and exploit

immigrant communities rather than provide opportunities for upward mobility. Sinclair paints a grim picture: "In one of these houses, eight or ten families lived, each one of them in a single room" (U. Sinclair, 1906: 91). The overcrowding was supplemented by speedy urbanization, as city planners could not cope with the growth. Sinclair condemns the capitalist regime by exposing the systemic exploitation and dehumanization of workers. Through his detailed depiction of the meatpacking industry, he shows how profit-driven practices (long hours, unsafe working conditions, and minimal wages) reduce laborers to mere instruments of production. By linking the physical suffering and social marginalization of immigrant workers to the imperatives of industrial capitalism, Sinclair critiques not just individual employers but the entire economic and social system that prioritizes profit over human welfare.

Sinclair's portrayal of the meatpacking industry highlights the clash of urbanization, economic exploitation, and social decay in growing cities. The novel exposes the breakdown of the American Dream by showing that, for immigrant workers, the promise of upward mobility and economic security is largely unattainable. Despite their hard work and hope for a better life, characters in *The Jungle* face relentless exploitation, unsafe working conditions, and impoverished living environments. Sinclair demonstrates that the ideals of prosperity and social advancement are systematically undermined by industrial capitalism, revealing a gap between the rhetoric of opportunity and the harsh realities of class inequality, as in the example of Jurgis Rudkus, a Lithuanian immigrant who initially clings to the possibility of class mobility but subsequently is disillusioned by the harshness of industrial labor. The meatpacking industry is a microcosm of Chicago's growth from a small industrial town into a thriving metropolis. With factories expanding and labor demands mounting, working conditions worsened and the social cohesion of the city disintegrated. *The Jungle* is a criticism of the free-market capitalism driving urbanization and industrialization and how these undermined the working class.

Sinclair's depiction of immigrant ghettos also foreshadows the subsequent impact of gentrification. Just as spur-of-the-moment industrialization created slums and exploitations, gentrification drove out impoverished communities. The ongoing issues of economic disparity, exploitation, and social decay in cities mirror the ongoing issues that cities face in spite of rapid development and expansion.

## **1.2. Social and economic effects of urbanization**

Sinclair's vivid description of conditions in the factories, the housing, and pervasive social inequalities paints a picture of the dismal world of the early 20th-century urban underclass with continuing relevance to urban landscapes today. The book follows the saga of Lithuanian

immigrant Jurgis Rudkus and his family, charting their struggles against the coarse reality of life in Chicago's industrial belt. Sinclair explicitly portrays the dirty, unhealthy working conditions in the meatpacking plants, in which workers like Jurgis endure endless working hours, poor compensation, and bodily harm: "Jurgis had worked for hours, with a maddening feeling of helplessness, as if he were being pounded in a machine that did not care anything for him" (U. Sinclair, 1906: 108). Factory owners exploit workers without fear of legal consequences because the lack of labor protection allows industrial capitalists to gain maximum profit at the workers' expense.

Sinclair also criticizes the miserable housing life of foreign workers, who are forced to live in crowded, deteriorated tenements without common amenities. He is talking about the Rudkus family's new home: "There were so many people in the room that you could hardly move, and the smell of the damp was so strong that it nearly made you sick" (U. Sinclair, 1906: 79). These conditions illustrate the general trend of urban deterioration caused by unregulated industrial growth, while the rich reap the benefits but the working classes bear the cost.

Though *The Jungle* was penned in the early 20th century, its themes remain relevant today, particularly when taking gentrification and urban displacement into account. As industrial capitalists profited from the exploitation of immigrant labor, today's developers and wealthier residents profit from the redevelopment of city neighborhoods at the expense of the poorer, often marginalized, groups. In both cases, the lower-class residents are displaced by rising property values and rents.

Sinclair's immigrant protagonists, pushed to the margins of society, mirror the status of today's displaced populations in gentrified neighborhoods. With the arrival of more affluent residents, housing prices rise, and lower-income residents are displaced. It's a socio-economic loop of disparity, not much different from exploitation and displacement of Sinclair's time. Gentrification weighs most on minorities, immigrants, and working poor, all the same social classes targeted in *The Jungle*. Even though the landscape is changed, the root of economic inequality endures. The most marginalized peoples continue to face the brunt of urban change despite industrialization and current-day gentrification, which are sources of inequality of wealth.

## **2. Gentrification and social inequality in Zadie Smith's *White Teeth***

### **2.1. The post-colonial urban landscape**

Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* (2000) is a critical representation of post-colonial London, examining the dynamics of urban transformation and their impact upon social dynamics, more

specifically in terms of race, immigration, and class. Set in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, the novel depicts the social and physical transformation of neighborhoods in a city increasingly plagued by gentrification. The novel's focus on multiculturalism and the immigrant experience offers a lens through which we can observe the tense intersection between gentrification, social inequality, and urban renewal in London today.

Smith presents us with a post-colonial cityscape whereby the historical path of colonialism and migration intersects with the day-to-day process of city renovation. London appears as a city characterized by diversity but also a city where class and racial divisions obstinately persist. As neighborhoods gentrify, the once working-class and immigrant communities are displaced to allow for more white, middle-class, and professional individuals. This is particularly apparent in neighborhoods like Willesden Green and the surrounding areas, where the novel *White Teeth* is set.

In *White Teeth*, Smith reflects the cultural and demographic changes within these communities, particularly through what happens to the Iqbal, Jones, and Chalfen families. The novel reveals the complex dynamics of race and class in post-colonial London, and how economic forces drive social change and reshape neighborhoods. The working-class, immigrant neighborhoods are gradually remade into expensive, gentrified neighborhoods to accommodate a wealthier clientele. Smith critiques the manner in which gentrification promotes social fragmentation, whereby the voices of the original residents are marginalized as new, affluent populations are invited in.

Gentrification in *White Teeth* is not just presented as an economic process, but also a cultural one whereby urban space that was once the heartland of immigrant communities is remade in the image of wealth and cultural homogeneity. As neighborhoods are "improved," the social character of the neighborhoods is remade, and immigrant and working-class residents are displaced to accommodate a wealthier and more homogeneous population. Smith portrays the social dynamics of this transformation in characters like Archie's family, who observe firsthand the demographic and economic transformation of their neighborhood.

For instance, when Archie Jones first moves into a new apartment, he is welcomed by the transforming cityscape in a district once known for housing immigrant families. Smith's description of the area encapsulates the gentrification process at such a rapid pace: "The corner shops were not what they had been. The old pub, The Crown and Anchor, had been turned into a gastro-pub, with white tile and clean lines and a heavy door that had no knocker" (Z. Smith, 2000: 143). The gentrification of the area is one that erases its working-class, immigrant past and recasts it as a glossy, consumerist space.

Gentrification, as depicted in *White Teeth*, is not simply a physical transformation of spaces. It also carries cultural and social implications, particularly for immigrant communities whose histories and identities are inscribed over by arriving wealthier, typically white, middle-class professionals. The Iqbal family, for example, suffers as their neighborhood is gentrified into a high-class, exclusive enclave. They represent the plight of immigrants in post-colonial countries who grapple with cultural identity as they are removed from their neighborhoods by displacement and economic forces.

The topic of gentrification in *White Teeth* is also inextricably linked with the post-colonial state, wherein market forces of urban renewal also involve cultural erasure and a remapping of the urban space. The London immigrant communities, particularly from the once colonized British nations, find it hard to maintain pace with the process, which has the effect of rendering their cultures and histories invisible. Smith portrays the conflicted experience of gentrification in a post-colonial context, whereby immigrant communities are conflicted between maintaining their cultural identities and responding to the economic pressures that gentrification visits upon them.

Smith's depiction of characters like Samad Iqbal, a Bangladeshi immigrant, illustrates how gentrification exacerbates the already fraught experience of belonging in post-colonial cities. As Samad watches the face of his neighborhood change, he feels the erosion of his sense of ownership of the area that was once the exclusive domain of his community: "The old street was slowly yielding to modernity, shops selling exotic spices and materials had been replaced by glass-and-steel-fronted boutiques dealing in overpriced 'antiques' and 'art'" (Z. Smith, 2000: 211). Here, Smith draws attention to the cultural displacement of immigrants who are not only economically but also culturally displaced as gentrification alters the character of their neighborhoods.

The gentrification in *White Teeth* resembles the broader patterns of gentrification in cities like New York and Chicago, where gentrification also leads to the displacement of long-standing communities, particularly those that are poor or ethnically marginalized. This corporate- and developer-driven process reshapes cities to be more accommodating of more prosperous populations at the expense of working-class and immigrant communities. As areas gentrify, the social and cultural characteristics that once identified these neighborhoods are erased along with them. Smith critiques this process by drawing attention to the manner in which class, race, and ethnicity intersect to shape the experience of urban transformation.

Just as Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* is a critique of the exploitation and displacement of immigrant workers amidst industrialization in early 20th-century Chicago, *White Teeth* is a

critique of the displacement of immigrant communities in a globalized post-colonial London today. Both novels are critiques of the systems that employ economic and social transformation to further consolidate power in the hands of the elite, typically at the expense of oppressed groups.

## **2.2. The impacts of gentrification on working-class and immigrant communities**

*White Teeth* (2000) by Zadie Smith is the common thread of social and economic differences of urban regeneration in London. The novel examines the process through which long-standing, traditionally marginalized residents are pushed out, bringing tensions, erosion of culture, and alienation. Smith laments the process, particularly in neighborhoods like Willesden and Dalston, as higher groups displace the original inhabitants, changing the social makeup.

One of the main protagonists, Archie Jones, is a figure for new urban Britain. Archie is an old working-class bloke who resides in the areas of Willesden that are quickly becoming gentrified. Smith depicts the transformation: "The whole neighbourhood had changed. The run-down houses. were now replaced by smooth, shiny fronts of new-build apartments" (Z. Smith, 2000: 145). This is an echo of the broader trend in London where immigrant and working-class communities are being displaced by more affluent, often white, middle-class incomers.

With the arrival of the wealthy, the indigenous population, including immigrants, are driven out and feel alienated. The displacement also leads to erasure of cultures since neighborhoods once dominated by Caribbean, Bengali, and other immigrant communities become unrecognizable. Smith illustrates this in the case of Samad Iqbal, a Bengali migrant, who reflects on the change in Willesden: "The old neighborhood wasn't what it once had been" (Z. Smith, 2000: 312). For Samad, this is a form of personal and cultural betrayal.

Gentrification enhances the alienation of long-standing residents. As Smith criticizes, the process benefits newcomers at the cost of ethnic minorities, rendering the city more socially and economically divided. The once diverse neighborhoods are more and more homogenized for the affluent. This is also reflected in the generational struggle of immigrant families. Millat, Samad's son, grapples with his identity, reflecting the frustration of the post-colonial generation caught between British and immigrant identity. His rebellion also symbolizes the overall resistance to cultural and economic displacement.

The gentrification in *White Teeth* mirrors the same in industrial America's immigrant communities, as in *The Jungle* by Upton Sinclair. Both novels look back on how economic change pushes marginalized communities out of their homes and so makes them

disenfranchised and culturally alienated. In *The Jungle*, immigrant working-class labor in Chicago's industrial economy is taken advantage of, while in *White Teeth*, post-colonial immigrants are pushed out as their districts are redeveloped for the wealthy.

Smith's presentation of gentrification in *White Teeth* is a critique of city development that prioritizes the rich over the working class and immigrant communities. It is a theme that echoes the social ills in Sinclair's *The Jungle*, where economic transformation leads to exploitation and displacement of marginalized communities. Both novels indicate how city renewal, whether during the early times of industrialization or modern-day gentrification, exacerbates social inequality and marginalization, a lesson still relevant in today's cities.

### **3. Comparative analysis of *The Jungle* and *White Teeth* on urban growth and social consequences**

#### **3.1. Parallels between Sinclair's depiction of Chicago and Smith's depiction of London**

Both Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* and Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* are about the gentrification of urban spaces and gentrification's effects on the working class in specific social and economic contexts. Sinclair aims at early 20th-century industrial Chicago, while Smith focuses on late-20th-century post-colonial, multicultural London. Both novels examine how economic systems, capitalism in Sinclair's novel and neoliberal capitalism in Smith's, are responsible for producing inequality and pushing marginalized groups from their places.

In *The Jungle*, Sinclair highlights the dehumanizing influence of unbridled capitalism during the industrial era, particularly in Chicago's meatpacking sector. The city is symbolic of economic exploitation, wherein the rich grow rich at the expense of the poor. The narrator of the novel, Jurgis Rudkus, states, "The people who were the most to be pitied were the rich men. they had no peace" (U. Sinclair, 1906: 295), reflecting on the difference between the wealthy and the exploited workers. Industrialization forces immigrants like Jurgis into cramped, dirty surroundings.

*White Teeth* is also critical of gentrification in London, where established working-class immigrant populations are displaced by wealthier, often white, residents. Smith is interested in how neoliberal policies benefit developers and investors and at the cost of marginalized communities. She describes the process: "What was once poor is now part of this 'desirable' part of town" (Z. Smith, 2000: 303), illustrating how gentrification displaces established residents.

Both novels point out the exploitation and displacement of immigrant communities. Immigrant labor in *The Jungle* lives in abominable working conditions and resides in filthy, disease-ridden slums. Sinclair describes their fate: "They were but poor people, who had come to America to be crushed. under the wheels of the giant machine" (U. Sinclair, 1906: 37), Similarly, in *White Teeth*, the Iqbal family's neighborhood is altered by economic pressures, resulting in the loss of cultural heritage and rising racial tension. Samad Iqbal notes, "They had become 'them', this other thing, and he was 'we', the ones who'd been here first" (U. Sinclair, 1906: 256), highlighting the alienation caused by gentrification. Both novels also depict how urbanization leads to cultural and social fragmentation. Industrialization in *The Jungle* disrupts immigrant communities and families, whose exploitation makes social cohesion erode.

According to Sinclair, "The great city was a beast, and its teeth were hunger and its claws were poverty" (U. Sinclair, 1906: 203). In *White Teeth*, gentrification too destroys settled communities as affluent inhabitants displace immigrant populations. Smith condemns the alienation between the new residents and the indigenous people: "There was a new crowd in the street. but who was really part of it?" (Z. Smith, 2000: 342).

While penned in other places and times, Chicago in the early 20th century and London in the late 20th century, *The Jungle* and *White Teeth* are strikingly similar in their portrayal of how urban growth and economic systems produce inequality. The two novels demonstrate how industrialization and gentrification push out the working class and immigrant communities and lead to social and cultural fragmentation as rich communities move in. Sinclair and Smith, through the novels, provide astute criticisms about the present implications of urbanization and gentrification.

### **3.2. Social degeneration and economic disparity**

Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* (1906) and Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* (2000) both explore how urbanization fosters social degeneration and economic disparity, though in different historical and cultural contexts. Sinclair critiques the unregulated industrial capitalism of early 20th-century Chicago, particularly its exploitation of immigrant workers in the meatpacking industry, while Smith critiques gentrification and market-driven development in contemporary London, which disproportionately impacts minority and working-class communities. Both novels expose the mechanisms that perpetuate inequality and urban degeneration.

In *The Jungle*, Sinclair portrays industrialization as an economic system of exploitation, whereby immigrant workers are afflicted with poverty and unsafe labor practices. The

meatpacking industry serves as a metaphor for capitalist greed, and social degeneration accompanying urbanization. Sinclair describes the way that the workers are trapped in a poverty cycle with the wealthy industrialists benefiting and the working class left behind. As Jurgis Rudkus realizes, "They were not Americans, and they never would be. there was nothing to hope for in the world outside of that little corner" (U. Sinclair, 1906: 249). This is a sign of class division and social degradation due to inequality. Sinclair criticizes monopolies and the repression of workers' rights, writing of the city as a "beast" with "hunger" and "poverty" as claws and teeth (U. Sinclair, 1906: 203).

In *White Teeth*, gentrification of post-colonial London is satirised by Smith as working-class immigrant communities are replaced by wealthier, typically white, middle-class inhabitants. In Archie's character and properties like Dalston and Willesden, Smith illustrates the cultural and economic displacement caused by gentrification. She deplores the social deterioration brought about by the economic imbalance of gentrification, as displaced people become estranged. Smith says: "It was very nice to be a gentrified, white-collar, middle-class professional and to talk about 'diversity,' but those individuals, they did not perceive diversity; they perceived 'improvement'" (Z. Smith, 2000: 312), pointing to the gap between the interests of the wealthy and the suffering of oppressed groups.

Both *White Teeth* and *The Jungle* address how urbanization benefits the wealthy at the cost of marginalized communities, leading to social decline. Sinclair condemns the capitalist exploitation of immigrant workers, which leads to physical and social decay. Similarly, Smith condemns gentrification, which yields economic inequality and displaces working-class and immigrant communities. Both novels expose the human cost of urban renewal, showing how economic systems lead to social degradation and inequality.

Overall, both novels offer a critical analysis of the social and economic effects of urban growth. Sinclair's critique of industrial capitalism and Smith's examination of gentrification reveal how economic systems, capitalist or market, create inequality and displacement. Through their explorations of urban renewal in different contexts, both books shed light on the deepening social cleavages within cities and the quest for social justice amidst accelerating urban change.

#### **4. Broader implications for American cities and suburbs**

##### **4.1. The evolution of gentrification in American cities**

Gentrification, as characterized in *The Jungle* and *White Teeth*, still revamps city locales in US metropolitan areas, accelerating income disparity, racial segregation, and low-income family displacement. While Sinclair's description of the industrialization of Chicago and Smith's

condemnation of London's post-colonial gentrification offer a temporal background, they also help us understand contemporary gentrification in cities like New York, San Francisco, and Chicago. Here, city urbanization increasingly excludes minority and blue-collar groups from their communities at the terrible cost of social consequence.

New York City is an excellent case study of this process, whereby low-income, working-class, and immigrant populations are displaced by rising property values and market-driven development. In *The Jungle*, Sinclair depicts the exploitation of immigrant workers in Chicago's meatpacking industry, much as gentrification now disproportionately affects immigrants and the working poor in New York. In neighborhoods like Williamsburg and Harlem, wealthy, mostly white residents push out African American, Latino, and immigrant populations, leading to tensions and loss of cultural identity. Sharon Zukin chronicles in *Naked City* that "gentrification continues with the displacement of low-income populations, pushing out immigrants and people of color. culturally erasing neighborhoods to accommodate the middle and upper classes" (S. Zukin, 2009: 213). This is a projection of social and cultural displacement of the immigrant workers in *The Jungle*.

The Mission District of San Francisco has the same dynamics, as the coming of the professionals in the technology field displaces the original Latino population. This transformation mirrors the way economic need, such as the tech boom, drives gentrification and widens social inequality, as it is seen in the two novels. Sociologist Mike Davis in *City of Quartz* argues that "gentrification is not simply a demographic shift; it is a cultural conquest, whereby invading middle class displaces the old, with often deliberate erasure of histories and communities" (M. Davis, 1990: 163), a process duplicated in *White Teeth* where working-class immigrants are displaced from their communities.

Chicago, the setting for *The Jungle*, has also gone through tremendous gentrification, especially in areas like Pilsen and Logan Square. Such areas have undergone gentrification, with increased rents driving away long-term dwellers. Gentrification in Pilsen is a replication of Sinclair's critique of the capitalist forces displacing and taking advantage of working-class poor like in the case of Jurgis Rudkus. Currently, working-class families in Pilsen are also pushed out by wealthier, mostly white residents who can afford the rising cost of living. Journalist John Joe Schlichtman authorizes in *Gentrifier*: "Just as industrialization in early 20th-century Chicago displaced working-class communities, gentrification today works to re-engineer the economic fabric of the city" (J. J. Schlichtman, 2017: 54).

Both Sinclair and Smith condemn capitalist economies that profit from the displacement of marginalized groups. Gentrification of American cities now worsens income inequality as lower-income residents are displaced by better-off individuals able to afford the cost of urban living. Despite changing the nature of urban development, from industrial capitalism to market-led development, the social impact is unchanged: the poor get left behind and enrich the affluent. This lends itself to alienation, fragmentation of culture, and more segregation by race. Internationally, the gentrification processes in the modern-day New York, San Francisco, and Chicago mirror the social and economic disruptions described in *The Jungle* and *White Teeth*. Whether in the early industrial or the modern-day post-colonial era, both novels describe how urbanization leads to the displacement of peripheral groups, deepening social divides and remapping the identity of cities. Considering these works allows us to better comprehend the long-term effects of economic change and the displacement of poor, frequently minority, populations.

#### **4.2. Social and political consequences of urban growth**

Urbanization, especially when associated with gentrification, lays significant social and political burdens on U.S. cities. Along the way, negative consequences such as loss of urban identity, erasure of affordable housing, and increases in polarization between rich and poor begin to take effect. These transformations influence political geographies, urban economies, and social solidarity, leading to cleavages within cities such as Chicago, San Francisco, and New York. Both *White Teeth* and *The Jungle* provide historical and contemporary perspectives on how capitalist urbanization produces social and political inequalities for marginalized communities.

Gentrification leads to cultural displacement and loss of identity. In *The Jungle*, immigrant laborers in Chicago's packing district not only receive exploitation in their labor but also experience the disintegration of their social order as a result of industrialization. In *White Teeth*, Smith depicts how gentrification in London disrupts communities, as new arrivals with greater incomes introduce a new urban order that is not inclusive of the native-born inhabitants. Similarly, gentrification in American cities pushes long-time residents, typically lower-income or immigrant, out of their neighborhoods, replacing their cultural heritage with developments for more prosperous, typically white, populations. Sharon Zukin in *Naked City* argues that "gentrification is not about real estate; it is a cultural conquest" (S. Zukin, 2009: 57), something also observed in both the novels with community identity loss.

Low-cost housing displacement is another important consequence. In *The Jungle*, immigrant workers live in unsafe, unsanitary tenements as a part of exploitation during Chicago's industrialization. Urban gentrification in places like New York and San Francisco now results in rising rents, driving out low-income residents. In *White Teeth*, neighborhoods like Willesden and Dalston face long-time, often immigrant, residents being pushed out by rising rents, which strains their social networks and support systems.

The broader impact is the creation of a bifurcated city in which low-cost housing becomes increasingly scarce, widening social inequality. Neil Smith argues that "gentrification represents the displacement of the poor, and by its very nature, it exacerbates social inequality" (Z. Smith, 1996: 95). This polarization of rich and poor citizens leads to extreme dichotomies, with wealthy neighborhoods thriving and poor neighborhoods declining.

David Harvey in *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* is convinced that gentrification is a symptom of a more widespread neoliberal agenda that shifts resources from the poor to the rich, stating, "Gentrification is the most overt manifestation of a capitalist regime" (D. Harvey, 2005: 122). This results in political and social fragmentation because urban policy is driven by the rich while the poor lack the ability to resist displacement and inequality.

Rent control, low-income housing programs, and urban renewal policies can mitigate the social impact of gentrification and urbanization. Sinclair attacks capitalism's failure to protect the poor in *The Jungle*, which is still relevant today, because insufficient rent control policies in US cities lead to displacement. Smith shows in *White Teeth* how gentrification policy leads to displacement of disadvantaged groups through market-led regeneration. Historian Joe Trotter notes that "urban renewal projects. repeatedly led to displacing working-class and immigrant households" (J. Trotter, 2018: 48).

Rent control policies, if effectively enforced, can protect low-income residents from displacement. Yet, in places like New York, where the policy has weakened, displacement is still possible. Subsidized housing has partially succeeded but is not sufficient. Without full-scale policies that provide affordable housing and prevent displacement, the adverse impacts of gentrification will persist.

The broader social and political consequences of gentrification and urban growth are dire, aggravating income gaps, racial isolation, and urban fragmentation. The experience of *The Jungle* and *White Teeth* sheds light on the still-unresolved challenges of American cities. While strategies like rent control and low-cost housing can mitigate the impact, the social glue of

urban life will continue to be undermined by economic transformation and class polarization without more profound change.

### **Conclusion**

This article has critically examined urbanization, gentrification, and the social effects of urbanization in Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* (1906) and Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* (2000). Both novels resist the revolutionary effects of urbanization, though in contrasting geographical and temporal settings. Sinclair's portrayal of early 20th-century industrialization in Chicago illustrates the poverty of immigrant workers, capitalist monopolies, and worsening living conditions in rapidly industrializing cities. By contrast, Smith's *White Teeth* condemns post-colonial London, where poorer and immigrant groups are displaced by better-paid, predominantly white, in-migrants in a gentrification process. Both novels address the topic of displacement and exploitation of outgroups.

Sinclair condemns industrialization for increasing inequalities and class struggles, while Smith condemns gentrification and neoliberal policies that prioritize economic growth over the welfare of native populations, and sometimes displace them. Both authors illustrate how urbanization leads to the loss of a sense of community identity, widened social gaps, and deepened economic inequalities.

The article also attributes such historical trends to broader implications for American cities experiencing mass gentrification. New York, San Francisco, and Chicago, to name a few, are experiencing the displacement of minorities and the poor, increased racial segregation, greater income inequality, and urban social disturbance. Such anxieties of *The Jungle* and *White Teeth* have acutely resonant implications for contemporary American urban transformations.

Sinclair and Smith's work still resonates today, illustrating how industrialization and gentrification cause social inequalities and displace poor and marginalized populations. Both books are critiques of how the economy reshapes cities and impacts poor, working-class, and immigrant populations. The drawbacks of urban change, loss of low-income housing, breakdown of communities, and widening economic divides, still beset cities today.

As US cities expand, gentrification and urbanization dynamics continue. Displacement based on class and race remains at the core of issues in cities such as New York and San Francisco, as increasing property prices drive out established communities. It reinforces inequality and exclusion, which renders the critiques by Sinclair and Smith relevant. Both texts call for urban policies that benefit vulnerable communities and ensure more inclusive growth.

These texts contribute to the socially conscious urban planning discussion as well. Sharon Zukin's *Naked City* (2009) argues that "gentrification, when unchecked, can lead to the fragmentation of the urban fabric" (S. Zukin, 2009: 65). The issues discussed in *The Jungle* and *White Teeth* can lead to greater sensitivity to the social implications of urban change, informing policy aimed at affordable housing, neighborhood preservation, and economic fairness.

In all, the exploration of gentrification and urbanization in *The Jungle* and *White Teeth* gives significant insights into contemporary cities. Through the comparison of the two books, we come to understand that economic transformation, whether industrialization or gentrification, is never political, there are serious social and political implications. As cities spread throughout the globe, displacement, inequality, and erasure of cultures remain at the forefront, and reading these texts can steer policies towards more inclusive and equitable urbanization.

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