UNIVERSITY OF LATVIA
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH STUDIES

MULTICULTURAL AND RACIAL ISSUES IN ZADIE SMITH'S NOVEL "WHITE TEETH"

MULTIKULTUR LIE UN RASU ASPEKTI ZEIDIJAS SMITAS ROM N "BALTIE ZOBI"

BACHELOR THESIS

Author: **Nadezda Lavrecka**
Matriculation Card No. nl07017
Adviser: doc. Aleksejs Taube

Riga 2013

ANOT CIJA

Šis bakalaura darbs p ta rasu un etnisk s probl mas Zeidijas Smitas rom n "Baltie zobi". Darbs sast v no div m noda m. Pirm noda a sniedz teor tisko p rskatu par britu kult ru, etnisko, rases un reli isko daudzveid bu, kas ir izveidojusies š s valsts koloni l mantojuma rezult t , k ar apsprież migrantu metaforas, kas var atrast m sdienu britu literat r . Otr noda a sniedz inform ciju par Zeidijas Smitas rom nu "Baltie zobi" un izanal ze rom nu ar m r i uzzin t, k rakstniece att lo daž du kult ru l dz spast v šanu, etnisk s un rasu attiec bas m sdienu Lielbrit nij un kuras probl mas daž diem cilv kiem is j p rvar saist b ar rasu un nacion lo identit ti, paaudžu savstarp j s attiec b m, k ar reli iskajiem un ideolo iskajiem uzskatiem šaj valst šodien.

Atsl gas v rdi: Zeidija Smita, Baltie zobi, multikultur lisms, migrantu metaforas, daudzveid ba, m sdienu britu literat ra

ABSTRACT

This Bachelor's thesis examines the racial and ethnic issues in Zadie Smith's novel *White Teeth*. The paper consists of two chapters. The first chapter gives a theoretical overview of the issues of British multiculturalism and ethnic, racial and religious diversity that have been caused by the colonial legacies of this country as well as discusses migrant metaphors that can be found in contemporary British literature. The second chapter provides a short background to Zadie Smith's novel *White Teeth* and presents an analysis of the novel with the purpose to find out how the writer depicts the coexistence of different cultures, ethnicities and races in contemporary Britain and which problems different individuals are believed to face regarding racial and national identities, intergenerational relations as well as religious and ideological encounters in this country today.

Key words: Zadie Smith, *White Teeth*, multiculturalism, migrant metaphors, diversity, contemporary British literature

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INTRODUCTION

Today's Britain is widely acknowledged to be multicultural, with many of its citizens and residents of different origins belonging to different cultures and having different life experiences. Therefore, in their works, contemporary British writers try to reflect the reality created by this diversity by drawing the readers' attention to cultural differences along the lines of language, religion, civilisation, race, ethnicity, region, nationality, gender, age, class, ideology and so forth. And it is this uniqueness of the diverse nature of contemporary British society that is investigated in detail in this Bachelor's thesis devoted to the examination of racial and ethnic issues in Zadie Smith's novel *White Teeth*.

Since Britain is a country with a distinctive colonial legacy, historical developments, colonial experiences, anti-colonial sentiments, wartime and postwar experience of the empire, decolonisation, migration and today's life in Britain and in its former colonies are crucial parts of the backgrounds in contemporary British literature. The postcolonial discourse found in many literary works of contemporary British writers often reflects the ideas of diaspora, hybridity, imperial power, magic, coloniser/colonised relations, migrancy, transnational identity, marginality, subalternity, ambivalence and mimicry. Nevertheless, as this research demonstrates, British authors touch upon an array of different themes, ranging from migrants' traumas of displacement, interrogations of authenticity and identity, belonging and unbelonging, representations of collective "minority" experiences, the new London being shaped by immigrants and life in imagined communities to portrayals of "home" countries and immigrant assimilation and resistance stories relating to Britain itself.

The main **aim** of this Bachelor's thesis was to examine the racial and ethnic issues in Zadie Smith's novel *White Teeth*.

The **hypothesis** put forward for this research was formulated as follows: Zadie Smith's novel *White Teeth* represents the author's vision of multiculturalism in contemporary Britain reflecting different cultures, ethnicities and races coexisting mostly peacefully despite the numerous problems individuals face regarding racial, national and religious identities and intergenerational relations.

In order to achieve the established aim and to verify the proposed hypothesis, the following **enabling objectives** were set:

- to review sources on multiculturalism in contemporary Britain;

- to examine how today's religious, ethnic and racial reality in Britain was formed by the country's colonial history;
- to analyse Zadie Smith's novel *White Teeth* with the purpose to find out how different cultures, ethnicities and races coexist in contemporary Britain and what kinds of problems individuals face regarding racial, national and religious identities and intergenerational relations in postcolonial Britain; and
- to draw conclusions about Zadie Smith's vision of multiculturalism as a result of personal cultural experience

The **research methods** applied in this Bachelor's thesis included theoretical literature review and literary analysis of the selected text.

This Bachelor's thesis consists of **two chapters**.

Chapter 1 gives a theoretical overview of the issues of British multiculturalism and ethnic, racial and religious diversity that have their roots in the colonial legacies of this country as well as discusses representations of migrants experience that can be found in contemporary British literature.

Chapter 2 provides a short background to Zadie Smith's novel *White Teeth* and presents an analysis of the novel with the purpose to find out how the writer depicts the coexistence of different cultures, ethnicities and races in contemporary Britain and which problems different individuals are believed to face regarding racial and national identities, intergenerational relations as well as religious and ideological encounters in this country today.

1 MULTICULTURAL NATURE OF CONTEMPORARY BRITAIN

Chapter 1 gives a theoretical overview of the issues of British multiculturalism and ethnic and racial diversity that have their roots in the colonial legacies of this country as well as discusses migrant metaphors that can be found in contemporary British literature.

1.1 Multiculturalism

Multiculturalism is a relatively new phenomenon: it appeared in the late 1970-ies in Canada and the United States. Multiculturalism acts both as a real social movement, and as a particular ideology. It was the third influential model to address the complex issues related to cultural, ethnic, racial and religious diversity of states after assimilation and integration. Multiculturalism appeared as a criticism of the ideology of liberalism, which was exercised to set a strict border between the private and public spheres and insisted that cultural practices should be recognised only in the private sphere (Adachi, 2011: 108). In contrast, multiculturalism claimed that all cultures also had the right to be recognised as "authentic" in the public sphere and should be given equal social support for that purpose. As explained by Deakin (2007: 461-462), from the very beginning multiculturalism was supported to promote cultural diversity and mutual respect and to reduce or, ideally, remove cultural conflict by minimising chances of day-to-day friction between members of society.

The question of multiculturalism has soon become central as nowadays only less than 10% of the countries can be seen as culturally homogeneous.

The term of multiculuralism denotes two or more communities coexisting alongside on one territory, thus, forming a multicultural society, where every community has it's own cultural heritage and social expectations of their own. Parekh suggests that the needs of the communities can be subdivided into two types. The communities of the first type crave for equal conditions for each and every member of the society, but the communities of the second type require the recogntion and respect of their ethnic features in wider society.

> While acceptance of differences calls for changes in the legal arrangements of society, respect for them requires changes in attitudes and ways of thought as well. Some leaders of the new movements go yet further and press for public affirmation of their differences by symbolic and other means. (Parekh, 2000: 2)

Such demands lead to opposition of communities as the established community is disinclined to change their national identity under the influence of other ethnic groups, whereas, other ethnic groups are willing to maintain the cultural features of their origin. Yet, the peaceful coexistence of two or more communities implies the satisfaction of the needs of all members of the society and, thus, the need for mutual recognition and reciprocal adjustment.

> It might welcome and cherish it, make it central to its self-understanding, and respect the cultural demands of its constituent communities; or it might seek to assimilate these communities into its mainstream culture either wholly or substantially. (Parekh, 2000: 6)

Either way, multicultural societies cannot neglect the influence of the ethnic groups on each other. The positive aspect of this process lies in the fields of arts: music, literature, etc. Still, the negative side suggests contradictions and misapprehension. Hence, it should be pointed out that identity itself isn't invariable, it constantly changes under the influence of the social environment. Likewise, every person views his identity in a different way. Parekh claims: "Like the identity of an individual, that of culture changes slowly and in parts, allowing its members time to absorb and adjust to changes and reconstitute its identity on a new basis." (2000:149)

And the change of identity of particular members of the ethnic group leads to the change of the identity of the whole social entity.

Britain has always been a country with a vast variety of foreigners of different origins Indians, Black Carribean, Pakistani, Chinese, Black Africans and Bangladeshi who have contributed to the national identity of the British. Multiculturalism has become the ideology with the main goal to avoid possible discrimination, prejudice and inequality between the established society and ethnic groups excluding any attempts to alienate their identities.

It should be remembered that Britain has benefited from immigrants not only in the field of arts and new exotic names given to the children inspired by other cultural heritage. The substantial number of immigrants at the end of World War II gave the solution to a deficiency of labour force, when the labour force shortage reached it's critical level.

> After 1945 the economically successful countries of Western Europe faced shortage of unskilled labour as well as offering niches fro entrepreneurs in areas of business which indigenous entrepreneurs were unwilling to occupy. They also needed professional skills which had to be provided from outside. (Rex, 1996: 241)

Most probably at that point immigrant-workers from abroad (Bangladeshis, Indians and Pakistanis) were believed to go back to their countries and, therefore, felt a limited acceptance by the established society. (Abbas, 2005: 9).

According to Adachi (2011: 107), the history of social integration policy in Great Britain can be divided into three distinct stages focusing on the relationship between social unity and cultural diversity, namely, from after World War II to 1979, Thatcher's and Major's Conservative Governments, and Tony Blair's new Labour Government. Yet, it is the social integration policy and philosophy of the new Labour Government that is particularly important because it represented post-multiculturalism discourse for social integration at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries. Blair's Labour Government is known for the establishment of social integration based on an abstract common identity, which both the majority and minority groups could accept, which was compatible with various cultural or religious conventions, and which recognized citizenship and Britishness as a set of the most essential liberal values for the multicultural British society (ibid).

Nevertheless, today the idea of multiculturalism seems to be losing the moral support of society because multiculturalism as such cannot serve as social glue among different people; rather it is more and more argued to make society unstable (Adachi, 2011: 108). Although Jenkins (1966, cited in Hasan, 2011: 29) claimed that integration on the basis of multiculturalism would provide for "equal opportunity, accompanied by cultural diversity, in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance", the policy of multiculturalism, as remarked by Barry (2001, cited in Adachi, 2011: 108), happened to be strongly criticised for its unconditional recognition of culture that could destroy social commonality and unity and even justify segregation and inequality among different cultural or racial groups. For real social integration to take place in Britain, people with different backgrounds need to share the same concept of society distinguished by outstanding cultural diversity (Adachi, 2011: 107).

As emphasised by Castles (2002: 575), the problem of accepting multiculturalism as a norm in contemporary Western society lies in the fact that historically nation-states were based on the idea that people belonging to a common culture should form a political community within fixed geographical boundaries but in reality nearly all nation-states have incorporated groups with diverse cultures through expansion, conquest or migration. Creation of a common culture has therefore involved lengthy and often oppressive processes of integration or assimilation. Globalisation has been another force that has largely undermined the consolidation of nation-states. Due to it, national boundaries are becoming less important because the national society is no longer viewed as the principal focus for economic, social and political life. In addition, the growth of immigration and the increasing diversity of immigrants in terms of origins, culture and economic and social characteristics lead to more rapid formation of new minorities. Thus, many Western countries of immigration, including Great Britain, are increasingly becoming multicultural societies, in which ethnic groups tend

to cluster together trying to maintain their own languages, cultures, and religions over generations (ibid).

Albeit, not only Britain has been challenged by the matters of multicultural society. Likewise, Germany, France and other countries are concerned to ensure a harmonious coexistence of ethnic groups while at the same time retaining the political solidarity.

> They need to find ways of reconciling the legitimate demands of unity and diversity, achieving political unity without cultural uniformity, being inclusive without being assimilationist, cultivating among their citizens a common sense of belonging while respecting their legitimate cultural differences, and cherishing plural cultural identities without weakening the shared and precious identity of shared citizenship. This is formidable political task and no multicultural society so far has succeeded in tackling it. (Parekh, 2000: 343)

However, as Castle (2002: 575) maintains, the combination of economic restructuring, erosion of national cultures and immigration as assets of globalisation tend to give rise to reactive movements trying to rescue myths of autonomous national communities and unitary identity. Thus, in spite of Tony Blair's celebration of diversity, the doctrine of multiculturalism implemented in Britain is argued to have encouraged different cultures "to live separate lives, apart from each other and apart from the mainstream", instead of building upon commonly accepted rules and norms (Cameron, 2012, cited in Ahluwalia and Miller, 2012: 1-2).

Today, many researchers and policy makers agree that the policy of multiculturalism has not brought the desired outcomes of better social unity but seriously destabilised Western nations' identity and values for the benefit of different international cultural and religious movements (Akbarzadeh and Roose, 2011: 310). The threat of the Islamic movement, with its perceived intent on the establishment of a caliphate, is one of the strongest ones, especially taking into account that the public life of the Muslim population is guided not only by their religion but also by their culture and ethnicity (ibid: 309-310). The general consensus amongst anti-multiculturalists is that the West has become weak and submissive and that cultural warfare is needed. They insist on the awakening of the West before it might be too late by exposing the shortcomings of pluralism, multiculturalism and tolerance that have allowed such a threat from within to flourish. As highlighted by Ye'or (2005: 9, cited in Akbarzadeh and Roose, 2011: 311): "Europe's evolution from a Judeo-Christian civilisation, with important post-Enlightenment secular elements into a post Judeo-Christian civilisation that is subservient to the ideology of jihad and the Islamic powers that propagate it".

Still, in the past decades, social integration achieved by multiculturalism was viewed as an effort to recognise cultural diversity as a positive aspect of society. Since

multiculturalism, in accordance with Deakin's (2007: 461) definition, is essential in a situation where many cultural communities live in one country "free from any obligation to forgo their cultures of origin", it could be really accepted as a policy that celebrates cultural differences founded on the belief that "mutual tolerance will grow and that there are no absolute values".

Nevertheless, the fears of multiculturalism's failure have appeared in the society and the media basically due to such authoritative politicians as Cameron's, Merkel's and Sarcozy's negative statements on the issue, Britain still remains a country with it's strong liberal and democratic values. According to A. Manning (2011) the failure of multiculturalism is nothing more than exaggeration and claims that the solution of the current situation is not in putting more emphasis on minorities, but in paying more attention to white natives, not taking their identity and values for granted; thus, creating a certain basis for both natives and foreigners to feel their accessory to the country without feeling "endangered" by each other in any possible way.

1.2 Racial, Ethnic and Religious Diversity

Above all, multiculturalism aims to unite racially, ethnically and religiously diverse members of society in countries that have historically accepted large numbers of immigrants (Deakin, 2007: 461). However, as Essed (2002: 202) highlights, signs of everyday racism from which there is no relief are still very widespread in Western societies. It is true that all the countries that have signed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights have agreed to eliminate racial discrimination but the denial of racism does not mean that racism as a problem has gone. The idea of the supremacy of the white race still takes place in contemporary Britain as much as in any other country despite its commitment to respect racial, ethnic and religious diversity (ibid: 203).

Banton (2002: 92) emphasises that in Britain, racial and ethnic diversity is respected on the level of legislation, which implies that institutional racism as "the predication of decisions and policies on considerations of race for the purpose of subordinating a racial group and maintaining control over that group" does not take place in the country. However, individual racism as "cultural assumptions, motives, institutions, attitudes, and beliefs about superiority" does exist, and numerous evidence of ethnoracial clashes between the members of the British society prove that racial and ethnic prejudice and overall hostility towards the foreign still permeate social relationships in Britain (ibid: 92-94).

Racism encompasses ideological and social processes which discriminate against others on the basis of their being associated with different racial or ethnic group membership

(Goldberg, 1993, cited in Essed, 2002: 203). Taking into consideration that the universal claims of Western knowledge, the domination of Western norms for progress and the globalisation of Western standards for cultural and human development are still firmly embedded in the British society, even increased overall tolerance in attitudes towards those members of society who belong to different cultures and are of races and ethnicities other than "white British" cannot compensate for the oppression based on racial issues of the representatives of African, Asian and Carribean origin (Essed, 2002: 203).

Such a paradox of the denial of racism and its persistence in Britain has become part of dominant commonsense discourses, effects of which taint the everyday lives of groups who continue to struggle against racial injustices (Essed, 2002: 203). As Dericotte (1997: 146, cited in Essed, 2002: 203) recollects about the denial of everyday racism that discredits voices of discontent:

> I was on guard. So many times if a black person admits discomfort, the white person then says that the black person must be "sensitive-paranoid" - responding not to the present environment, which is safe and friendly, but to something of the past. They want to hear that the white people in this environment (themselves) are fine. It's the black person who is crazy.

The main problem with everyday racism is that it is a multidimensional experience (McNeilly et al., 1996, cited in Essed, 2002: 206). As Essed (2002: 206) explains, "one event triggers memories of other, similar incidents, of the beliefs surrounding the event, of behavioral coping and cognitive responses". Feagin and Sikes (1994:15, cited in Essed, 2002: 206) also agree that it is the "recurring experiences... with whites who discriminate" that lie at the heart of the seemingly unsolvable racial problem.

It has to be noted that everyday racism is believed to adapt to the culture, norms and values of a society as it operates through the prevalent structures of power in society (Essed, 2002: 209). Surprisingly, Britain creates an image of the country, which divides everyone in two categories , black and white (James,1996:155).Therefore, it is clear why contemporary British writers who would be previously disadvantaged in expressing their opinions and in sharing their visions of British history touch upon racism in their works rather extensively. Three strands of everyday racism are usually dwelt upon in British contemporary fiction, including the marginalisation of those identified as racially or ethnically different, the problematisation of other cultures and identities as well as symbolic or physical repression of (potential) resistance through humiliation or violence (ibid: 207). Unfortunately, as long as people continue designating others and emphasising their "otherness" to construct boundaries of identity and community between and within societies on the basis of cultural differences along the lines of language, religion, civilisation, race, ethnicity, region, nationality, gender,

age, class, ideology and so forth, problems of racism are likely to remain unsolved (Pieterse, 2002: 17).

For British writers of Caribbean origin, like Zadie Smith, the issue of racism stands apart from all other issues that may be of interest for people whose family history contains accounts of hard immigrant life. As pointed out by Hintzen (2002: 475), Caribbean reality has formed as a result of "a never-ending assault by a global and international environment and a multiplicity of ever-changing cultural, social, economic, and political forces". Carribean socioculture is based on everything "adapted, reimagined, reinvented" to suit the needs of the constantly changing domestic conditions highly influenced by external pressures, needs and demands (Stavans, 1995: 60, cited in Hintzen, 2002: 475). People of Caribbean origin are therefore viewed as "extremely pregnable, constantly penetrated, while struggling to maintain its own sense of integrity", whose characters are described as "chaosshock, mixture, combination, alchemy" (Taylor, 1989: 136, cited in Hintzen, 2002: 475). In fact, this means that Carribean identity is capable of accommodating all of the region's varied diasporic presences and that immigrants of Carribean origin rather easily accommodate to cultures in those countries where they finally settle down (Hintzen, 2002: 476).

According to Goldberg (2004: 72), acception of the notion of hybridity is one of the possible ways to mitigate the negative effects of racism in Britain as a country with distinct colonial legacy:

> Hybridity has become invested with impossible conceptual promise, hope bound to be dashed, faith destined to turn bad, in the desperate drive away from race as it at once predicates itself on racial distinction, in the rush to theorize the betwixt and between of cultural expression, group formation, and social conditions. Hybridity itself is taken as conceptually catching the in-between, as the product if not the very expression of mixture, of the antipure, of Becoming in the face of Being's stasis.

Yet, some theorists, like McClintock (1995: 299, cited in Goldberg, 2004: 72), argue that adoption of the idea of hybridity is "a scandal" precisely because it confronts the virtues of racial purity and apartness and in general undermines the imperative of racialised divides, which have been commonly held to in British society for so long. Nevertheless, given the highly heterogeneous nature of multicultural British society that has always accepted large influxes of immigrants from its all parts of the world, the idea of hybridity may really find support both among ordinary citizens and policy makers if social unity is a real, not just proclaimed, goal (Goldberg, 2004: 73).

1.3 Colonial Legacies

As emphasised by Behdad (2004: 396), the issue of colonial legacies is closely interrelated with the issues of globalisation, diaspora and immigration. In fact, geographical and cultural displacements and voluntarily departments and arrivals have radically informed (post)colonial consciousness. The history of British colonialism is distinguished by a massive dislocation of people in the form of the slave trade and later indentured labor as well as by the generation of huge geographical and cultural movements among the ex-colonies and the country since decolonisation.

In Britain, migration played a vital role in the development of trade and industry in the early modern period, leading to an intermingling of European peoples with natives in the colonised territories, which contradicts later nationalist myths of ethnic homogeneity (Moch, 1992, cited in Castles, 2002: 569). British colonialism involved overseas emigration of British citizens who worked as sailors, soldiers, farmers, traders, priests and administrators in colonies, with many Britons settling in the USA. Colonial labour migration of Africans until the middle of the 19th century was crucial to the economic and political power of Britain, whereas the late 19th century was marked by the replacement of slaves by indentured workers as the main source of colonial labour. British authorities recruited workers from India and China for plantations, mines and railway construction in the Caribbean, Malaya, East Africa and Fiji. Many workers remained as free settlers in East Africa, the Caribbean, Fiji and elsewhere, where they could obtain land or set up businesses (ibid).

As Britons went overseas in the attempt to escape proletarianization, workers from peripheral areas, like Ireland, Poland and Italy, were drawn in as replacement labour (Castles, 2002: 570). Although Britain's new factory towns quickly absorbed immigrants, atrocious working and living conditions led to poor health, high infant mortality and short life expectancy among the newcomers. Natural increase was inadequate to meet labour needs, which is why Britain's closest colony, Ireland, became a labour source accounting for over seven hundred thousand Irish who left their devastated native country for the new homeland. Most immigrants were concentrated in the British industrial cities, especially in textile factories, tobacco plants and building trades. Their social conditions were extremely poor and their situation was marked by hostility and discrimination right into the 20th century (ibid). Even now the great amount of immigrants face the same hardships, which includes bad housing, lack of education and high levels of unemployment. (Peach 23).

After World War II, the diversity of immigrants arriving in Britain significantly increased, with new entrants representing a broad spectrum of economic, social and cultural backgrounds (Castles, 2002: 271). During the first phase lasting from 1945 to 1973, Britain witnessed large-scale labour migration from less-developed areas, such as Southern Europe,

North Africa, Turkey, Finland and Ireland, and from colonies or former colonies, such as the Caribbean and the Indian subcontinent. Colonised peoples had been granted citizenship as a form of ideological integration, which facilitated the entry of labour and meant that the colonial workers could bring in dependents and settle. However, by the 1960s the British authorities began introducing laws to stop colonial immigration, distinguishing between the statuses of guestworkers and colonial workers. Yet, but by 1970, the process of ethnic minority formation had become irreversible, taking into account the large number of immigrants who chose to stay in the country (ibid: 572).

The 1973 oil crisis led to a decrease in immigration rates, which allowed for a demographic normalization in Britain: family reunions took place, new families were formed and the original immigrants aged without being looked upon as a threat to national identity and sovereignty (Castles, 2002: 572). Community formation took place, and education and welfare authorities slowly began to respond to new needs. However, from the mid-1970s the country experienced a new significant inflow of immigrants from Southern Europe, the Gulf oil countries, Latin America, Africa and Asia. The late 1980s and early 1990s were acknowledged as a period of unprecedented migration, accelerated through the influx of asylum seekers and illegal workers from Eastern Europe, Africa, Asia and the Middle East. An upsurge in racist violence, extreme-right mobilisation and overt politicisation of migration issues were the main consequences of the undesired immigration, although it has been argued that migration helps increase cultural diversity and create conditions for new forms of ethnic relations in the British society (ibid: 575).

Colonial legacies of Britain are reflected in historic documents and literary works characterised not only by the description of varying cultures but also by subjectivity in delineating colonial relations of power to colonisers and colonised. (Behdad, 2004: 396). Importantly, the unequal relationship between colonisers and the colonised is not only expressed by means of a discourse of marginality derived from the Manichean model of the dominator and the victim but also results from the misreading of postcolonial relations of power through the rhetoric of colonisation (ibid: 397).

On the one hand, most cultural discourses of identity position themselves paradoxically within the confining matrix of identification they strive to subvert, a matrix dominated by such colonialist binaries as center/periphery, dominator/dominated, and oppression/opposition (Behdad, 2004: 397). In line with this, postcolonial critiques of colonialist literature and culture have often viewed the relationship between the coloniser and the colonised in terms of a "Manichean allegory" that attributes the source of power and oppression to one and the victimised other resisting the conqueror's domination to the other

(JanMohamed, 1985, cited in Behdad, 2004: 397). The readers of postcolonial literature witness the historical and cultural victimhood of the colonised people, reaffirming thereby the paramount importance of formerly suppressed or silenced forms of knowledge.

On the other hand, the question of the recent reconfigurations of power relations continues to be dominated by the so-called binary logic (Behdad, 2004: 397). Despite a better focus on hybridity, transculturation and globalism in contemporary discussions of identity and power, new power relations are mostly defined in terms of the inequality between the center and the periphery while identity is often articulated according to the binary logic of oppression/opposition. As underlined by Canclini (1992, cited in Behdad, 2004: 397):

> To study inequalities and differences today is not simply to see mechanisms of exclusion and opposition; it is also necessary to identify the processes that unequally articulate social positions, cognitive systems, and the tastes of diverse sectors. … The dense web of cultural and economic decisions leads to asymmetries between producers and consumers and between diverse publics. But these inequalities are almost never imposed from the top down, as is assumed by those who establish Manichean oppositions between dominating and dominated classes, or between central and peripheral countries.

Nevertheless, it does not mean that the changes determined by globalisation or new social movements have eliminated the unequal access to power and knowledge or diminished the importance of identity (Behdad, 2004: 397). Rather, there has been a radical change in "the absolute spatial division between exploiters and exploited", because as it is remarked by Surin (1995, cited in Behdad, 2004: 397), "the exploiters are [now] everywhere and so are the exploited". In a way, it can be seen that the postcolonial world, in contrast to the polarised colonial context, has indeed become a "confusing world, a world of crisscrossed economies, intersecting systems of meanings, and fragmented identities" (Rouse, 1991: 8, cited in Behdad, 2004: 397).

One of the most significant aspects of the postcolonial world is the existence of diaspora, which, as suggested by Hall (1990, cited in Behdad, 2004: 399), can be defined as the opposite of "the old, the imperialising, the hegemonising, form of identity", especially when referring to the British context. The UK-based Somalis, Nigerians, Ghanaians, Indians, Sri Lankan Tamils and Chinese diasporas consist of people who have arrived in the country at different times, through different channels and means as well as with very different legal statuses, but people forming these diasporas differ in their ability and willingness to integrate into the British society (Van Hear, 2004: 1). Yet, diaspora identities are considered to be rather strong in that they are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference (Hall, 1990, cited in Behdad, 2004: 399). Interestingly, diaspora identity is respected since diasporas can constantly recreate and refashion themselves, while

the notion of ethnic identification becomes more and more devalued as a monolithic and static phenomenon incapable of variation and transformation (ibid).

As a rule, immigration and cultural differences are viewed as potential threats to national sovereignty and identity (Castles, 2002: 561). Yet, by now, it has been recognised that the influx of immigrants from the British colonies has had, positively and negatively, a strong impact on the UK (Adachi, 2011: 107). On the one hand, it compensated for it's decreasing population and restrained inflation through the supply of a young and cheap labour force as well as contributed to cultural production which is regarded to be an important product in postindustrial economy. However, the increase in cultural diversity as a consequence of mass immigration has also brought about some serious conflicts and backlashes in the UK. The myths that immigrants come to steal welfare and to destroy the cultural heritage of the host country have resulted in a rise in the politics of insecurity, as exemplified in Islamophobia or the anti-immigrant movements of far-right groups (ibid: 108).

In order to provide for more peaceful and respectful coexistence of people belonging to different cultures within the borders of one state, some researchers propose that the mixture of nations, languages, cultures and religions due to colonial legacies and labour migration should contribute to the formation of a "mixed race" society (Arias, 2002: 355). In accordance with this idea, a map of a country like the UK or the USA could be "with no borders; a map turned upside down; or one in which the countries have borders that are organically drawn by geography, culture, and immigration, and not by the capricious hands of economic domination and political bravado" (Gomez-Pena, 1996: 6, cited in Arias, 2002: 355). Larsen even insists on the idea that presumed "national consciousness" cannot correlate with the reality of the "universal" historical sphere:

> These phenomenological forms of the nation evidently continue to play some experiential role in contemporary consciousness, for which nations in their most immediate, commonsensical self-presentation are, after all, just aggregated, geographical units strung like beads, not linked together in a chain or (except in war) faced off in "Manichean" pairs. But the "globalized"/"reparticularized" nation…, as a site for the disaccumulation of capital and the production of migrancy, […] traversed by antimodern, quasi-fascistic fits of religious identity-formation and unraveled along ethnic and tribal lines, seems more and more to be a space emptied of any historical self-relation, not a "people without history" but yet not the place where "people" and "history" meet any longer. "Globalized" nation space is not the perfectly flattened surface of neo-liberal "Ends of History." […] Colonizer and colonized, oppressor and oppressed, "man" and ethnic (female) "other," rich and poor: these are, perhaps more than ever, the visible fissures in the "world" that encloses us. (20004: 39)

As Castles (2002: 576) adds, the emerging transnational belonging that affects the economic relations, social and political institutions, culture and national identity of all the

countries being concerned can truly substitute the ideas of the overarching importance of unitary national identity and citizenship of a single nation-state that are still rather widespread. Indeed, the emerging postmodern, postindustrial, postcolonial and postnational era requires new approaches and new ideals to unite people of different cultures for some common goals (English, 2005: 1).

1.4. Migrant Metaphors in Contemporary British Literature

As underlined by Arias (2002: 356), the reconfigurations of postcolonial identities continue determining people's perpetual investigations of self in racial, sexual, cultural and linguistic terms. Not surprisingly, the results of such investigations often transform into theoretical, cultural, literary and political effusions one can easily get acquainted with if he or she wishes to know about British history more. In their literary works, the writers who have encountered British culture either as natives or as immigrants or even as those who left Britain for another country share their opinions and experiences in relation to all possible matters that may interest their readers. And it is exactly the political, social and historical context these writers have in common that makes the disparate nature of their writings so remarkable (Dasenbrock, 2005: 88).

Historical developments, colonial experiences, anti-colonial sentiments, wartime and postwar experience of the empire, decolonisation, migration and today's life in Britain and in its former colonies are crucial parts of the backgrounds that can be found in masterpieces of contemporary British literature (Dasenbrock, 2005: 88). However, the attitudes towards the empire itself greatly differ in these works, with some writers displaying liberalism in their treatment of the colonised and others actively opposing colonisation and its consequences (Israel, 2005: 84). Yet, it can also be noticed that some writers engage in anti-foundationalism by presenting colonialism as a messy project of partial alliance rather than one of outright domination and describing the coloniser-colonised relationships as those of the "intimate enemies" (Desai, 2004: 530-531). Such a shift in the discourse of colonial relations away from the emphasis on power to an emphasis on complicity has led to "an astonishing flattening of the contours of colonial power sharing, so that we are left with no fundamental distinction between colonizers and the colonized" (Kaul, 1996: 76, cited in Desai, 2004: 531).

Furthermore, it has to be noted that many British writers have not allowed the readers to see the "Natives" from any other perspective rather than theirs, that is, the colonisers', for a long time, thereby endorsing the remnants of British colonisation in line with Dinesen's (1961: 9, cited in Dasenbrock, 2005: 89) words, "We ourselves have carried European light to

the country quite lately, but we have had the means to spread and establish it quickly". But at present more and more writers share their visions of history and present day from the perspective of the natives that have experienced intercultural contacts "from within" in locations as varied as Kenya, South Africa, Australia, and the Caribbean (Desai, 2004: 530).

As pointed out by Ashcroft (2002: 519), the postcolonial as the discourse of the colonised mainly reflects the ideas of hybridity, marginality, the rhizomic operation of imperial power and its contestation, but apart from this it examines those aspects of life and policy which can finally release the subjects from the complexity of essentialist and identarian matters. Desai (2004: 530) also adds rereadings of the English canon, investigations of the production of colonial stereotypes and the "inventions" of the other, critical analysis of postcolonial literatures and cultures as well as "theorisations" of categories such as "subalternity," "ambivalence," "mimicry" and "hybridity" as other important aspects of the "postcolonial" discourse. In this respect, Ashcroft (2002: 517) proposes for postcolonial authors neither an escape from the world, from the map or from power, nor a retirement into one's native language; rather, he suggests that it should be worth exploring the full range of responses to colonialism, from absolute complicity to violent rebellion and all variations in between which have been made by the society that has ever experienced colonial contact.

Above all, contemporary British literature written by, and on behalf of, immigrants or those who come from or live in former British colonies raises the issues of dispossession, exile, racialisation and marginalisation (Arias, 2002: 356). The concerns of the multiple cultures are often articulated in English in a way that marks, reverbalises and theorises "coloured" experiences. And in most cases these people's search for the meanings of living underpinned by particular problems, attitudes and miscomprehension is expressed through their investigation of questions such as "what am I?" and "where am I?" (ibid). Understanding of differences in ethnicity, culture, gender, generation, religion and sexuality embarrasses them even stronger (Procter, 2002: 102). The context of contemporary Britain, however, is more and more argued to facilitate deracialisation, if not "reproblematisation", of their existence, although some theorists and policy makers still try to "unproblematise" the existing ethnoracial, gendered or migrant problems (Arias, 2002: 356).

Many anglophone writers from such formerly colonised countries as Canada, Australia, New Zealand, India and other South Asian as well as Caribbean and African countries, like Nadine Gordimer (South Africa), Margaret Atwood (Canada), Chinua Achebe (Nigeria), Kazuo Ishiguro (Japan) and Derek Walcott (St Lucia), have already been rather established and their works have already been recognised as distinct heritage of postcolonial literature (Israel, 2005: 87). However, postcolonial British literature has also situated a big

number of writers of African American, South African, Nigerian, Carribean and Asian descent, many of whom would be previously left unvoiced, for example, V. S. Naipaul (Trinidad), Lewis Nkosi (South Africa) or Witi Ihimaera (New Zealand) (English, 2005: 3). Among these writers one can find first-, second-, third- and even fourth-generation immigrants. As English (ibid) remarks, the representatives of "Black British" writing can easily include "a third- or fourth-generation Londoner of African descent; an Irish-identified native of Belfast whose father had emigrated from Pakistan; a recent illegal immigrant from Jamaica doing casual labor in Glasgow; or the daughter of a wealthy Parsi businessman, educated in Mumbai and Geneva but now a resident of Holland Park". Meanwhile, "White British" writers may be those who have produced Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish fiction (ibid).

Interestingly, both Black and White British writers tend to sharply differentiate themselves, formally and linguistically as well as "them-atically", from the previously accepted norms of the English novel (English, 2005: 3). Being traditionally disadvantaged by their position in the world literary space, the writers dwell on migrant metaphors, thereby presenting articulations and productive antagonisms between Britain's literary culture and the wider world (ibid: 4). Taking into account the existence of other anglophone literatures outside the UK all being rooted partly in the long history of British imperialism, it can be clearly seen that contemporary British fiction has been undergoing a deep process of productive destabilisation and fragmentation (ibid). In part, such destabilisation and fragmentation has resulted in exclusion of major writers from former colonies, like Pius Ngandu Nkashama, Calixthe Beyala, T. Janakiraman, Werewere Liking or the late Ken Saro-Wiwa, who, sometimes writing in their own languages about local experiences, are considered to fail to dwell upon the dominant metaphors of postcolonialism, such as diaspora, hybridity and transversality (Israel, 2005: 91). In this respect, it is very important to stress the importance of the English language for postcolonial British writers of any origin because as Achebe (1976: 77, cited in Jussawalla, 2005: 104) stresses, "If [English] failed to give them a song it at least gave them a tongue for sighing"; otherwise, they would simply not have been heard.

The main genres characteristic to contemporary British fiction are queer fiction, New Historical fiction, Black British fiction and postcolonial fiction, one of Britain's most distinctive and critically esteemed genres, namely, working-class fiction, has seen a distinct demise (English, 2005: 8). The rapid decline and virtual disappearance of the latter can be explained by the focus on privatisation, efficiency and individual enterprise, which divided traditional working-class communities into a middle-class salariat oriented toward feverish

consumption, a new servant class of menial service workers employed on a casual basis to cater to this more prosperous bourgeoisie and the so-called underclass of "truly disenfranchised" individuals lacking all prospects of work (ibid).

In fact, the majority of contemporary British authors belongs to the middle-class, but, given the increasing diversity of their ethnicity, regional or national background, religion and political outlook, these authors touch upon an array of different themes, ranging from migrants' traumas of displacement, interrogations of authenticity and identity, belonging and of unbelonging, representations of collective "minority" experiences, the new London being shaped by immigrants and life in imagined communities to portrayals of "home" countries and immigrant assimilation and resistance stories relating to Britain itself (Israel, 2005: 88-89). Yet, the metaphors of diaspora, hybridity, migrancy, mimicry, transnational identity, magic and coloniser/colonised relations appear to be central to all postcolonial British fiction (ibid: 90).

Overall, it can be concluded that contemporary British writers draw the readers' attention to the instability of race, immigration and a sense of place within the makings of the nation, but despite the existing tensions and contradictions between the greatly differing subjects they still accentuate the importance of a sense of moral, spiritual and cultural belonging in the place they commonly describe as "new home" (Johnston and Lawson, 2004: 362-363).

2 ANALYSIS OF ZADIE SMITH'S NOVEL *WHITE TEETH*

Chapter 2 provides a short background to Zadie Smith's novel *White Teeth* and presents an analysis of the novel with the purpose to find out how the writer depicts the coexistence of different cultures, ethnicities and races in contemporary Britain and which problems different individuals are believed to face regarding racial and national identities, intergenerational relations as well as religious and ideological encounters in this country today.

2.1 Background to Zadie Smith's Novel *White Teeth*

White Teeth is the first novel written by Zadie Smith, a British novelist, short story writer and essayist (Bentley, 2008: 52). As soon as the novel was published in 2000, it became internationally recognised and won several literary prizes, including the prestigious Commonwealth Writers First Book Prize (Beaumont, 2012: 1). As highlighted by *The Guardian* (2000: 1), this novel was widely accepted as an important debut precisely because it tells the story of three families, spanning three generations and dealing with multiple ethnicities, which reflects the complex reality of multiculturalism in the British settings.

As Syal (cited in *The Guardian*, 2000: 1) emphasises, Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* was highly appraised by many critics because it offered to the reading audience "a supremely modern story of millennial Britain" delivered in a light-humorous, easily comprehensive tone. For her ability to portray today's multicultural Britain in such a vivid way, Zadie Smith has even been named "a fashionable multicultural wunderkind" (Press, 2005: 1). Most importantly, the novel tackles the issue of multiculturalism by raising "the two questions which gnaw at the very roots of our modern condition. Who are we? Why are we here?" (Phillips, cited in *The Guardian*, 2000: 1).

When asked about the connection of the novel's plot to her own life, Zadie Smith indicates that *White Teeth* is not really based on her personal family experience (Merritt, 2000: 2). The writer has a mixed-race background that has become the zest of the story (she is the daughter of a Jamaican mother and an English father) but it is that special perspective on ethnic issues which every individual with mixed ethic background has rather than the writer's own experience that is truly demonstrated in the novel. As Zadie Smith says:

> When you come from a mixed-race family, it makes you think a bit harder about inheritance and what's passed on from generation to generation. But as for racial tensions – I'm sure my parents had the usual trouble getting hotel rooms and so on, but I don't talk to them much about that part of their lives. A lot of it is guesswork or comes from reading accounts of immigrants coming here. I suppose the trick of the novel, if

> there is one, is to transpose the kind of friendships we have now to a generation which was less likely to be friends in that way. (Smith, cited in Merritt, 2000: 2)

Readers should appreciate the very creation of this novel because for Zadie Smith, with her mixed-race background, writing a novel like *White Teeth* which raises the problematic issues of race and ethnicity seems to be a more difficult task than for a white writer (Procter, 2005: 102). As underlined by Jones (2000, cited in Procter, 2005: 102), Zadie Smith has to constantly defend herself against the tendency of critics to view her novels as written in a black literary tradition and this makes her feel a victim of seemingly never-ending racial prejudice:

> Do you go to Don DeLillo and say, "He doesn't represent middle-class white people enough"? … No. You give him complete freedom. Why would you limit writers of any ethnicity or gender to be a sex or class politician and give freedom to white writers to write about absolutely anybody? (Smith, cited in Jones 2000, cited in Procter, 2005: 102)

The above principle, albeit discriminating, has long been kept to in postcolonial British literature. According to Boehmer (2005: 5), this freedom for white writers to write on behalf of other communities and cultures was predetermined by their right to have imaginative command in exerting political and economic power in colonised countries. Colonialist and postcolonial literatures not only articulated colonial or nationalist preoccupations; also, they contributed to the making, defining and clarifying of these preoccupations. In fact, symbols scattered across well-known texts written by white writers show the attempt of European colonisers to make sense of strange and complex occupied worlds. No voices of the colonised were to be heard in colonialist and postcolonial literatures, and breaking this tradition is a difficult task for contemporary British writers of other than white origins.

In Zadie Smith's view, reduction of writers to the role of representatives who are expected to speak on behalf of a particular community means outright limitation of their artistic freedom. That is why it might be useful to analyse *White Teeth* both in terms of the tension between representation as a process of fictional depiction and representation as an act of political delegation, which has become increasingly apparent in British literature since the late 1980s (Procter, 2005: 102).

2.2 Coexistence of Different Cultures, Ethnicities and Races in Contemporary Britain

White Teeth presents several narratives displaying the multicultural nature of contemporary Britain. The novel illustrates how turns in history affect the lives of people, their relationships and their attitudes towards each other during fateful encounters. Unlike in other works by prominent contemporary British writers, the characters of *White Teeth* are

depicted positively in the context of multiculturalism and ethnic and racial diversity that has formed as a result of the unique British colonial legacies.

As pointed out by Merritt (2000: 2), different cultures, ethnicities and race relations are portrayed in a rather optimistic manner in the novel. In no way does Zadie Smith's vision of these complex issues reject existing prejudice, but tolerance is obviously brought forward to confront people's innate urge towards opposing the Other. If racist violence is ever mentioned in the novel, then it is done only briefly, against the background of other, weightier incidents in the relationships between the characters. The writer acknowledges that she approaches the problem of coexistence of different cultures, ethnicities and races in Britain in the novel with great imagination, but, at the same time, she emphasises that she does look at the future with hope understanding that racial prejudice is still a part of daily life, especially in London:

> [*White Teeth*] is kind of a fantasy book. There is a lot of pessimism currently about race relations in this country. I think the relationships in the book are something to be wished for, but I think they might exist now, and certainly in the future, with the amount of mixing up that has gone on. My generation, and my younger brother's generation even more, don't carry the same kind of baggage. (Smith, cited in Merritt, 2000: 2)

It has to be admitted that this declared anti-prejudicial direction of Zadie Smith's vision about the future of multiculturalism in Britain can really be felt in *White Teeth*. Although the narration in the novel revolves around the problems of individuals living in contemporary Britain, the writer still acclaims the great significance of pluralistic ideas and appraises the coexistence of different cultures, ethnicities and races in the postcolonial world.

Even the settings of the novel underline the importance of accepting the necessity and inevitability of coexisting different cultures, ethnicities and races in Britain. The novel is set in Willesden, North London, which was once part of the old colonial centre. The place has both provincial and cosmopolitan elements enriching the lives of Londoners living around it. Moreover, the place affects the inhabitants' daily experiences by its distinguished historic and cultural features since it has links to cultures brought from other parts of the world. Yet, it has to be added that Willesden has acquired its image of accommodating diversity also owing to the people whom one can meet in the streets. In this sense, it is interesting to see how peculiarly the children Irie, Magid and Millatt view this part of the city:

> Now, the children knew the city. And they knew the city breeds the Mad. […] But these people […] were properly mad in the Shakespearean sense, talking sense when you least expected it. In North London, where councilors once voted to change the name of the area to Nirvana, it is not unusual to walk the streets and be suddenly confronted by sage words from the chalk-faced, blue-lipped or eyebrowless. From across the street or from the other end of a tube carriage they will use their schizophrenic talent for seeing connections in the random (for discerning the whole world in a grain of sand, for deriving narrative from nothing) to riddle you, to rhyme you, to strip you down, to tell you who you are and where you're going […] and why. But as a city we are not

appreciative of these people. Our gut instinct is that they intend to embarrass us, that they're out to shame us somehow as they lurch down the train aisle, bulbous-eyed and with carbuncled nose, preparing to ask us, inevitably, what we are looking at. […] As a kind of pre-emptive defence mechanism, Londoners have learnt not to look, never to look, to avoid eyes at all times so that the dreaded question "What you looking at?" and its pitiful, gutless, useless answer "Nothing" might be avoided. But as the prey evolves (and we are prey to the Mad who are pursuing us, desperate to impart their own brand of truth to the hapless commuter) so does the hunter, and the true professionals begin to tire of that old catch phrase "What you looking at?" and move into more exotic territory. (Smith, 2000: 174)

With regard to the time period covered in the novel, it stretches from the nineteenth century (starting with an episode of the Indian Mutiny in 1857) till the New Year's Eve of 1999. In fact, the narration touches upon some of the most important dates pertaining to the formation of multicultural Britain: beginning of the movement of struggle for independence in colonies, waves of migration in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s and the end of the millennium.

By putting her characters in such settings, Zadie Smith clearly shows that time and place impact on people's lives more than any other factors, although some people tend to focus on genes, opposing others on the basis of nationalities and races. Yet, the novel ends with an optimistic note about the result of historic and cultural encounters: Zadie Smith suggests that multiculturalism should be perceived as a gift, but not a time-bomb, for the British society.

2.3. Problems of Individuals in Postcolonial Britain

The problems of individuals living in postcolonial Britain are shown in *White Teeth* by an omniscient narrator. The characters of the novel present their personal stories from the perspectives of their varying ethnic cultures and backgrounds. The readers follow the account of the lives of three closely interconnected families, namely, the Joneses, the Chalfens and the Iqbals, whose relationships allow for analysing distinctive traits of racial and national identities as well as attitudes between people belonging to different generations and holding different religious views.

2.3.1 Racial and National Identities

In order to start the discourse on the topic of racial and national identities it is important to define the term nation itself. Encarta Encyclopedia states that a nation is a community of people or peoples who live in a defined territory and are organized under a single government and share some characteristics. However, we can hardly rely on this brief

definition in the case of such heterogeneous country as Britian with it's rich history of colonisation and immigration. Centuries long British national identity has undergone the influence of immigrants, who have subjoined and enriched it with certain features of their cultures. That is why, the idea that "essence of a nation is rather a psychological bond that joins the people and differentiates it" (Connor, 1996:70), seems more applicable.

The essence of national identity can be seen in relationships between people, who share the same territory, history, language, traditions and consider themselves culturally different from others. Thus, the tendency to stick to the past becomes of a high importance for immigrants, it isinescapable, because it is something that is dear to them, something that they have become accustomed to. The character of Samad Iqbal is a good example of a stereotypical Bengali man, living in Britian, but seeking to preserve cultural features of his homeland in his family.

> To Samad, as to the people of Thailand, tradition was culture, and culture led to roots, and these were good, these were untainted principles. That didn't mean he could live by them, abide by them or grow in the manner they demanded, but roots were roots and roots were good. You would get nowhere telling him that weeds too have tubers, or that the first sign of loose teeth is something rotten, something degenerate, deep within gums. Roots were what saved, the ropes one throws out to rescue drowning men, to Save Their Souls. And the further Samad himself floated out to sea, pulled down to the depths by a siren named Poppy Burt-Jones, the more determined he became to create for his boy roots on shore, deep roots that no storm or gale could displace. (Smith, 2000: 193)

This abstract clearly shows Samad's loyalty to his cultural heritage and roots. It is clear why Samad often refers to the past as from the moment he has moved to Britain everything he truly loves and respects belongs to the past. Moreover, Samad is afraid that his standards of life are being undermined by cultural values of British society.

On the contrary, striving to fit in a new society, accommodate to new life and search for the new identity by immigrants in such countries as Britain, that can be hardly named homogenous, is often hardly possible due to British people's diverse originsEven those being born in Britain may never feel welcome and treated as British. Many Muslims think multiculturalism should celebrate diversity in clothes, cuisine or music but it shoud sideline human equality and human rights (Hussain and Osler, 2005: 141).

> He knew that he, Millat, was a Paki no matter where he came from; that he smelt of curry; had no sexual identity; took other people's jobs; or had no job and bummed off the state; or gave all the jobs to his relatives; that he could be a dentist or a shop-owner or a curry-shifter, but not a footballer or a film-maker; that he should go back to his own country; or stay here and earn his bloody keep; that he worshipped elephants and wore turbans; that no one who looked like Millat, or spoke like Millat, or felt like Millat, was ever on the news unless they had recently been murdered. (Smith, 2000: 233-234)

The decision of Samad to move with his family from East London to North London, where in his opinion things were more liberal, portrays his fears of being discriminated against on the basis of their origin. He feels that the East part of London due to a great amount of immigrants of various origins is much more safe.

All three families described in *White Teeth* present a mixture of racial and national identities. Archie Jones is of Welsh origin, although he calls himself an Englishman. Archie's wife, Clara Bowden, is of black Carribean origin but regards herself as a British woman because her grandfather was a white man serving in the British colony. Meanwhile, Samad and Alsana Iqbal are of Bangladesh origin. Samad Iqbal settled in London after the World War II in which he fought together with Archie Jones. Finally, Joyce Chalfen is white English, while Marcus Chalfen is Jewish from East Europe. As one can see, the novel presents the whole kaleidoscope of ethnicities, including English, Welsh, Caribbean, Jewish and Asian, and this may well be claimed as the strongest side of this work because tolerance among people of different origins is one of the most serious questions to be solved in Britain today when, as underlined by Boehmer (2005: 96), the stirrings of new nationalism can be witnessed more and more often.

In *White Teeth*, the characters' race and nationality are so entangled due to the vicissitudes of life that it is often hard to identify any individual character's ethnic or racial identity. Zadie Smith points to this peculiarity in the following episode describing the relationship between Sita and Sharon:

> It is only this late in the day, and possibly only in Willesden, that you can find best friends Sita and Sharon, constantly mistaken for each other because Sita is white (her mother liked the name) and Sharon is Pakistani (her mother thought it best less trouble). Yet, despite all the mixing up, despite the fact that we have finally slipped into each other's lives with reasonable comfort […], despite all this, it is still hard to admit that there is no one more English than the Indian, no one more Indian than the English. (Smith, 2000: 327)

The writer admits that some young white men are still not ready to accept the above fact of the mixture of racial and national identities in contemporary Britain, preferring to fight against the movement towards greater diversity. But nonetheless, if approached thoughtfully and, notably, from a different, immigrant angle, this diversity should be comprehended and accepted as one of the consequences of previous colonisation and sequential migration of huge masses of people across the colonies:

> [I]t makes an immigrant laugh to hear the fears of the nationalist, scared of infection, penetration, miscegenation, when this is small fry, *peanuts*, compared to what the immigrant fears dissolution, *disappearance*. Even the unflappable Alsana Iqbal would regularly wake up in a puddle of her own sweat after a night visited by visions of Millat (genetically BB; where B stands for Bengali-ness) marrying someone called Sarah (aa where 'a' stands for Aryan), resulting in a child called Michael (Ba), who in turn

> marries somebody called Lucy (aa), leaving Alsana with a legacy of unrecognizable great-grandchildren (Aaaaaaa!), their Bengali-ness thoroughly diluted, genotype hidden by phenotype. (Smith, 2000: 327)

When writing about the interplay of racial and national identities of her characters, Zadie Smith realises that the subconscious reaction to protect one's own identity through fighting with the Other is "both the most irrational and natural feeling in the world" (Smith, 2000: 327). "In Jamaica," she says, "it is even in the grammar: there is no choice of personal pronoun, no splits between *me* or *you* or *they*, there is only the pure, homogenous *I*" (ibid). But the present reality requires that people live peacefully in multicultural countries like Britain, which requires mutual tolerance of difference within a legal framework.

It is interesting, however, that, apart from indicating the desire of white men to fight the "preponderance" of other cultures in Britain, the writer also mentions the desire of immigrants to become "whiter" and "purer" English by all possible means. Irie Jones, for example, wants to maintain a relationship with the Chalfens, which would give her a right to "sneak into England" and "dilute" herself in their "Englishness":

> It was partly for this reason that Irie didn't mention the Chalfens to her parents. It wasn't that she intended to *mate* with the Chalfens… but the instinct was the same. She had a nebulous fifteen-year-old's passion for them, overwhelming, yet with no real direction or object. She just wanted to, well, kind of, *merge* with them. She wanted their Englishness. Their Chalfishness. 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, nee 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. When Irie stepped over the threshold of the Chalfen house, she felt an illicit thrill […]. She was crossing borders, sneaking into England; it felt like some terribly mutinous act, wearing somebody else's uniform or somebody else's skin. (Smith, 2000: 328)

According to Bentley (2008: 55), the very title of the novel indicates the significance that people attribute to identity. Although teeth are a universal human characteristic, everyone's teeth are different and serve as a distinctive marker of individuality. Bentley (ibid) argues that teeth act as an extended metaphor in the novel because several chapter titles refer to them in one way or another (for example, "Teething Trouble", "The Root Canals of Alfred Archibald Jones and Samad Miah Iqbal", "Molars", "Canines: the Ripping Teeth"). "White" teeth are particularly important for the novel because they should indicate sameness but, nonetheless, throughout the history, they have been culturally constructed to mark out racial difference. As an old man explains to Irie, Magid and Millatt in one episode:

> 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… But like all things, the business has two sides. 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. Horrid business. Dark as buggery, it was. And they died because of it, you see?

> Poor bastards. Or rather I survived, to look at it in another way, do you see?... Those are the split decisions you make in war. See a flash of white and bang! […] The decision of the gun. So quick, children. So brutal. (Smith, 2000: 171-172)

Because teeth are a distinctive feature of individuality and race, it is very important to deal with wisdom teeth in an appropriate manner. In the same episode with Irie, Magid and Millatt, the old man suggests pulling out wisdom teeth, but an attentive reader will definitely see more behind his words:

> But while you're still young, the important matter is the third molars. They are more commonly referred to as the wisdom teeth, I believe. You simply must deal with the third molars before anything else. That was my downfall. You won't have them yet, but my great-grandchildren are just feeling them now. The problem with third molars is one is never sure whether one's mouth will be quite large enough to accommodate them. They are the only part of the body that a man must grow into. He must be a big enough man for these teeth, do you see? Because if not oh dear me, they grow crooked or any which way, or refuse to grow at all. They stay locked up there with the bone an impaction, I believe, is the term and terrible, terrible infection ensues. Have them out early, that's what I tell my granddaughter Jocelyn in regard to her sons. You simply must. You can't fight against it. I wish I had. I wish I'd given up early and hedged my bets, as it were. Because they're your father's teeth, you see, wisdom teeth are passed down by the father, I'm certain of it. So you must be big enough for them. God knows, I wasn't big enough for mine… (Smith, 2000: 173)

In a way, the above instruction for taking care of wisdom teeth can well refer to multiculturalism which is becoming more and more widespread in contemporary society and for which societal order must be "big enough" to accommodate all people, regardless of their race or nationality, to be able to pass the strength of social unity to the next generations.

2.3.2 Intergenerational Relations

Intergenerational issues in *White Teeth* can be traced through the relations in the Iqbal and Chalfen families. Whereas the first half of the novel mainly concentrates on the lives of the parents, the second half of the novel already dwells on their children, namely, Magid and Millat Iqbal, Joshua Chalfen and Irie Jones. Focusing on multiculturalism and ethnic diversity, Zadie Smith uses the ethnic origins of her characters of different ages as the indication of the fact that in contemporary Britain race should no longer be considered as a category of dividing people, that race as an outdated category of identification should be renounced altogether, because race itself is a social construct. As the writer points out:

> This has been the century of strangers, brown, yellow and white. This has been the century of the great immigrant experiment. It is only this late in the day that you can walk into a playground and find Isaac Leung by the fish pond, Danny Rahman in the football cage, Quang O'Rourke bouncing a basketball, and Me Jones humming a tune. Children with first and last names on a direct collision course. Names that secrete within

them mass exodus, cramped boats and planes, cold arrivals, medical checks. (Smith, 2000: 326)

It is necessary to note that the characters' evaluation of the cultural values, traditions and meanings of other ethnic groups happens against the background of their personal experiences, whether these may be caused by the problems associated with the beginning of adulthood or by mid-life crises. The writer's comparison of how people belonging to different generations, Archie Jones and Samad Iqbal, go through mid-life crises and solve their personal problems shows that some human concerns are universal and usually outweigh not only age but also cultural and racial distinctions.

Archie, for example, attempts to commit suicide after divorcing his Italian wife but meets Clara Bowden, a black Caribbean woman who is thirty years younger than him. Samad feels interested anew in his religion and Bangladesh culture and falls eventually in love with a white English woman, Poppy Burt-Jones. Although culture and religion influence the ways how the men try to solve their problems in critical moments, it would be wrong to suppose that the behaviour of people of different ethnicities is dictated solely by their cultures or religions.

The conflict between first and second–generation immigrants appear due to ambivalent self–identification as second-generation immigrants were born in Britain, but were brought up in the framework of the culture and religion of their origin. The confusion is caused by the fact that the second-generation immigrants cannot fully identify themselves being British or being "Muslim" or else. The youth in *White Teeth* try to solve their problems based on their understanding of life and on the evaluation of their parents' achievements.

> Millat disappeared from home for weeks at a time, returning with money that was not his and an accent that modulated wildly between the rounded tones of the Chalfens and the street talk of the KEVIN clan. He infuriated Samad beyond all reasons. No, that's wrong. There was a reason. Millat was neither one thing nor the other, this or that, Muslim or Christian, Englishman or Bengali; he lived for the in between, he lived up to his middle name, *Zulfikar,* the clashing of two swords. (Smith,2000: 351)

This excerpt emphasises how complex is the problem of self-identification for Millat. He doesn't want to share his father's views and meet his expectations to become a stereotypical Muslim.

He is more likely to indulge in the way of life of a stereotypical British young man, which includes partying, dating white girls and wearing modern clothes, rather than sacrificing all this to being a Muslim, which includes praying five times a day, no alcohol, sexual abstinence and the like. Nay his brother Magid occasionally calls himself Mark Smith in order to be looked upon as British.

> 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 on one side of the house instead of the ever growing pile of other people's rubbish; he wanted a piano in the hallway in a 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; and this month Magid had converted all these desires into a wish to join in with the Harvest Festival like Mark Smith would. Like everybody else would. (Smith, 2000: 151)

This yearning for simple things that are inaccessible for him living amongst the youngsters of a different culture are contrary of the desires of his parents. As a result, he becomes ashamed of his parents, his origin and culture.

> But no one fucked with any of them any more because they looked like trouble. They looked like trouble in stereo. Naturally, there was a uniform. They each dripped gold and wore bandanas, either wrapped around their foreheads or tied at the joint of an arm or leg. The trousers were enormous, swamping things, the left leg always inexplicably rolled up to the knee; the trainers were equally spectacular, with tongues so tall they obscured the entire ankle; baseball caps were compulsory, low slung and irremovable, and everything, everything, everything was Nike™; wherever the five of them went the impression they left behind was one gigantic swoosh, one huge mark of corporate approval. (Smith, 2000: 232)

This excerpt portrays the look of Millat's friends. In their manner of dressing they try not to differ from other white boys. The clothing helps them to fit in the society and forget about their origin. Of course, the parents of Millat do not support his attempts to dissociate from the family. Samad always wanted his sons to wear traditional Muslim clothes to promote Muslim identity and honour traditional Bangladeshi culture. He feels that although his wife is already negatively influenced by living in England, he does not want his sons to be a mixture of both cultures like Alsana. She wears a sari, traditional Muslim clothes and symbol of Muslim identity together with a pair of trainers, a symbol of British fashion (Smith, 2000:198).

The problem in the intergenerational relationship between Samad and Millat Iqbal appears to be the least solvable because the young man's derogatory attitude towards his father derives from both his youthful maximalism and the implacability of the principles of Islamic fundamentalism professed by Millat. However, most importantly, Millat belongs to the second generation of immigrants, which believes and hopes that they can do more than their parents to improve their lives in a foreign land:

> Millat was here to finish it. To revenge it. To turn that history around. He liked to think he had a different attitude, a second generation attitude. If Marcus Chalfen was going to write his name all over the world, Millat was going to write it BIGGER. There would be no misspelling *his* name in the history books. There'd be no forgetting the dates and times. Where Pande misfooted he would step sure. Where Pande chose A, Millat would choose B.

> Yes, Millat was stoned. And it may be absurd to us that one Iqbal can believe the breadcrumbs laid down by another Iqbal, generations before him, have not yet blown away in the breeze. But it really doesn't matter what we believe. It seems it won't stop the man who thinks this life is guided by the life he thinks he had before, or the gypsy who swears by the queens in her tarot pack. […] Amidst the strange landscapes that have replaced our belief in the efficacy of the stars, Millat's is not such odd terrain. He believes the decisions that are made, come back. He believes we live in circles. His is a simple, neat fatalism. What goes around comes around.
> "Ding, ding," said Millat out loud, tapping Havelock's foot, before turning on his heel to make his hazy way to Chandos Street. "Round two." (Smith, 2000: 506-507)

Unfortunately, Millat does not realise that future cannot be built on hatred and revenge. His protest against his father will just be as futile as his father's earlier protest against the circumstances.

Likewise, the other son of Samad had not fulfilled the expectations of his father. He feels that his sons have betrayed him and feels disappointed, but his wife Alsana tries to persuade him that good education and geniality means so much more than anything else could. Alsana on the contrary of Samad realizes her son's struggle in search of identity and takes him as he is.

> "You say we have no control, yet you always try to control everything! Let *go*, Samad Miah. Let the boy go. He is second generation – he was born here – naturally he will do things differently. You can't plan everything. After all, what is so awful – so he's not training to be an alim, but he's educated, he's clean!" (Z. Smith 289)

In general, it can be seen that the intergenerational relations in *White Teeth* are influenced by migration. The sore relationship between Samad and Millat and the lack of understanding between Samad and Magid and even between the twins themselves are only one example of family life influenced of the experience of living side by side with the representatives of other cultures. Samad and Irie are representatives of two generations of immigrants but in this matter their opinions coincide:

> "Believe me, Magid will do Millat no good and Millat will do Magid no good. They have both lost their way. Strayed so far from the life I had intended for them. […] All I wanted was two good Muslim boys. […] I just don't understand where I have gone wrong. You teach them but they do not listen because they have the "Public Enemy" music on at full blast. You show them the road and they take the bloody path to the Inns of Court. You guide them and they run from your grasp to a Chester sports centre. You try to plan everything and nothing happens in the way that you expected…"
> But if you could begin again, thought Irie, if you could take them back to the source of the river, to the start of the story, to the homeland… But she didn't say that, because he felt it as she felt it and both knew it was as useless as chasing your own shadow. […]
> "But if you believe that, where do you go? What do you do? What does anything matter? […] Do you understand, child? I know you understand."
> And what he really meant was: do we speak the same language? Are we from the same place? Are we the same?
> Irie squeezed his hand and nodded vigorously, trying to ward off his tears. What else could she tell him but what he wanted to hear?
> "Yes," she said. "Yes, yes, yes." (Smith, 2000: 406-408)

In these migrant intergenerational relations, parents feel that they have not achieved what they wanted and reproach themselves for not giving their children the homeland that they need most. Samad feels that his immigration to Britain resembles making "a devil's pact":

> You hand over your passport at the check-in, you get stamped, you want to make a little money, get yourself started… but you mean to go back! Who would want to stay? Cold, wet, miserable; terrible food, dreadful newspapers who would want to stay? In a place where you are never welcomed, only tolerated. Just tolerated. Like you are an animal finally house-trained. Who would want to stay? But you have made a devil's pact… it drags you in and suddenly you are unsuitable to return, your children are unrecognizable, you belong nowhere. (Smith, 2000: 407)

Most upsetting to immigrants, like Samad, is the moment when they realise that leaving their country entailedhaving to deal with many unforeseen problems. Not only do they find themselves needless in the new land but they catch themselves giving up "the *very idea* of belonging" anywhere: "Suddenly this thing, this *belonging*, it seems like some long, dirty lie… and I begin to believe that birthplaces are accidents, that everything is an *accident*" (Smith, 2000: 407). This guilt of being "nobody from nowhere" appears to only aggravate the complex relationships between generations in migrant families.

2.3.3 Religious and Ideological Encounters

Despite the fact that in the past Britain had many religious conflicts, nowadays religion is no longer a dominating force in the contemporary British society. Since many Muslim immigrants are strong religious believers, who dedicate a lot of time to praying and other religious activities. The conflict of religious and ideological views as a result of colonial legacies can be discussed on the example of the Iqbals family especially Samad, as religion plays a vital role in his life. Samad adheres to Islam as his salvation from temptations of life. In fact, he is a truly decent man, who just cannot accept the superficial attitude of the majority of common British to religion.

> But of course he was in the wrong religion for compromises, deals, pacts, weaknesses and *can't say fairer than that's.* He was supporting the wrong team if it was empathy and concessions he wanted, if he wanted liberal exegesis, if he wanted to be *given a break.* His God was not *like* that charming white-bearded bungler of the Anglican, Methodist or Catholic churches. He God was not in the business of *giving people breaks.* The moment Samad set eyes on the pretty red-haired music teacher Poppy Burt-Jones that July of 1984, he knew finally the truth of this. He knew his God was having his revenge, he knew the game was up, he saw that contract has been broken, and the sanity clause did not, after all, exist, that temptation had been deliberately and maliciously thrown in his path. In short, all deals were off. (Smith, 2000: 140)

In the excerpt, Samad realizes the differences between other religions and Islam. He has no illusions to be forgiven by Allah in case of his disobedience, as being a Muslim implicates strong devotion and discipline.

Samad knows that he is supposed to live according to the principles and values of Islam, but sometimes his strivings lead to nothing more than a complete failure. Nevertheless, he still considers his faith to be strong and blames the western society for corrupting his way of life.

> "Why don't you eat it?" said Archie, guzzling his two chops down like a madman. "Strange business, if you ask me."
> "I don't eat it for the same reason you as an Englishman will never truly satisfy a woman."
> "Why's that?" said Archie pausing from his feast.
> "It's in our culture, my friend." He thought for a minute. "Maybe deeper. Maybe in our bones."(Smith, 2000:96)

The short dialogue between Samad and Archie shows not only Samad's attitude towards British, but also his pride of being a Muslim, a person who is ready to go through hardships in respect to his culture and religion.

What's more, Samad is preoccupied by the British education standards. He wants his sons to become proper Muslims,but British secular education, according to him, does not provide deep knowledge of Islam. Eventually, Samad comes up with sending his twin sons back to Bangladesh, where they can learn about their culture. Because he does not have enough money to send both his sons there, he has to decide between them. Finally, he decides to send Magid because he was his favourite and capable of becoming a decent Muslim (Smith,2000: 196).

As a result, Samad's twin sons due to very different cultural experiences, have formed absolutely different religious views.

When Magid who was sent off to Bangladesh not to be contaminated by Western ideas returns to England, Samad sees that his son has imbued with the ideologies of nineteenth century British imperialism. Instead of being reconnected with his Eastern roots, Magid demonstrates commitment to Western ideals and values, such as liberalism, scientific rationalism and comprehension of art and culture. These ideals have been instilled in Magid by the education he received in Bangladesh which was appropriated by the ideological frameworks established by the British during colonisation. Therefore, Magid is a typical Englishman, "a late product of the British colonisation of the Asian sub-continent" (Bentley, 2008: 57). Samad who has always wished to raise his sons as two good Muslim boys does not understand Magid's adherence to the Western values, and this is one tragedy of the Iqbal family.

Meanwhile, Millat who stayed in England and was subject to the neo-colonisation of American culture has converted to Islamic fundamentalism as a form of resistance to the predominance of imposed American values. Samad does not recognise Millat's adherence to Islamic fundamentalism because he does not consider it as a legitimate Muslim practice. But Millat does not seem to care. He sees his father as "a faulty, broken, stupid, one-handed waiter of a man who had spent eighteen years in a strange land and made no more mark than this", that is the inscription of Samad's name under a bench made by him on one day when he felt especially depressed in the foreign country (Smith, 2000: 504-506). In his ideologically imbued hatred, Millat openly despises his father's "nothingness":

> "It meant *I wanted to write my name on the world…*"
> "No, thought Millat, the first time he heard this, no, that's not what it meant. It just meant *you're nothing*. […] All his life he wanted a Godfather, and all he got was Samad. […] *It means you're nothing and he's something*. […] That's why Pande hung from a tree while Havelock the executioner sat on a chaise longue in Delhi. Pande was no one and Havelock was someone. No need for library books and debates and reconstructions. […] *That's the long, long history of us and them. That's how it was. But no more*." (Smith, 2000: 505-506)

And even the twins themselves cannot understand each other and are "driven to different ends of the world" by their ideals and the people surrounding them (Smith, 2000: 442). Millat admits that his religious conversion derives more from a human need for belonging and acceptance in the society than from any intellectually formulated belief in the existence of an all-powerful creator. He understands that his religiousness is a kind of a rebellion against the accepted values. He confesses to himself that his religion is not one based on faith, like Christian and Jewish, and believes that to rely on faith, as his own father does, is contemptible. It is "purging oneself of the West", of that "*moribund, decadent, degenerate, over-sexed, violent state of Western capitalist culture and the logical endpoint of its obsession with personal freedoms*" that appears to be the most difficult task for Millat because he needs and would give everything in the world for those his personal belongings that his mother once burnt to teach him a lesson (Smith, 2000: 445).

But most scary is the fact that in this twins' reluctance to understand each other's aspirations and hidden pain, Millat seems to persist more than his brother and does it with unveiled anger and contempt:

> Worst of all was the anger inside 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. And if the game was God, if the game was a fight against the West, against the presumptions of Western science, against his brother or Marcus Chalfen, he was determined to win it. [...] there was no going back now. Yeah, he'd meet Magid, he'd meet him… they'd have a good face-off, he'd come out of it the stronger; he'd call his brother a little cock-a-roach, and walk out of that tete-a-tete even more determined to fulfill his destiny. (Smith, 2000: 446-447)

Of course, it would be wrong to state that Millat's intention to take revenge derives from his religious views only. Rather, the reader can see that Millat is buried under the weight of mutual reproaches and unwillingness to listen to each other. But intolerance can really be formed as a result of religious fanaticism, as shown in the excerpt below:

> "Look around *you*! And what do you see? What is the result of this so-called *democracy*, this so-called *freedom*, this so-called *liberty*? Oppression, persecution, *slaughter*. Brothers, you can see it on national television every day, every evening, every *night*! Chaos, disorder, *confusion*. They are not ashamed or embarrassed or *self-conscious*! They don't try to hide, to conceal, to *disguise*. They know as we know: the entire world is in a turmoil! Everywhere men indulge in prurience, promiscuity, *profligacy*, vice, corruption and *indulgence*. The entire world is affected by a disease known as *Kufr* - the state of rejection of the oneness of the Creator refusing to acknowledge the infinite blessings of the Creator. (Smith, 2000: 467)

Thus, religion not always helps mitigate the negativity of daily life. Often, it serves as a tool of managing people for the sake of gaining power and satisfying one's own interests.

However, on the whole, Zadie Smith tries to treat the issue of religious encounters in *White Teeth* with humour, avoiding the didacticism of political correctness. Perhaps, Samad's conversation with Mrs. Owens, the headmistress of his son's school is the brightest example in connection with the issue:

> "Mr. Iqbal, we have been through the matter of religious festivals quite thoroughly in the autumn review. As I am sure you are aware, the school already recognizes a great variety of religious and secular events: amongst them, Christmas, Ramadan, Chinese New Year, Diwali,
> Yom Kippur, Hanukkah, the birthday of Haile Selassie, and the death of Martin Luther King. The Harvest Festival is part of the school's ongoing commitment to religious diversity, Mr. Iqbal."
> "I see. And are there many pagans, Mrs. Owens, at Manor School?"
> "Pagan – I'm afraid I don't under-"
> "It is very simple. The Christian calendar has thirty-seven religious events. Thirty-seven. The Muslim calendar has nine. Only nine. And they are squeezed out by this incredible rash of Christian festivals. Now my motion is simple. If we removed all the pagan festivals from the Christian calendar, […] the children could celebrate Lailat-ul-Qadr in December, Eid-ul-Fitr in January and Eid-ul-Adha in April, for example. […] This Harvest Festival is not a Christian
> festival. [...] These are pagan ideals!" (Smith, 2000: 129-130)

Unfortunately, the above episode shows that neither Samad nor Mrs. Owens understands each other. Samad feels angry that the children should celebrate all kinds of "pagan" holidays included in the Christian calendar, while important holidays from their own religions are omitted. And even the teacher's argument of "the charity aspect of the Harvest Festival" does not appear to Samad to be a laudable idea (Smith, 2000: 130). And when the teachers admit that they would like to think of all holidays as relating more to community than to religion as such, Samad indignantly asserts: "A man's god *is* his community!" (ibid)

The above demonstrates that out of all aspects of human diversity it is religion and cultural experience that play the most important roles in the lives of people of a multicultural society. And this reaffirms Zadie Smith's message to the reader: multiculturalism in all its manifestations must be accepted and built upon rather than bluntly resisted by society.

2.4 Zadie Smith's Vision of Multiculturalism as a Result of Personal Cultural Experience

The above analysis of the complex multicultural character of contemporary Britain allows for concluding that Zadie Smith's vision of multiculturalism differs from a commonly accepted one. While many authors believe that multiculturalism represents monoethnic individuals grouped to produce a multicultural nation, Zadie Smith proposes a model of race in which each individual is multicultural due to the cultural influences (including biological heritages) that are at play in non-homogeneous contemporary society (Bentley, 2008: 53).

It can also be concluded that Zadie Smith's idea of multiculturalism is based on the accommodation of sameness and difference alongside the balance between shared values, traditions and meanings in cultural groups that constitute the British nation (Bentley, 2008: 55). Starting anew, however, is a difficult task in a country with a long history of racial and ethnic inequality. As Joyce puts it:

> A neutral place. The chances of finding one these days are slim, maybe even slimmer than Archie's pinball trick. The sheer quantity of shit that must be wiped off the slate if we are to start again as new. Race. Land. Ownership. Faith. Theft. Blood. And more blood. And more. And not only must the place be neutral, but the messenger who takes you to the place, and the messenger who sends the messenger. There are no people or places like that left in North London. (Smith, 2000: 457-458)

Acceptance of Zadie Smith's vision of multiculturalism can give to everyone that wonderful feeling of living in one's homeland that all immigrants long for. As Irie once notices:

> Why bother when there was now this other place? (For Jamaica appeared to Irie as if it were newly made. Like Columbus himself, just by discovering it she had brought it into existence.) This well-wooded and watered place. Where things sprang from the soil riotously and without supervision, and a young white captain could meet a young black girl with no complications, both of them fresh and untainted and without past or dictated future a place where things simply were. No fictions, no myths, no lies, no tangled webs this is how Irie imagined her homeland. Because *homeland* is one of the magical fantasy words like *unicorn* and *soul* and *infinity* that have now passed into the language. And the particular magic of *homeland*, its particular spell over Irie, was that it sounded like a beginning. The beginningest of beginnings. Like the first morning of Eden and the day after apocalypse. A blank page. (Smith, 2000: 402)

This feeling of homeland is especially important for migrants who often feel that they move nowhere and are out of time despite their desire to start a new life in the new land. When describing the discrepancy between the common perception of immigrants as people who are ready to leave their homeland and stay in other lands to leave them as easily and the real experience of immigrants themselves, Zadie Smith points to the Zeno's Paradox:

> Because we often imagine that immigrants are constantly on the move, footloose, able to change course at any moment, able to employ their legendary resourcefulness at every turn. We have been told of the resourcefulness of Mr. Schmutters, or the foot loosity of Mr. Banajii, who sail into Ellis Island or Dover or Calais and step into their foreign lands as *blank people*, free of any kind of baggage, happy and willing to leave their difference at the docks and take their chances in this new place, merging with the oneness of this greenandpleasantlibertarianlandofthefree.
> Whatever road presents itself, they will take, and if it happens to lead to a dead end, well then, Mr. Schmutters and Mr. Banajii will merrily set upon another, weaving their way through Happy Multicultural Land. […] But Magid and Millat couldn't manage it. They left that neutral room as they had entered it: weighed down, burdened, unable to waver from their course or in any way change their separate, dangerous trajectories. They seem to make no progress. The cynical might say they don't even move at all that Magid and Millat are two of Zeno's head fuck arrows, occupying a space equal to themselves and, what is scarier, equal to Mangal Pande's, equal to Samad Iqbal's. Two brothers trapped in the temporal instant. Two brothers who pervert all attempts to put dates to this story, to track these guys, to offer times and days, because there isn't, wasn't and never will be any duration. In fact, nothing moves. Nothing changes. They are running at a standstill. Zeno's Paradox. (Smith, 2000: 465-466)

As Zadie Smith (2000: 466) explains, the essence of Zeno's Paradox is especially applicable to the lives of immigrants because it, first, establishes multiplicity, the Many, as an illusion, and thus proves reality to be a seamless, flowing whole, a single, indivisible One. For the writer, immigrants "are always still, move nowhere, there is no progress" (ibid). She underlines it again and again that migration does not give a chance for change because people by their nature are inherently persistent and because Zeno's Paradox really works:

> But multiplicity is no illusion. Nor is the speed with which those-in-the-simmering-melting-pot are dashing towards it. Paradoxes aside, they are running, just as Achilles was running. And they will lap those who are in denial just as surely as Achilles would have made that tortoise eat his dust. Yeah, Zeno had an angle. He wanted the One, but the world is Many. And yet still that paradox is alluring. The harder Achilles tries to catch the tortoise, the more eloquently the tortoise expresses its advantage. Likewise, the brothers will race towards the future only to find they more and more eloquently express their past, that place where they have just been. Because this is the other thing about immigrants ('fugees, émigrés, travellers): they cannot escape their history any more than you yourself can lose your shadow. (Smith, 2000: 466)

The dialogue between Archie and Dr. Sick at the end of the novel shows how the above Zeno's Paradox works in practice:

> "Imagine the world with no beginning or end [...] Imagine, if you can, events in the world happening repeatedly, endlessly, in the way they always have [...] Imagine this war over and over a million times [...] Only those who are sufficiently strong and well disposed to life to affirm it even if it will just keep on repeating have what it takes to endure the worst blackness."
> "The decision you make, Archie," said Dr. Sick [...] "could you see it repeated again and again, through eternity? Could you?" (Smith, 2000: 538-539)

As *White Teeth* shows, Zadie Smith's idea of hybrid identities that represent a mixture of discrete races and ethnicities may be the most appropriate vision for multiculturalism in contemporary Britain. Perhaps, it is Irie Jones, with her complex racial background and with her unborn child whose father may be any of the twin Iqbal brothers, who should become a symbol of this new hybrid multicultural identity. If it is difficult for immigrants to integrate in a new community and even for their children to find some common ground among one another upon which a successful multicultural society can be built, then let Irie's child and the children of others who wish to stop this dissonance between races, nationalities, religions and ideologies in society be the first ones who will grow up like those wisdom teeth mentioned by the old man to Irie, Magid and Millat when they were little.

Zadie Smith's vision of multiculturalism as a result of personal experience, rather than of biological/racial or cultural/national heritage, implies that no progress in contemporary Britain is possible without change in thinking. It is clear that colonies legacies will continue influencing political and rhetoric because politicians always play on people's prejudices and the natural desire to protect oneself from the Other. It is also clear that religions will always divide people based on the principle "divide and rule". But the writer who has an extensive personal experience of racist attacks appeals to us all to come to our senses and stop the seemingly interminable conflict on the basis of differences, whether these may concern age or race or nationality or religious views.

And it should be of least importance if the new model of multiculturalism will not be accepted by everyone. It is important that its implementation would bring more tolerance and understanding among individuals. Irie, for instance, realises that she is not loved by Millat but sleeps with both him and his brother in protest against their feud. This act symbolises an escape from ideological determinism that lies at the heart of the current, not very successful model of multiculturalism in Britain. By this act, the young woman wants to break the ties that were once imposed by colonialism as well as the very rules of nature. Deep in her heart, she wishes to escape from the weight of the past:

> "… and when we consider that the human significance of this technology… which will prove, I believe, the equal of this century's discoveries in the field of physics: relativity, quantum mechanics… when we consider the choices it affords us…"

> But Irie now believes there are things the human eye cannot detect, not with any magnifying glass, binocular or microscope. […] She's looked at one and then the other, one and then the other so many times they don't seem like faces any more, just brown canvases with strange protrusions, like saying a word so often it ceases to make sense. Magid and Millat. Millat and Magid. Majlat. Milljid.
> She's asked her unborn child to offer some kind of a sign, but nothing. She's had a lyric from Hortense's house going through her head - Psalm 63 - *early will I seek thee: my soul thirtieth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee…* But it asks too much of her. It requires her to go back, back, back to the root, to the fundamental moment when sperm met egg, when egg met sperm so early in this history it cannot be traced. Irie's child can never be mapped exactly nor spoken of with any certainty. Some secrets are permanent. In a vision, Irie has seen a time, a time not far from now, when roots won't matter any more because they can't because they mustn't because they're too long and they're too tortuous and they're just buried too damn deep. She looks forward to it. (Smith, 2000: 527)

As Bentley (2008: 61) suggests, a parallel can be drawn between Irie's unborn child and Marcus Chalfen's genetically engineered FutureMouse. The artificial creation of this mouse in a laboratory emphasises the predetermined nature of its existence. On the one hand, the existence of the mouse becomes possible by means of scientific technology, but on the other hand, its future is already encoded in its creation and thereby is predetermined which evokes much older forms of containment and authority. Magid is delighted by the sheer possibility of being created like this mouse – without ties, values, plans or search for sense of life – which shows how tired of misunderstanding and judgments he is:

> Magid was proud to say he witnessed every stage. He witnessed the custom design of the genes. He witnessed the germ injection. He witnessed the artificial insemination. And he witnessed the birth, so different from his own. One mouse only. No battle down the birth canal, no first and second, no saved and unsaved. No pot-luck. No random factors. No *you have your father's snout and your mother's love of cheese*. No mysteries lying in wait. No doubt as to when death will arrive. No hiding from illness, no running from pain. No question about who was pulling the strings. No doubtful omnipotence. No shaky fate. No question of a journey, no question of greener grass, for wherever this mouse went, its life would be precisely the same. It would not travel through time (and Time's a bitch, Magid knew *that* much now. Time is *the* bitch), because its future was equal to its present which was equal to its past. A Chinese box of a mouse. No other roads, no missed opportunities, no parallel possibilities. No second-guessing, no what-ifs, no might-have-beens. Just certainty. Just certainty in its purest form. (Smith, 2000: 489-490)

But the final episode of the novel showing that the mouse has escaped proves that anyone and anything can be free:

> Archie, for one, watched the mouse. He watched it stand very still for a second with a smug look as if it expected nothing less. He watched it scurry away, over his hand. He watched it dash along the table, and through the hands of those who wished to pin it down. He watched it leap off the end and disappear through an air vent. *Go on my son!* Thought Archie. (541-542)

That many people are tired of the focus on race as biological heritage is shown also in an episode with Joshua who once confesses to the members of his organisation FATE that he

is the son of Marcus Chalfen. Joely, his girlfriend, is first shocked but then excited that she is "sleeping with the enemy" (Smith, 2000: 482). The members of the organisation spend two days to decide what to do now with Joshua who finally stays and acquires the status of "the convert from the other side" (ibid). This and the other episodes where the characters of *White Teeth* eventually come to some consensus leaves hope that Zadie Smith's idea of multiculturalism as a personal experience may be successfully accepted by British society. The people are really tired of the intolerance which undermines strengths and overshadows daily life and relationships. Acceptance and mutual understanding will definitely be a win-win situation for Britain hosting people of different origins as it will enable the country to unite "gainst all disaster" (ibid: 527).

CONCLUSIONS

The literature review on racial and ethic issues in contemporary Britain as well as the analysis of Zadie Smith's novel *White Teeth* conducted in the present Bachelor's thesis have allowed for the following conclusions.

Multiculturalism is reality in today's Britain due to the British imperialistic past and colonial legacies. Although multiculturalism is a mere result of mass migration that happened across the British Empire before and continues today owing to the relatively open immigration policy of the country, the recent decade has witnessed a growing discontent with the racial and ethnic diversity within British society. Many British authors dwell upon problems encountered by immigrants in the new homeland, trying to speak of immigrants' diversity as a valuable cultural commodity, rather than as something to be fought against. There is an attempt to replace the values of racial purity and apartness that have long been held to in British society by the idea of hybridity which can help unite people of different cultures for some common goals. Instead of focusing on race, ethnicity, nationality or religion, contemporary British writers consider the moral, spiritual and cultural belonging of people to the place they call homeland.

In her bestselling novel *White Teeth*, Zadie Smith, being herself of a mixed ethnic background, shows how hard it is for immigrants to make choices and to face the consequences of their choices. The writer touches upon the coexistence of different cultures, ethnicities and races in today's Britain but tries to convince that personal experience, albeit influenced by cultural heritage, matters much more than ethnicity, race or nationality. The immigrant families of the Joneses, the Chalfens and the Iqbals are closely interconnected and despite their differences have to find some common grounds to support the members of their families.

The writer shows these people of Asian, Carribean, English, Welsh and Jewish origin search for identity, solve problems of intergenerational relations and undergo religious and ideological encounters in Willesden, North London. The time period covers two centuries, showing how greatly racist attitudes have changed over time. Time and place are shown as more influential for people's lives than other factors, although some people still cannot give up nationalistic or racist views.

The characters in *White Teeth* go through life crises, establish and break relationships, solve family problems and try to make sense of what is going on around them, and in so doing they are shown as equal. It is immigrant metaphors that indicate their sameness. The parents feel sorry for depriving their children of their roots, immigrating to Britain and having no

chance to return home. The children who have already grown up try to escape racial issues altogether but they also feel that they are out of place and out of time. Both parents and children make mistakes, whether it may be expressed in antagonised intergenerational relationships or in adherence to alien values.

The feelings of nothingness and hopelessness felt both by the first and second generations of the immigrant families as well as the lack of mutual understanding make the people search for some common sense in their situations in the new land. They long for homeland, they long for general acceptance in all their diversity, and they long for normality and continuity. Therefore, Zadie Smith proposes a model of multiculturalism in which each individual is multicultural due to the cultural influences (including biological heritages) *and* personal experience. Her idea of multiculturalism is based on the accommodation of sameness and difference alongside the balance between shared values, traditions and meanings in cultural groups that constitute the British nation. Perhaps, it is Irie Jones, with her complex racial background and with her unborn child whose father may be any of the twin Iqbal brothers, who should become a symbol of this new hybrid multicultural identity.

The above shows that the conducted analysis has verified the hypothesis put forward for the present research. Zadie Smith's novel *White Teeth* does represent the author's vision multiculturalism as a result of personal cultural experience by reflecting how harmoniously different cultures, ethnicities and races manage to coexist in contemporary Britain despite the numerous problems individuals face regarding racial, national and religious identities and intergenerational relations.

THESES

1. Multiculturalism is reality in today's Britain due to the British imperialistic past and colonial legacies.

2. Although multiculturalism is a mere result of mass migration that happened across the British Empire before and continues today owing to the relatively open immigration policy of the country, the recent decade has witnessed a growing discontent with the racial and ethnic diversity within British society.

3. Many British authors dwell upon problems encountered by immigrants in the new homeland, trying to speak of immigrants' diversity as a valuable cultural commodity, rather than as something to be fought against.

4. There is an attempt to replace the values of racial purity and apartness that have long been held to in British society by the idea of hybridity which can help unite people of different cultures for some common goals.

5. Instead of focusing on race, ethnicity, nationality or religion, contemporary British writers consider the moral, spiritual and cultural belonging of people to the place they call homeland.

6. Zadie Smith's novel *White Teeth* does represent the author's vision multiculturalism as a result of personal cultural experience by reflecting how harmoniously different cultures, ethnicities and races manage to coexist in contemporary Britain despite the numerous problems individuals face regarding racial, national and religious identities and intergenerational relations.

7. Time and place in *White Teeth* are shown as more influential for people's lives than other factors, although some people still cannot give up nationalistic or racist views.

8. The immigrant families of the Joneses, the Chalfens and the Iqbals are closely interconnected and despite their differences have to find some common grounds to support the members of their families.

9. The characters in *White Teeth* go through life crises, establish and break relationships, solve family problems and try to make sense of what is going on around them, and in so doing they are shown as equal; it is immigrant metaphors that indicate their sameness.

10. The feelings of nothingness and hopelessness felt both by the first and second generations of the immigrant families as well as the lack of mutual understanding make the people search for some common sense in their situations in the new land: they long for homeland, they long for general acceptance in all their diversity, and they long for normality and continuity.

11. Zadie Smith proposes a model of multiculturalism in which each individual is multicultural due to the cultural influences (including biological heritages) *and* personal experience.

12. Zadie Smith's idea of multiculturalism is based on the accommodation of sameness and difference alongside the balance between shared values, traditions and meanings in cultural groups that constitute the British nation.

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Dokument r lapa

Bakalaura darbs „Multicultural and racial issues in Zadie Smith's novel 'White Teeth'" ("Multikultur lie unrasu aspekti Zeidijas Smitas novel 'Baltie zobi'") izstr d ts LU Humanit ro zin t u fakult t .

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Autors: Nadežda Lavrecka 10.01.2013.

Rekomend ju darbu aizst v šanai

Vad t js: docents Aleksejs Taube 10.01.2012.

Recenzents:

Studiju metodi e: 10.01.2012.

Darbs iesniegts Anglistikas 10.01.2012.

Darbu pie ma:

Darbs aizst v ts bakalaura gala p rbaud juma komisijas s d

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