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Multicultural Hybridity in the Construction of the Young Generation presented in Zadie Smith's novel *White Teeth*

Summary

The paper presents a unique aspect of multicultural hybridity pictured in the construction of the representatives of the young generation of immigrants, Irie Jones, Millat Iqbal, Magid Iqbal and Joshua Chalfen, in the first novel written by Zadie Smith called *The White Teeth*. The analysis includes the aspects of immigration in Britain and its location in the postcolonial trend with the emphasis on its motifs. The thesis also raises a topic of multiculturalism in the contemporary world as well as the subject of hybridity which becomes a multinational phenomenon.

Keywords: multiculturalism, hybridity, Zadie Smith, postcolonialism, immigration, culture

1. Introduction

It might be claimed that in the contemporary world the borders of our cultural identity are blurred. People migrate, change their culture, habits, beliefs due to the economy, education, politics and individual needs. Some of these people try to keep their ethnic identity and refuse the foreign customs, while others accept the new cultural identity and acquire the status of a cultural hybrid. The subject of multiculturalism and hybridity is the central and complex phenomenon of the contemporary times. The postcolonial effect has an impact on nearly all cultures around the globe including literature. The picture of the master who colonises the slaves stays in the mentality of the old generation. The new generation has a different perspective. The new hybrids become confused: on the one hand, they

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try to fit in but on the other hand, they want to keep something from their homebred customs. In the modern world, it is very difficult to avoid the influence of other cultures, because people have a direct or indirect contact with the foreign cultures in every aspect of their lives. The question which stays the same is the dilemma of keeping close to the roots or moving further and changing to acquire a new complex identity, a culture hybrid.

This paper aims to present the phenomenon of the multicultural hybridity of the characters of the young generation of immigrants portrayed by Zadie Smith in her first novel *White Teeth* (2000). The main source of this paper is the novel *White Teeth*, which in a very clear and complex manner presents the subject of multiculturalism and cultural hybridity. In the novel, Zadie Smith places all protagonists in a very uneasy and confused culture setting which has a significant influence on their lives, their decisions and actions. This essay presents the approach to the subject of multiculturalism in the characters who represent a new generation of immigrants. It describes the journey of the young generation, the problem of the identity among immigrants, their religious background as well as their wanders from social and spiritual alienation towards union with others and with themselves. The methodology of this paper relies on the motifs of postcolonial theory with the clear distinction of the hybridity, which is one of the most influential aspects of the literary trend in question. The conclusions present the main ideas described in this work and prove that the novel *White Teeth* is a contemporary voice of the writer, a cultural hybrid herself, in the matter of multicultural hybridity.

The novelist Zadie Smith was born on 25th of October 1975 in an English-Jamaican family as Sadie Smith in the north-west London. Her mother emigrated to England from Jamaica in 1969, so the writer's Jamaican roots have had a huge influence on her novels and the fictional reality presented in *White Teeth*. Zadie Smith studied English literature at Cambridge University and during her college years she wrote her first book *White Teeth*. This debut novel was published in 2000 and shortly after became a best-seller, winning a number of awards such as *Guardian First Book Award*, *James Tait Black Memorial Prize for fiction*, *Commonwealth Writers First Book Prize* and *Whitbread Book Award* in the category of the best first novel. In *White Teeth*, Zadie Smith presents a multi-generational story about three very different families, immigrants living in London, whose fates intertwine due to fortune, history and a character of a mouse. Each of the characters comes from a different country, culture, religion and lives according to different rules. Everything starts with an unsuccessful suicidal attempt of Archibald Jones. Zadie Smith takes the reader on a journey through the

life of Archie a middle-aged Brit, who makes decisions, even the most important ones, by throwing a coin, and his friend Samad Iqbal, a Bengali Muslim, whose steps in life depend on the principles of religion and tradition. Afterwards, the novel uncovers the characters' past at the beginning of their acquaintance, World War II, and later their fates in Jamaica and Bengal. Other characters include Archie's new wife, a Jamaican Clara Bowden and Samad's young wife Alsana, two female protagonists of contradictory personalities. Subsequently, new generations emerge in the characters of Archie's and Clara's daughter Irie and Samad's and Alsana's twin sons Millat and Magid. When the Chalfens, English intellectuals of Jewish descent, join this extremely colourful group, the lives of all the characters change dramatically. The strong influence of Chalfens's personality on the psyche and behaviour of Irie, Millat and later Magid does not really do any good for them and the fates of the young people become even more 'twisted', which results in new relationships between the characters.

The reality presented in *White Teeth* is a multicultural, multinational, hybrid: a world in which generations, cultures, religions and beliefs collide. The author mixes various conventions: pathos is mixed with the grotesque, the seemingly distant past has a huge impact on the here and now of the characters. The language of Zadie Smith can be termed as fresh, flexible and vivid so that it is impossible not to be seduced by her prose. Everything is served as a very digestible mixture and despite the accumulation of a multitude of threads – everything seems to make sense, and its place.

Zadie Smith also wrote four stunning novels such as *The Autograph Man* (2003), *On Beauty* (2006), *NW* (2012), *Swing Time* (2016) and a collection of essays: *Changing My Mind: Occasional Essays* (2009) and *Feel Free* (2018). Apart from her writing career she also works as a tenured professor in the field of the Creative Writing faculty at the New York University and is a Member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

2. Immigration in Britain

It is important for this thesis to underline the significant role of immigration in Britain due to the location where the characters of *White Teeth* are set. The novel written by Zadie Smith deals with the people who migrated from Jamaica, Bangladesh, Eastern Europe and is set in London during the years between 1857-1999. The novel celebrates the multicultural London full of bittersweet taste.

Britain has been dealing with immigration for centuries, so it is not a new subject, but still very up-to-date in the contemporary world. People migrate for

various reasons. In some cases, the important factor of immigration is connected with the geographic terms of push and pull factors of migration (Rosenberg). The 'push-factor' is related to problems which force people to migrate such as war, poverty or natural disasters. Sometimes 'pull-factor' plays the first role which is connected with the religious or political freedom, which can be described as the factor which encourages people to migrate (Hadjetian, 2014, p. 15). The most popular city to which the people migrate when they consider Britain is London. London becomes the 'keeper of precious diversity' (Alibhai-Brown), a place where all races are mixed together and they all fit there in some magical way. Homi Bhabha says about London that, "It is the city that the migrants, the minorities, the diaspora come to change the history of the nation" (Bhabha, 2004, p. 243). It is possible to explain why people from other countries and the former British colonies migrate to London so willingly. They migrate there because "they already had a special cultural, political and economic relationship to it" (Hadjetian, 2014, p. 15). It is connected to the role of colonisation and the impact which Britain has on their subservient colonies. During the twentieth century, much has changed in relation to the British immigration policy from the open borders to the standstill phase due to the fact connected with the immigration control. At some point, on the one hand, the number of non-white immigrants did not rise, but on the other hand, the number of inhabitants did not decline because of the offspring of the first generation immigrants born in Britain. The movement of immigrants who came to London constantly changes this city adding a new culture, new food, new religion, and new beliefs. The immigrants living in Britain and especially in London are not just looking for their roots but also for their identities. They must deal with the problems such as racism, loneliness and rejection. A new generation of immigrants must keep on with the changing environment and leave some of their parents' beliefs in their homes. Children of the first generation of immigrants are different from their parents, they adopt new aspects of the English culture more willingly adding just a little bit of their family tradition into their lives. The immigration movements demonstrate the power of migration which has a huge impact on the "transformation of Britain, especially of London, into the multicultural society, it is today" (Hadjetian, 2014, p. 15).

3. Postcolonialism

In order to locate the base of the multicultural hybridity within the characters presented in Zadie Smith's novel, it is important to underline the primary role of postcolonialism as a period in which "Britain's society has become multicultural" (Hadjetian, 2014, p. 18). The term postcolonialism goes far beyond the scope of this thesis, but it is significant to point out the influential theorists such as the ones by Homi Bhabha, Edward Said or Robert J. C. Young.

Postcolonialism, sometimes written as post-colonialism, in a simplified way is related to a reaction to colonialism. The prefix 'post' means 'after' in Latin. The term postcolonialism, "deals with the effects of colonisation on cultures and societies" (Ashcroft, 2007, p. 168). Its origin could be related to the time after the Second World War which can be described as a 'post-independence period' (Ashcroft, 2007, p. 168). However, there is no specific moment in which the postcolonial theory was created. The work of Edward Said entitled *Orientalism* (1978) was an impulse for the flourishing of postcolonial research in the 1980s. *Orientalism* (1978) concerned a discursive analysis of the romantic and exotic representation of the East. Said showed that Western techniques of representation strengthened the stereotypical image of the Orient and the foreign also legitimised imperial policy and the dominant position of Europe in the world. Throughout the years from the first text dealing with the issue presented by Edward Said, postcolonialism has had many phases and the meaning has been evaluating depending on the country and the cultural background. It is for this reason that it is difficult to unambiguously define the term of postcolonialism. It could be considered more as a collection of various ideas related to this collective term. The term postcolonialism is perceived more as an interdisciplinary study which connects various aspects of culture, politics, history and literacy. A postcolonial term leads to a "break from the past, is seen as a sign of the new, as a critical reappraisal in the context of imperialism and the rise of capital, and as a register of social and political assertiveness" (Mishra V., 2015, p. 369). Robert Young postulates that postcolonialism, "generate[s] relations between different peoples and their cultures" (Young, 2003, p. 7).

Homi Bhabha is another significant postcolonial theorist who has made a very important contribution to postcolonial criticism in his work *The Location of Culture* (1994). In the publication mentioned Bhabha applies a phrase 'in-between' to people living between two cultures, two different worlds. He claims that:

These 'in-between' spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood – singular or communal – that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself. (Bhabha, 2004, p. 2)

This quotation is also closely related to the new term which Bhabha entered into the postcolonialism terminology, namely hybridity.

4. Hybridity

Zadie Smith belongs to the second generation of immigrants, and for this reason, she is often labelled as a Black-British writer. The term isolates a person who is, “not recognised as part of the domain culture’s discourse” (B.T. Williams, 2000). Writers labelled in this particular way often aim to change the ruling method of writing which may be defined as something ‘in-between’ literary trends, neither different nor equivalent. This idea is presented in the words of Homi Bhabha: “[...] there are no necessary to eternal belongings” (Bhabha, 2004, p. 179).

The motif of ‘hybridity’ is mostly related to the work of Homi K. Bhabha. Bhabha’s findings are connected with the analysis of the relation between the coloniser and colonised, with the relation ‘in-between’ cultural diversity, where people live among the different ethnic groups and deals with the overcome of the exoticism. He claims “that all cultural statements and systems are constructed in a space which he terms as the ‘Third Space of enunciation’ ” (Ashcroft, 2007, p. 108), the idea explained in the following words:

It is significant that the productive capacities of this Third Space have a colonial or postcolonial provenance. For a willingness to descend into that alien territory ... may open the way to conceptualising an international culture, based not on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the diversity of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture’s hybridity. (Bhabha, 1994, p. 38)

Hybridity is seen throughout the transcultural connection which descendants of immigrants hold with the West. According to Dominic Head, the “period of postcolonial migration begins a new process of cultural (and biological) hybridity that makes stable national identities problematic” (Head, 2002, p. 119). The term hybridity has changed the view on the national identities. Due to migration, immigrants become hybrids and the clear vision of their natural identities has blurred its lines. According to Young:

Hybridity is a making one of two distinct things so that it becomes impossible for the eye to detect the hybridity of a geranium or a rose (Young, 2003, p. 26).

Nowadays, nearly the majority of people can be labeled as hybrids due to globalisation and other movements. Those hybrids are affected by various cultures and communities, and those cultures and communities are hard to define and isolate from one another.

5. Multiculturalism

The setting of the novel *White Teeth* is located in the multicultural environment of the busy city of London so the characters are set inside the proverbial 'cultural mosaic'. The motif of 'cultural mosaic' is related to many different nations, races, religions and beliefs which are located side by side. The difference between 'cultural mosaic' and the American 'melting pot' lies on the act of assimilation: 'mosaic' presents the mixture of various people who are different but they celebrate their uniqueness, while the metaphor of 'melting pot' is related to the pressure for assimilation into the existing society (Levine R., Gifty S.D.).

According to the Cambridge Dictionary, multiculturalism means "the belief that different cultures within a society should all be given importance" (Multiculturalism). The multicultural concept aims "to fight against discrimination, stereotypes, separatism, racism and forced assimilation" (Hadjetian, 2014, p. 28). It is an interesting concept of putting many cultures side by side without judging them. The idea of multiculturalism relies on the beauty of different things which do not have to create a unity but the conglomeration of various aspects. John Clement Ball claims that:

Multiculturalism and multicultural structure in England, having become a postcolonial contact zone has brought about the interrogation of some issues such as nationality, race, identity crises, religious clashes, hybridity and so forth as mentioned subject matter in multicultural literature. (Ball, 2004, p. 15)

Multiculturalism is an important part of postcolonial theories, contemporary literature as well as politics. In the article published in the column in the Guardian newspaper, Bhikhu Parekh, an author of *Rethinking Multiculturalism* claims that:

Multiculturalism is not about safeguarding self-contained ethnic and cultural boxes but rather about intercultural fusion in which a culture freely borrows bits of others and creatively transforms both itself and them. Far from implying that each individual should remain rooted in his or her own culture and flit between them, multiculturalism requires that they should open themselves up to the influence of others and engage in a reflective and sometimes life enhancing dialogue with others. Multiculturalism is not ghettoisation but a form of universalism, and represents one of the highest expressions of human freedom and self-creation. (Guardian)

The quotation above presents the idea of 'borrowing bits' so as to create a new bright world, the place where the skin colour and the religion will not matter anymore. The idyllic concept in which people are seen as equal with little differences which only add the colour to this mixed group with excision of all the

stereotypes and racial prejudice. Multiculturalism is mostly about tolerance and acceptance of differences which are clearly seen in the everyday life of contemporary people.

6. The young generation of hybrids in *White Teeth*

The significant meaning for the analysis of the novel *White Teeth* lies in its title. The title has numerous references which occur repeatedly in the novel. The motif of teeth symbolises identity, which is the main concern of the characters. The teeth have roots, and roots lie in the past. The past, tradition and heritage can destroy us, but getting rid of them is a deception. The roots of teeth embody personal identities because teeth are changing through life experiences, so is the identity of the characters. At the same time, teeth are the same in every race, which becomes a symbol of humanity beyond racial divisions. However, it is easy to lose teeth just as it is easy to lose the identity. Teeth can be healthy just like healthy identities and they can rot like the identities based on false premises. They can also cause suffering and conflicts and they can be neatened just like the characters of *White Teeth* are neatened by the desire of fitting in a right culture, and into the society's expectations. One of the most significant visions which presents the symbol of teeth is pictured in the story of Clara Bowden because she lost her teeth in the motorcycle accident in her teenage years and her artificial teeth become a sign of hypocrisy in which the whole Jones's family lives. For Irie, her daughter, false teeth are:

yet another item in a long list of parental hypocrisies and untruths, this was another example of the Jones/Bowden gift for secret histories, stories you never got told, history you never entirely uncovered, rumours you never unravelled, which would be fine if every day was not littered with clues, and suggestions. (Smith, 200, p. 379)

When Clara's daughter Irie discovers that her mother has artificial teeth, she feels cheated. The lack of teeth equals the lack of roots, that is why Irie runs away from home to her grandmother, hoping to find the roots of her family. While choosing a profession, she decides to become a dentist, as if she could be able to fix her roots with teeth, as if she could be able to repair relations between herself and her mother Clara.

It is also quite significant to the motif of teeth and the title of Zadie Smith's novel to point out the words of J.P. Hamilton, a man who Irie, Magid and Millat meet during their school Harvest Festival:

One sometimes forgets the significance of one's teeth. We're not like the lower animals—teeth replaced regularly and all that—we're of the mammals, you see. And

mammals only get two chances, with teeth [...] Clean white teeth are not always wise, now are they? Par exemplum: when I was in the Congo, the only way I could identify the nigger was by the whiteness of his teeth, if you see what I mean [...] Those are the split decisions you make in war. See a flash of white and bang! As it were ... Dark as buggery. (Smith, 2000, p. 171-172)

Hamilton's story enhances the meaning of the Zadie Smith's novel's title. For him people of different races are not the same, but, on other hands, they are still mammals which connect everyone without taking the importance of the skin colour. Hamilton's story is brutal, but it shows again the link to the subject of teeth and the meaning of belonging to a particular place.

The group of the young generation is the most set in the reality of the multicultural hybrids because they are the true multicultural hybrids. Children of immigrants, born in England, who are constantly looking for their roots, identity, traditions and a way of life, Irie, Magid, Millat and Joshua, are the mix of races, cultures and ambitions, whom fate puts side by side and connects them forever.

Irie, Magid and Millat know one another from the very young age because of their family connections. Magid and Millat are identical twins and even though they develop different personalities. In *White Teeth* there is a description of the style which they choose quoted below:

Both twins had always been determined to choose their own clothes, but where Millat bullied Alsana into purchases of red-stripe Nikes, OshKosh B'Gosh, and strange jumpers that had patterns on the inside and the out, Magid could be found, whatever the weather, in grey pullover, grey shirt, and black tie with his shiny black shoes and National Health Service specs perched upon his nose, like some dwarf librarian. (Smith, 2000, p. 134)

But clothing is not the only difference between the twins, which is presented in the novel. It is repeatedly mentioned that their characters are the opposites, so Magid is described as "a strange child with a cold intellect" (Smith, 2000, p. 134), while Millat as a "good-for-nothing" (Smith, 2000, p. 135). Irie has always loved Millat, who never really reciprocates these feelings. Magid fades for eight years from their lives because of Samad's decision to send him to Bangladesh. Then Irie and Millat meet Joshua and come to Chalfens family life. All starts with the programme which means to punish them for smoking marijuana. The school program of principles is presented in the following words:

Every Tuesday and Thursday, you, Millat, and you, Irie, will go to Joshua's house and join him in a two-hour after-school study group split between math and biology, your weaker subjects and his stronger [...] I think it's a really interesting

idea. This way Joshua's strengths can be shared equally among you, and the two of you can go to a stable environment, and one with the added advantage of keeping you both off the streets. I've talked to your parents and they are happy with the, you know, arrangement. (Smith, 2000, p. 303)

This programme has the opposite result which turns out to be a perfect ground for lost hybrids. All of the young characters are living 'in-between' two cultures, traditions and beliefs. A new generation is constantly confronted with the new and left without a clear answer to their questions.

[...] if not delivered return to sender [...] O what a tangled web we weave. Millat was right: these parents were damaged people, missing hands, missing teeth. These parents were full of information you wanted to know but were too scared to hear. But she didn't want it anymore, she was tired of it. She was sick of never getting the whole truth. She was returning to sender. (Smith, 2000, p. 379)

The quotation above presents Irie's dilemma. Her needs to know more about the place from which she derives. All characters of the young generation presented by Zadie Smith are complex and lost in the new land. They are all strangers in a storage land. It does not matter what they will do they always will be haunted by the shadows of their mixed roots. However, at some point, they succeed in developing their identity and it comes out that hybrids are the people who can live and adjust themselves to the dynamic change of the British society. They are the children of international culture, whose life is not easy, but leads them to a new world.

All characters of the young generation presented by Zadie Smith are dissimilar, but one thing connects them strongly which is presented in their search for identity. Irie is looking for her roots, Magid tries to find himself as a perfect English citizen, Millat tries to connect his Muslim beliefs with the Western influences and Joshua does everything to find himself far from his family's asylum.

The only female character who is related to the new generation of hybrids is Irie Jones. She is the only daughter of Archie and Clara. She is a black, big girl who tries to find herself in the English society. When she meets Chalfens she becomes jealous of their identity, she wants to be part of this world. However, she is fascinated by this middle-class family, as it is presented in the following words:

She just wanted to, well, kind of, merge with them. She wanted their Englishness. Their Chalfenishness. The purity of it. It didn't occur to her that the Chalfens were, after a fashion, immigrants too (third generation, by way of Germany and Poland,

né Chalfenovsky), or that they might be as needy of her as she was of them. To Irie, the Chalfens were more English than the English. (Smith, 2000, p. 328)

From the very young age, Irie is lead by the desire to fit into English culture and the canons of beauty. She thinks that she is not good enough the way she is and that she does not look pretty in her natural look. She is quite a large girl: “the girl had weight; big tits, big butt, big hips, big thighs, big teeth” (Smith, 2000, p. 265). Her body shape is closer to the Jamaican canon, such as her grandmother’s Hortense, and not like her tall and skinny mother’s, Clara. Because of that she becomes obsessed with her look and uses a lot of her energy thinking about it. Finally, instead of losing weight she makes a decision that she needs to change her hair to become more English. Irie, because of her ethnical identity of mixed raced is feeling odd in the land where more people are white and fit. She wants to be part of that world, a part of this society. That is why she makes a decision to change something in her looks.

“What have you done? You had beautiful hair, man. All curly and wild. It was gorgeous.” Irie couldn’t say anything for a moment. She had not considered the possibility that she looked anything less than terrific. (Smith, 2000, p. 283)

She dyes and straightens her black curly hair trying to look more like white girls who surrounded her, but this decision turns out to be amiss. Irie loses her identity again. The need to belong in the community makes her do things which are not good for her. But deep inside she knows that she does all this for Millat and he is not impressed by her new look. Irie loves Millat for years, it is love based on friendship and care. However, Millat has never loved her, not as a girl, he treated her more like a family member. At the end of the novel, Irie sleeps with Millat, who did not hide that he never wanted her. Irie wants to feel good about herself and in some way gets revenge on Millat and that is why on this same day she sleeps also with Magid. Soon after Irie discovers that she is pregnant. The one thing which she will never find out is the real father of her baby because Millat and Magid are genetically identical twins who share the same DNA. This is perfectly presented in the following words:

What she didn't know, and what she realised she may never know (the very moment she saw the ghostly pastel blue lines materialise on the home test, like the face of the madonna in the zucchini of an Italian housewife), was the identity of the father. No test on earth would tell her. Same thick black hair. Same twinkling eyes. Same habit of chewing the tops of pens. Same shoe size. Same deoxyribonucleic acid. She could not know her body's decision, what choice it had made, in the race to the gamete, between the saved and the unsaved. She could not know if the choice

would make any difference. Because whichever brother it was, it was the other one too. She would never know. (Smith, 2000, p. 515)

There is something fascinating in this conceiving, as much as Marcus wanted to control his Future Mouse experiment, Irie just let nature decide and this secret will stay unsolved forever. Irie accepts this fate and she even believes that is better for her baby to call twins as a “Good Uncle Magid” and a “Bad Uncle Millat” (Smith, 2000, p. 541). At the end of the novel Irie leaves England and Iqbal's twins with their problems and she travels with her baby, grandmother and her new lover, Joshua to Jamaica to find out more about her roots, with the feeling that she finally belongs somewhere.

The issue which is the most difficult for Irie is her search for her roots. After she discovers that her mother is wearing false teeth she runs away to her grandmother Hortense and she starts to discover her parents' past. Irie decides that when she finds out the past she will be able to confront her own feelings and place. She feels betrayed by her mother and hiding at her grandmother's flat turns out to be her therapy, she thinks that Hortense's obsession with religion is fascinating and with time she discovers photographs and other items which bring her closer to the roots of her family. Finally, Irie develops the sense of belonging and enthrals of Jamaica, the place where her mother and grandmother came from to England. Irie starts to like herself and get over with the fact that she will always be a hybrid, but at least a hybrid who knows her roots.

The second analysed character of the young hybrids is Magid Iqbal. He is an older twin son of Samad and Aldana. From his early age he is a good boy, with good manners, always dressed in an elegant way, good at school and Samad's favourite. However, Magid always wants to be more English than his family, which is presented in the following words:

Magid really wanted to be in some other family. He wanted to own cats and not cockroaches, he wanted his mother to make the music of the cello, not the sound of the sewing machine; he wanted to have a trellis of flowers growing up one side of the house instead of the ever-growing pile of other people's rubbish; he wanted a piano in the hallway in place of the broken door off cousin Kurshed's car; he wanted to go on biking holidays to France, not day-trips to Blackpool to visit aunties; he wanted the floor of his room to be shiny wood, not the orange-and-green swirled carpet left over from the restaurant; he wanted his father to be a doctor, not a one-handed waiter. (Smith, 2000, p. 151)

His family is not the ideal family for Magid, he wanted more from his life. Therefore maybe that is why after the accident of kidnapping when Samad sends

him to Bangladesh he becomes someone he always wanted to be instead of being the man that his father expects him to be. However, the decision which son Samad will send to Bangladesh was not easy, one day he chooses Magid, another Millat. Unfortunately, Samad does not have enough money to send both sons with his saving so he decides to send Magid with the intention to make him a proper Muslim with the sense of tradition. In some twisted way, Samad thought that he is saving Magid by giving him the opportunity to grow up far from the Western culture. The process of decision is pictured in the lines below:

For the first week it was going to be Magid, definitely Magid. Magid had the brains, Magid would settle down quicker, learn the language quicker [...] So Samad began stealing Magid's clothes away for surreptitious packing, arranged a separate passport (he would be traveling with auntie Zinat on November 4), and had a word in the ear of the school [...] But then the next week there was a change of heart and it was Millat, because Magid was really Samad's favourite, and he wanted to watch him grow older, and Millat was the one more in need of moral direction anyway. So his clothes were pilfered, his passport arranged, his name whispered into the right ears. (Smith, 2000, p. 194-195)

Magid is a character who is mostly absent from his family's drama because he comes back after eight years he spends at Bangladesh. His comeback happens when everything is even more twisted with all characters, as it is described in the novel, "The return of Magid Mahfooz Murshed Mubtasim shook the houses of Iqbal, Jones, and Chalfen considerably" (Smith, 2000, p. 424).

During the time when Magid is in Bangladesh, Marcus starts to write letters to him and they become passionate friends. When Magid comes back he starts to help Chalfen with the Future Mouse project and led by his mentor, he becomes even stranger for his family.

The irony of Iqbal family is that Magid, who grows up far away from England becomes "more English than the English" (Smith, 2000, p. 406): he is educated, speaking with the perfect British English accent; science is his true religion, which is contradictory to what his father wants him to develop. He returns with the identity which perfectly fits the standards of the English society. He is a multicultural hybrid who absorbs everything that is connected with English culture, leaving far behind everything which could connect him with his roots.

The third hybrid character analysed in this thesis is Millat Iqbal. He is the younger son of Samad and Alsana and Magid's twin brother. From the very young age, Millat is known as the troubled son who smokes, drinks, has sex with lots of

girls, always gets into dangerous situations with shady characters. He struggles with the problem of his identity and the feeling of being alienated. He is constantly under the influence of anger whose source he does not really understand. Millat fights and rejects the dominant British society. He takes part in various gangs and organisation during his teens, but none of them fits him the way he expects it to be. He is constantly feeling different, even around peers who are the same as he is in terms of their hybridity. The following words describe his way of thinking:

And that's how it was for Millat. He 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. From his first Raggastani crowd, he had expanded and developed tribes throughout the school, throughout North London. 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. He had to please all of the people all of the time. To the Cockney wide-boys in the white jeans and the coloured shirts he was the joker, the risk-taker, respected lady-killer. To the black kids he was fellow weed-smoker and valued customer. To the Asian kids, hero and spokesman. Social chameleon. And underneath it all, there remained an ever-present anger and hurt, the feeling of belonging nowhere that comes to people who belong everywhere. It was this soft underbelly that made him most beloved, most adored by Irie and the nice oboe-playing, long-skirted middle-class girls, most treasured by these hair-flicking and fugue-singing females; he was their dark prince, occasional lover or impossible crush. (Smith, 2000, p. 269).

Millat repeatedly tries to find his own identity, beneath the surface of being tough he is lost. What is more, he tries to discover his identity more than once and fails every time. At some point, Millat joins the radical Islamist group called KEVIN, which sounds ironic in terms of fighting with the Englishness but the full name of that organisation stands for Keepers of the Eternal and Victorious Islamic Nation. This group has strict rules which are not easy to follow by Millat, he does not feel the need to be devoted to the Muslim religion and cuts off all the influences of the Western land. But when KEVIN abandons the rule of blood and gore for pacifism he becomes disgusted with them. Millat in some way is fascinated by the gangster image which is presented in the films he loves watching.

Worst of all was the anger inside of him. Not the righteous anger of a man of God, but the seething violent anger of a gangster, a juvenile delinquent, determined to prove himself, determined to run the clan, determined to beat the rest (Smith, 2000:446-447)

This fascination is based on Millat's needs of a father role model which he has never had. Millat is enthralled by the gangster lifestyle, therefore he would like to be a part of that group. He tries to convince himself that he wants to be a Muslim despite the fact that he really sees himself as a gangster. Millat's subconscious is training to adjust his way of thinking from: "As far back as I can remember, I always wanted to be a gangster to As far back as I can remember, I always wanted to be a Muslim"(Smith, 2000, p. 446). Millat's hybridity is perfectly presented in the following words:

But the fact was Millat didn't need to go back home: he stood schizophrenic, one foot in Bengal and one in Willesden. In his mind he was as much there as he was here. He did not require a passport to live in two places at once, he needed no visa to live his brother's life and his own (he was a twin, after all).(Smith, 2000, p. 219)

Magid is sent to Bangladesh but Millat his twin brother is left in England, torn apart from his brother, with the feeling of a tear inside his mind, heart and identity. At the climax of the novel when the presentation of the Future Mouse project is taking place, Millat brings a gun with the intention to shoot Marcus at that event. He is against the Chalfens experiment and his own brother who is taking part in this project. Millat says to Magid before the presentation that, "KEVIN will do whatever is necessary to stop you and your kind" (Smith, 2000, p. 464).

Millat lacks a role model so he is struggling with finding the right path for himself and he starts to be against everyone else. Samad lives 'in-between' two cultures, Alsana accepted the Western pattern of life, while Millat, on the one hand, wants to be part of his roots, but on the other hand, he wants to be more suitable to the place where he was born and raised. He does not know where he belongs, and by crossing the cultural lines Millat becomes a hybrid.

The last character of the new generation of hybrids presented in the novel *White Teeth* is Joshua Chalfen. He is a son of Marcus and Joyce Chalfen and an intellectual who gets into trouble of pot-smoking at school with Irie and Millat. Young Chalfen obviously wants to look cool to his peers so he tells the principle that this is his marijuana. Josh was always a perfect pupil "the only kid in class who volunteered opinions" (Smith, 2000, p. 270). Because of the smoking accident, Irie and Millat start to come to the Joshua house to study together. Josh is first pleased with that situation because he is in love with Irie, but the girl does not reciprocate his feelings. When the Chalfens family allow the new people to come to their lives everything changes for Joshua. He has a very good relationship with his mother and father, but soon after Irie and Millat start visiting them every day,

parents lose interest in their son. Irie starts to work with Marcus on the Future Mouse project, Millat becomes an obsession for Joyce so Josh feels anger and injustice. This situation is perfectly presented in the following words:

Four months ago, having a cool mate like Millat had seemed to Josh one hell of a lucky break. Having him round his house every Tuesday had upped Josh's ante at Glenard Oak by more than he could have imagined. And now that Millat, encouraged by Irie, had begun to come of his own accord, to come socially, Joshua Chalfen, né Chalfen the Chubster, should have felt his star rising. But he didn't. He felt pissed off. For Joshua had not bargained on the power of Millat's attractiveness. His magnetlike qualities. He saw that Irie was still, deep down, stuck on him like a paperclip and even his own mother seemed sometimes to take Millat as her only focus; all her energy for her gardening, her children, her husband, streamlined and drawn to this one object like so many iron filings. It pissed him off. (Smith, 2000, p. 331)

All that is going on at his family house makes him run away from it. After the run, he joins a radical animal rights group called FATE. Paradoxically, this group fights against the genetic project of Marcus. Joshua tries to fit in this group mainly because he falls in love with Joely, the woman of the leader of the FATE organisation. Josh at some point tries to impress Irie and explains with whom he spent most of his time.

[FATE] It stands for Fighting Animal Torture and Exploitation. They're like the hardcore end of Greenpeace or whatever. Read it—they're not just hippie freaks, they're coming from a solid scientific and academic background and they're working from an anarchist perspective. I feel like I've really found my niche, you know? It's a really incredible group. Dedicated to direct action. The deputy's an ex-Oxford fellow." (Smith, 2000, p. 403)

The quotation presented above shows Joshua's fascination with the new organisation to which he joined. He tries to fit in this group, but he discovers that the leader of FATE, "doesn't know about the motivations of people. And he knows more about the psychology of a badger than he will ever know about the inner workings of a Chalfen" (Smith, 2000, p. 525).

After discovering that fact Josh cuts off himself from the group and finally ends up sitting with Irie by a Caribbean sea, "for Irie and Joshua become lovers in the end; you can only avoid your fate for so long" (Smith, 2000, p. 541).

The main problem of Josh is his failure in the search of his identity. Firstly, he is a part of perfect Chalfens and he feels in the right place, but when Millat, Irie and later Magid come into his family life, his attitude is changing dramatically. He is losing his stability and sets out on a journey to find his identity. He wants to

know who he really is and how he should live far from his toxic mother and insane father.

7. Conclusion

White Teeth is above all, a story of multiculturalism which has undoubtedly accompanied London for many generations. It is a story about a few families who, despite many differences, especially cultural ones, maintain friendly relations and try to find themselves in the changing culture of the West. The novel perfectly sketches the problems and social dilemmas which the characters experience. The issues such as the sense of identity, adaptation or the importance of religion in the modern world are foregrounded. The young generation is still looking for their place on earth. *White Teeth* is a novel about the new contemporary reality in which cultures mix, traditions become a threat, and foreignness becomes a liberation. This is a perverse diagnosis of a multicultural society which shows immigrants as vulnerable rather than threatening. Clinging to their customs, religions and traditions, they become dangerous to themselves, their ideas blur, they cannot come to terms with who they have become in a foreign country, they cannot accept the fact that the transformations which they experience may lead to their own progress. Zadie Smith's novel argues that immigrants can no longer live in their own ghettos. Her London is not a blend of ethnic groups who defend themselves against the influence of one hostile white culture. Zadie Smith presents a real mix of characters and their attempts to maintain individuality which becomes the greatest threat.

All characters presented in the novel *White Teeth* are multicultural hybrids which Zadie Smith presented as very complex contemporary individuals who live in the diverse society of the city of London. The dilemma of *White Teeth*'s characters is related to their lives 'in-between' different cultures, customs, religions and beliefs. The lives of the old and the new generations of immigrants present the differences in readjusting and their search for their identities. Therefore, the new generation of the multicultural hybrids such as Irie, Millat, Magid and Josh have an ultimate need to belong, to fit into the new surroundings despite the differences not only in their appearance. Millat due to his riotous nature rebels against all the rules, which he does not accept, such as his father's principles. While he is willing to accept all the norms of the contemporary England which are close to him due to his hybrid origin. Irie, the only analysed female character of the young generation, is finding herself in the strange land of England by accepting her identity and uniqueness after a long fight with her search for roots. All of these analysed characters are lost in their lives and all of

them are constantly looking for their identities. However, it is very difficult for them to find their own space in the British land because all of them somehow have already become hybrids, people who live 'in-between' two worlds, past and future. Michael Perfect in his publication called *Contemporary Fictions of Multiculturalism: Diversity and the Millennial London Novel* stated that: "White Teeth's large cast characters repeatedly try to predict or to engineer the future only to be utterly (and usually comically) thwarted" (Perfect, 2014, p. 79).

Furthermore, this paper applies the theories of the main thinkers of postcolonialism such as Edward Said and his exotic vision of the East, Robert Young and his postulates that postcolonialism creates a relation between various peoples and their unique cultures, and Homi Bhabha with his term of immigrants who live 'in-between' different cultures and worlds. Moreover, this paper tries to prove that the novel *White Teeth* is a contemporary voice in the discussion about multicultural hybridity, a phenomenon which appears in a number of big cities around the globe. *White Teeth* highlights the multinational aspect of immigration, according to Benedict Ledent in this publication called *The Many Voices of Post-Colonial London* "White Teeth is basically a polyphonic novel, integrating dozens of different voices" (Wilson, 2016, p. 82). This novel made Zadie Smith one of the most influential writers of the contemporary times and *White Teeth* for nearly 8 years still excites and inspires her readers.

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