

ANALYSING THE MULTICULTURALISM IN ZADIE SMITH'S FICTIONWHITE TEETH: A CRITICAL INTERPRETATION.

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Abstract:

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

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

Introduction

“The world is now multicultural the same way the world is round. It's not a selling point, it's not a 'quirky' feature, it's not a cynical marketing ploy, it's not an artistic statement, it's not even a plot device. It's a fact, like seedless grapes.” - Zadie Smith (AZQuotes)

Multiculturalism has always been and will perhaps always be a far-reaching and instantaneously fervently debated issue. It is not just about the choice whether to eat at a Chinese or Italian restaurant but is also predominant in the every-day communication with people. For many people, like for Zadie Smith, multiculturalism is a matter of course but for others it still represents a critical subject. Due to globalization and the concurrent improvement of transport and communication technologies migration processes have become faster and easier than ever. People constantly change their place of living and working and consequently relationships have become not just international but also multicultural. The composition of different cultural communities in the countries of destination are constantly being transformed and diversified which thus can result to discrimination and prejudice. London has consistently been a popular destination for immigrants from all places and is definitely one of the world's most diverse metropolises. People who define themselves as “mixed race” are the rapidly rising ethnic group (Perfect, 4). There are many theories that attempt to describe the emerging diverse societies. Popular concepts are the “melting pot” or the “salad bowl” theory. According to Berray the “fusing of individualities, including any traits of immigrant religion and race” (143) is the melting pot's core idea. Immigrants adapt dominant norms regarding culture, politics and economics which leads to the reduction of linguistic and cultural differences between different ethnic groups (cf. Berray, 143). On the contrary the salad bowl theory implies the maintenance of unique identities and cultural differences. Ethnic minorities live side-by-side with the dominant culture and share their cultural and identical practices (cf. Berray, 145).

Multiculturalism is an extremely wide-ranging term and can therefore be understood and used in numerous ways. It might be commended that in the contemporary world the borders of our cultural identity are blurred. People migrate, change their culture, habits, beliefs due to the economy, education, politics and individual needs. Some of these people try to keep their ethnic individuality and refuse the foreign customs, while others accept the new cultural identity and obtain the status of a cultural hybrid. The subject of multiculturalism and hybridity is the central and multifaceted spectacle of the contemporary times. The postcolonial effect has an impact on nearly all cultures around the globe including literature. The depiction of the master who colonises the slaves stays in the approach of the old generation. The new generation has a different perspective.

This Chapter aims to present the phenomenon of the multicultural hybridity of the characters of the young generation of immigrants described by Zadie Smith in her first novel *White Teeth* (2000). Core foundational element to this chapter is the novel *White Teeth*, which presents the thematic concern of multiculturalism and cultural hybridity. In the novel, Zadie Smith spaces all protagonists in a very anxious and disorderly culture setting which has a momentous effect on their lives, their decisions and actions. On this motif of note, this Chapter presents the approach to the subject of multiculturalism in the characters who represent a new generation of immigrants. It defines the journey of the young generation, the problem of the identity among immigrants, their religious background as well as their wanders from social and spiritual estrangement towards union with others and with themselves. The methodology of this Chapter relies on the ideas of postcolonial theory with the strong difference of the hybridity, which is one of the most persuasive facets of the literary trend in contemporary theoretical discourse.

The reality presented in *White Teeth* is a multicultural, multinational, hybrid: a world in which generations, cultures, religions and beliefs were strikingly progressed. The author blends several conventions: pathos is mixed with the grotesque, the seemingly distant past has a huge impact on the here and now of the characters. The language of Zadie Smith can be termed as fresh, supple and intense so that it is impossible not to be scored by her prose. Everything is served as a very consumable assortment and despite the accretion of a multitude of threads - everything seems to make sense, and its place.

Before analysing the elements of hybridity in the novel, it is desirable to interpret its meaning first. One must know that there exists more than one definition concerning the term's position in a social or racial context. Nevertheless, some aspects can be generalised:

Hybridity refers to the development of the appearance of a culture, in which its elements are being recurrently transformed or translated through uncontrollable encounters. Hybridity offers the potential to weaken existing forms of cultural authority and representation. (A Dictionary of Sociology 2005, as cited in Warner 2007: 5).

In this definition, hybridity is designated as an own culture. According to Edward Said, a Palestinian American theorist, "cultures are hybrid and heterogeneous [...] and interdependent" (Said 1995: 347), thus hybridity can be seen as not only a result of globalisation, immigration and colonisation, but as a constant circumstance in the development of every culture. Therefore, it is nearly impossible to determine a particular culture (cf. Said 1995: 348). Hence, its concretisation must be critically reviewed.

As already stated, there are diverse understandings on hybridity's location in a social context. According to Tim Warner, "hybridity is a concept settled between multiculturalism and the concept of a melting-pot" (2007: 5).

However, this assumption raises the question in how far multi culturalism and hybridity can be separated, and how one has to position multiculturalism in the societal condition of Britain.

An occasion of Immigration in Britain:

The event of Immigration in Britain was one of intensive moment which was outstandingly reflected in this novel. It is important for this hypothesis to underline the significant role of immigration in Britain due to the location where the characters of *White Teeth* are set.

It has effectively been observed that due to the United Kingdom's long history of colonisation and imperialism, its capital has become one of the most diverse and multicultural cities in the world. Indeed, the city of London is considered a main source of British history and culture, but specially in the last decades, many subcultures have emerged through immigration from mostly the West Indies and Southern Asia. Hence, residents of the United Kingdom faced a postcolonial development within their culture, eventually leading scholars and authors to address certain issues, for instance the concepts of multiculturalism and hybridity that have newly emerged within British society. Zadie Smith, being a child of an Englishman and a Jamaican mother, grew up in London amidst these mixed cultures and social groups. Thus, she is not only one of Britain's representatives of multiculturalism through her literature, but has also experienced the development of a hybrid identity herself through her multi-ethnic background. In her debut novel *White Teeth*, Smith depicts the lives of mainly three families in northern London who are highly affected by postcolonial circumstances.

The novel written by Zadie Smith deals with the people who migrated from Jamaica, Bangladesh, Eastern Europe and is set in London during the years between 1857- 1999. The novel rejoices the multicultural London full of poignant taste.

Britain has been dealing with immigration for centuries, so it is not a new subject, but still very up-to-date in the contemporary world. People migrate for numerous reasons. In some cases, the important aspect of immigration is connected with the geographic terms of push and pull factors of migration (Rosenberg). The 'push-factor' is related to problems which force people to migrate such as war, poverty or natural destruction. Sometimes 'pull-factor' plays the first role which is connected with the religious or political freedom, which can be described as the factor which encourages people to migrate (Hadjetian, 2014, p. 15). The most popular city to which the people migrate when they consider Britain is London. London becomes the 'keeper of precious diversity' (Alibhai- Brown), a place where all races are mixed together and they all fit there is some magical way. Homi Bhabha says about London that, "It is the city that the migrants, the minorities, the diaspora come to change the history of the nation" (Bhabha, 2004, p. 243). It is possible to explain why people from other countries and the former British colonies migrate to London so willingly. They migrate there because "they already had a special cultural, political and economic relationship to it" (Hadjetian, 2014, p. 15). It is connected to the role of colonisation and the impact which Britain has on their subservient colonies. During the twentieth century, much has changed in relation to the British immigration policy from the open borders to the standstill phase due to the fact connected with the immigration control. At some point, on the one hand, the number of non-white immigrants did not rise, but on

the other hand, the number of inhabitants did not decline because of the offspring of the first generation immigrants born in Britain. The movement of immigrants who came to London continuously changes this city adding a new culture, new food, new religion, and new beliefs. The immigrants living in Britain and especially in London are not just looking for their roots but also for their identities. They must deal with the problems such as racism, loneliness and rejection. A new generation of immigrants must keep on with the changing environment and leave some of their parents' beliefs in their homes. Children of the first generation of immigrants are different from their parents, they adopt new aspects of the English culture more willingly adding just a little bit of their family tradition into their lives. The immigration movements demonstrate the power of migration which has a huge impact on the "transformation of Britain, especially of London, into the multicultural society, it is today" (Hadjetian, 2014, p. 15).

Multicultural Society in White Teeth:

The background of this interesting fiction is located in the multicultural environment of the busy city of London so the characters are set inside the well-known 'cultural mosaic'. The keynote of 'cultural mosaic' is related to many different nations, races, religions and beliefs which are situated side by side. The difference between 'cultural mosaic' and the American 'melting pot' lies on the act of integration: 'mosaic' presents the mixture of various people who are different but they celebrate their uniqueness, while the metaphor of 'melting pot' is related to the pressure for assimilation into the existing society (Levine R., Gifty S.D.).

An interesting context in *White Teeth* is that one cannot only find people in a hybrid condition, but there are also additional facets that present themselves as such. In Willesden, many things are hybrid. Whether it is the Irish pub run by an Arab named Mickey, whose regular guests are Samad and Archie, or the Afro hair salon owned by a white man, in which hair postponements from Indian women are put on African or Caribbean women's heads. There is neither such thing as one significant dominant culture, nor is there a clear division between any of the ethnic minorities. Thus, one realises that it is not enough to analyse the difference between Englishness and the other, but that there are indeed blurred lines between the immigrants themselves. Moreover, it is vital to distinguish the elements that are found in the text. The examples of hybridity do not prove that the society presented in the novel are evidently hybrid. In fact, there are also elements that indicate a multicultural society. "It was only that here, in Willesden, there was just not enough of any one thing to gang up against any other thing and send it running to the cellars while windows were smashed" (Smith 2000: ch. 3). This statement about the coexistence of different groups without the domination of one, is incompatible with the definition of hybridity according to Bhabha. Hence, one must realise that Willesden is not purely hybrid, neither is it purely multicultural in the sense of a salad bowl. The reasons for these differences are mainly due to the older and younger generations' different methods on cultural identity. It is also of great importance to note the role of religion and how it is used differently by the characters. "White Teeth focuses on the characters' use of religion for non-religious purposes, such as coping with socioeconomic inequity (Hortense) and traumatic immigrant experience (Samad), or forging new modes of belonging (Millat)" (Tew 2013: 128).

At the initial encounter itself, there is a sense of hybridity which is crucially visible in this novel. With a multicultural note of understanding, we primarily learn that Archibald Jones and his wife Clara Bowden Jones are an interracial married couple. At the time they

meet, he is a much older divorced Englishman and she is a 19 years old Jamaican. Both, Clara and Archie are somehow pretentious by an identity predicament when they decide to marry. Clara's mother turned her boyfriend Ryan Topps into a Jehovah's Witness, while she dissociated herself from her mother's belief, and as a result, from Ryan. Archie breaks up with his wife, with whom he has never gotten along, and takes Samad's advice to marry again. As a part of his reckless character, he does not concern himself with neither the race of his wife nor of Samad's (cf. Smith 2000: ch. 4). In general, one could say that he lives without a thought for tomorrow. If there is a decision he needs to make, he throws a coin, which underlines his aimlessness.

While Clara appears to be rather conflicted in the beginning, for she is urgently trying to escape the life her mother has dictated for her, she becomes more and more unconstrained throughout the years. She does not love Archie but she decides to marry with him nonetheless in order to begin a new life. The fact that he promises her to go somewhere far away but eventually buys a house in Willesden (cf. Smith 2000: ch. 3) does not discourage her to stay with him. These aspects put emphasis on Clara's willingness for compromises. When she is pregnant, she explains the meaning of the name she wants to give her future daughter. "If it's a girl, I tink I like Irie. It patois. Means every ting OK, cool, peaceful, you know?" (Smith 2000: ch. 4). Indeed, there is something peaceful about Clara and her attitude. This becomes evident when Irie becomes obsessed with the Chalfens. She does not see any harm in the beginning, to the contrary, she thinks that the Chalfens play a positive role in Irie's education. However, one notices that Clara's attitude changes throughout the novel. She becomes more insecure about the development of her daughter, fearing that white culture could control her.

The fact that they are an interracial couple in a disturbed postcolonial society, that is less concerned about the situation they find themselves in than one would expect, displays one example of how heterogeneous the families in Willesden are; they are not only culturally different but also in their way of coping with multiple cultural influences. Not only in comparison to the Iqbals but also within the family, these differences are highlighted.

Hortense, Clara's mother, although being of mixed English and Jamaican descent herself (cf. Smith 2000: ch. 12), does not accept that her daughter married a white man (cf. Smith 2000: ch. 3, 12). She is a strictly religious Jehovah's Witness and is constantly waiting for the apocalypse. As already mentioned, religion in the novel is an instrument for the protagonists to manage their lives, also in a non-religious context. Hortense's attitude is a result of the suppression of minorities and her mother's history. She represents the ultimate subaltern in England. "A little English education can be a dangerous thing" (Smith 2000: 13), she claims, giving a hint about how her mother Ambrosia was impregnated by her English teacher and was left alone during the earthquake. With the help of her religion, she creates a personal solution for escaping her social inferiority by craving for the end of the world. In the belief of Jehovah's Witnesses, only the most dignified and pious 144.000 people in the world will "sit next to Jesus" (Smith 2000: ch. 14) on doomsday. Believing that through being a devout human being, one is destined to become the elite in the afterlife, is one way to get out of the subordinated role. Another significant aspect about Hortense is that she teaches Irie about her past. She is the closest connection to her mother's homeland Jamaica, which makes her a symbol for cultural memory and the reminder of colonial oppression. It is in the end her who understands Irie's identity conflicts for she provides her information about her ancestry. It is also her who convinces

Irie to visit Jamaica in the year of 2000 due to her belief that the millennium was the final day on earth. One should note that although Archie's and Clara's carefree attitude might be refreshing in a society that might be too much concerned about the rapid cultural change, it does not help their daughter for her development of an identity.

Considering her identity development, there is possibly no better example of hybridity than Irie, for she is not only of mixed race, but also behaves in particular manners that are naturally hybrid. However, since the novel contains a lot of sarcastic and humorous elements, it is rather difficult to determine whether Irie's actions are, in fact, simply teenage experimenting and curiosity, or can be read as an act of ethnic assimilation, or isolation depending on the circumstances. For instance, she suffers heavy pain in order to straighten her hair. But it must be noted that she does that to impress Millat, who mostly dates white girls. One cannot conclude whether Irie wants to be white or is only obsessed with the idea of pleasing Millat's understanding of physical beauty. In contrast to her wanting straight hair, she interprets a Shakespeare poem as being an ode to a black woman (cf. Smith 2000: ch. 11), which is negated by her teacher. Nevertheless, it shows that she sees beauty in black women. One could possibly argue that the negative reaction by her teacher and classmates might have negatively affected her conception of beauty. However, it has to be considered that Millat criticises her for her new hairdo, so that she receives different responses on beauty in an ethnic context. Throughout the novel, Irie collects these responses she gets from society and develops her own view on culture and identity.

Another development of great importance is that Irie, while growing up, releases herself from her self-consciousness and her compulsion to find answers about everything. She is even alright with not knowing whether Millat or Magid is the father of her child. Finally, Irie and Joshua's relationship can be interpreted as the foundation of a new culture, which would fit to Edward Said's conception of hybridity being an ongoing reality in the development of culture, because finally, all three families merge into one.

The Second Generation of Jones' Family:

The main reason behind Clara's marriage to Archie Jones, an Englishman, is related to her need to be free from her authentically religious Jamaican mother, Hortense. Additionally, the couple has a little girl called Irie, as her parents perceive that Irie does not have a place in English culture; also she does not accept her identity as a Jamaican. Irie's school sorts out an activity for her and Millat, which is paying a visit to the Chalfen family frequently to Joyce Chalfens, Irie's mother. Irie, in a challenge between Bowdenism and Chalfenism, attempts to explore a space among English society for herself. Moreover, the Chalfens are from a white upper class family and they trust themselves to be very liberal, while Bowdenism refers to Hortense's method for living, which is significantly impacted by her Jamaican roots and religion. The following paragraphs demonstrate Irie's clash and examine the impact of Hortense Bowden and Joyce Chalfen on her and on the construction of her identity among these two families.

When Alsana Iqbal finds out that she is pregnant, she asks Archie "what the child will look like, half blacky-white?" (WT: 61). Furthermore, when Clara tells her husband about the probability of the child's blue eyes, then Archie guesses this possibility will happen after that minute ahead. The precedents display how Irie does not satisfy her family's desire since she is not "half white and half black", and "her blue eyes changed to black after two weeks of her born" (WT: 89-90). Irie, as a biased young lady, has a response to everything because of her low-mindedness. Even so, during her pre-adulthood, this manner changes fundamentally. Moreover, Irie believes that she is wrong if she regards herself as

the 'Other' in London, because she thinks that she belongs to the English society (WT: 351). Irie acknowledges her ugliness in every place because of her big size, her buck teeth, glasses, braces and her Afro- dark skin (WT: 351). Moreover, she intends to create her identity as an English girl rather than a Jamaican, this is why she performs as an English lady. This shows how the self is reduced to mere simulacra, in the postmodern British society, so that it confirms Baudrillard's theory that "we are simulators, we are simulacra" (Kellner, 1989: 61), which means she is aware that she is empty inside; she is always haunted by feelings of barrenness and inauthenticity.

An essential role of Chalfens family:

Although the Chalfens might appear as the archetypal English family, they are Jewish immigrants themselves. Additionally, their behaviour, and their culture is exclusive and cannot be usually described as typically English. In the novel, their way of living and behaviour is called "Chalfenist" (Smith 2000: ch. 15). The existence of the Chalfens in the novel sheds a light on two aspects that might contribute to the multicultural context of the story: On the one hand, Chalfenism is unique and excludes anyone who is not part of the family; they represent an isolated culture. On the other hand, it displays the possibility to develop an own culture. The family members, especially the parents, appear to be extremely peculiar. The parents' need for determination and control, their obsession with genes and their superior self-perception cause the effect that the children of the family distance themselves more and more. For example, Joyce Chalfen, the matriarch of the family, constantly speaks on behalf of her son Oscar, although he does not hesitate to object anytime she states an opinion that is not his. And Marcus' genetic research project on a mouse upsets Joshua so much that he decides to dissociate himself entirely from his family. Joshua expresses his inability to have a discussion with his father for he thinks "there's no point being reasonable with him because he thinks he owns reasonableness" (Smith 2000: ch. 15).

Here again, one can note a sense of generation differences. As already mentioned, the danger of remoteness is knowingly high when a society is multicultural. Nonetheless, Smith manages to represent the Chalfens' interest and fascination towards Millat and

Irie. They might be biased and their imagination of other cultures is based on stereotypes, but they still feel compassion for the children and care about them. Joyce even tends to care more about Millat than for her sons, even though he is being disrespectful and rude on many occasions.

The family serves as an example for the fine line between multiculturalism and hybridity. Although the parents are trying to preserve their family's culture, their son reaches out for further influences in his life, becomes a vegetarian and begins a relationship with a mulatto girl who is mother to an English-Jamaican-Bengali child. Again, one observes that the younger generation's tendency into hybridity is much higher than the older ones. However, even Marcus and Joyce are willing to accept that they can learn from others. This is most explicitly highlighted through Magid's and Marcus' friendship.

He saw room for change. And the genius of it, the master stroke, was that Magid never for a moment let Marcus feel that Chalfenism was being compromised in any way whatsoever. He expressed his undying affection and admiration for it every day. All Magid wanted to do, he explained to Marcus, was bring Chalfenism to the people. And you had to give the people what they wanted in a form they could understand. (Smith 2000: ch. 16)

In this passage, it is obvious that Marcus is ready to accept change, but also that Magid

highly respects his ways and morals. Since their relationship is based on mutual admiration, it is an apposite example for a more positive view on multiculturalism, thus comparable to the definition that it depends on "equal respect" (Hirsch et al. 2002: 438).

Although Alsana, and later also Clara, struggle to sympathise with the family, they recognize the optimistic influence they have on their children's education.

It might be a stereotype that the white family helps immigrant children to become better at school, but the fact that they descend from Polish-German Jews, only puts emphasis on Said's theory, namely the non-existence of a self-reliant and self-developed culture.

And in the end, even the Chalfens depend on Irie's and the twins' help (Smith 2000: ch 12. so that there is no distinction between the inferior and the superior.

Despite the fact that the Chalfens make racist statements and they even denigrate her, Irie wants to resemble them. In this admiration, this validates the changes she has undergone. Irie replies to each affront she faces and comments truly, but now she is satisfactorily able to suffer them. Irie, for instance, once she pays a visit to the Chalfens, Marcus considers Irie a "big brown goddess". She does not become angry but her main response to him is "Marcus, chill out, man . . ." (WT. 434). Straightway after Irie's response he begins to comment on Irie's weight. When Joyce claims that Irie is aware of her bulky weight, but Irie answers that she is not aware of her huge body (WT. 434). Moreover, Irie has proceeded onward to be like English girls and desires an English family that fits in with English social standards. Regarding her advancement, this implies that her emphasis is not only on her individual identity, but also on her family as well. Despite the issues concerning her identity, Irie sees that the more she pretends to be close to Chalfenism, the more Joyce's enthusiasm for her disappears. Thus, she understands her exhibition of an ordinary English lady, and yet, she cannot adapt to the truth of her family. She triumphs over another identity issue when she decides to live with her grandmother, Hortense, for quite a while.

Obviously Irie is enchanted by Hortense's lifestyle (WT: 528,530) ; Hortense Bowden is depicted as an extremely strong, pious lady. She attempts to activate the same sort of self-assurance in Irie. Hortense shows her gender without paying attention to societal standards, she is a giant and has Afro hair, yet she does not think about that by any means. This indicates that she is not involved in emulating English attractive standards and attempt to dispose of her place as the 'Other': therefore, she is content with her identity and accepts herself as she is. Bowden is a religious lady and reads the Bible in manners, but Irie considers it as an absurd. Moreover, Clara, Irie's mother, is frightened that Irie will be instructed by Bowden's religion and her belief, as a faithful Jehovah's Witness. However, she is unaware that Irie is an atheist lady and no one influences her even her grandmother. Irie perceives the significance of her stay at Bowden's, which helps her to know her roots and identity. While the Chalfens convinced Irie for accepting that she does not have a place, but Bowden's tales which talk about Jamaican principles guide Irie to think that she has a place. Hence, Irie thinks she belongs to Jamaica and it turns into new fixation for her. The young generation of hybrids in *White Teeth*:

The significant meaning for the analysis of the novel *White Teeth* lies in its title. The title has numerous references which occur repeatedly in the novel. The motif of teeth symbolises identity, which is the main concern of the characters. The teeth have roots, and roots lie in the past. The past, tradition and heritage can destroy us, but getting rid of them

is a dishonesty. The roots of teeth embody personal identities because teeth are changing through life experiences, so is the identity of the characters. At the same time, teeth are the same in every race, which becomes a symbol of humanity beyond racial divisions. However, it is easy to lose teeth just as it is easy to lose the identity. Teeth can be healthy just like healthy identities and they can rot like the identities based on false premises. They can also cause suffering and conflicts and they can be neatened just like the characters of White Teeth are neatened by the desire of fitting in a right culture, and into the society's expectations. One of the most significant visions which presents the symbol of teeth is pictured in the story of Clara Bowden because she lost her teeth in the motorcycle accident in her teenage years and her artificial teeth become a sign of hypocrisy in which the whole Jones's family lives. For Irie, her daughter, false teeth are:

yet another item in a long list of paternal insincerities and untruths, this was another example of the Jones/Bowden gift for secret histories, stories you never got told, history you never entirely uncovered, rumours you never unravelled, which would be fine if every day was not littered with clues, and suggestions. (Smith, 2000, p. 379)

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

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

One sometimes forgets the significance of one's teeth. We're not like the lower animals—teeth replaced regularly and all that—we're of the mammals, you see. And mammals only get two chances, with teeth [...] Clean white teeth are not always wise, now are they? Par exemplum: when I was in the Congo, the only way I could identify the nigger was by the whiteness of his teeth, if you see what I mean [...] Those are the split decisions you make in war. See a flash of white and bang! As it were ... Dark as buggery. (Smith, 2000, p. 171-172)

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

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

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

Both twins had always been determined to choose their own clothes, but where Millat bullied Alsana into purchases of red-stripe Nikes, OshKoshB'Gosh, and strange jumpers that had patterns on the inside and the out, Magid could be found, whatever the weather, in

grey pullover, grey shirt, and black tie with his shiny black shoes and National Health Service specs perched upon his nose, like some dwarf librarian. (Smith, 2000, p. 134)

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

Every Tuesday and Thursday, you, Millat, and you, Irie, will go to Joshua’s house and join him in a two-hour after-school study group split between math and biology, your weaker subjects and his stronger [... I think it’s a really interesting idea. This way Joshua’s strengths can be shared equally among you, and the two of you can go to a stable environment, and one with the added advantage of keeping you both off the streets. I’ve talked to your parents and they are happy with the, you know, arrangement. (Smith, 2000, p. 303)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

What she didn't know, and what she realised she may never know (the very moment she saw the ghostly pastel blue lines materialise on the home test, like the face of the madonna in the zucchini of an Italian housewife), was the identity of the father. No test on earth would tell her. Same thick black hair. Same twinkling eyes. Same habit of chewing the tops of pens. Same shoe size. Same deoxyribonucleic acid. She could not know her body's decision, what choice it had made, in the race to the gamete, between the saved and the unsaved. She could not know if the choice would make any difference. Because whichever brother it was, it was the other one too. She would never know. (Smith, 2000, p. 515)

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

The issue which is the most difficult for Irie is her search for her roots. After she discovers that her mother is wearing false teeth she runs away to her grandmother Hortense and she starts to discover her parents’ past. Irie decides that when she finds out the past she will be

able to confront her own feelings and place. She feels betrayed by her mother and hiding at her grandmother's flat turns out to be her therapy, she thinks that Hortense's obsession with religion is fascinating and with time she discovers photographs and other items which bring her closer to the roots of her family. Finally, Irie develops the sense of belonging and enthrals of Jamaica, the place where her mother and grandmother came from to England. Irie starts to like herself and get over with the fact that she will always be a hybrid, but at least a hybrid who knows her roots.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The third hybrid character analysed in this thesis is Millat Iqbal. He is the younger son of Samad and Alsana and Magid's twin brother. From the very young age, Millat is known as the troubled son who smokes, drinks, has sex with lots of girls, always gets into dangerous situations with shady characters. He struggles with the problem of his identity and the feeling of being alienated. He is constantly under the influence of anger whose source he does not really understand. Millat fights and rejects the dominant British society. He takes part in various gangs and organisation during his teens, but none of them fits him the way he expects it to be. He is constantly feeling different, even around peers who are the same as he is in terms of their hybridity. The following words describe his way of thinking:

And that's how it was for Millat. He was so big in Cricklewood, in Willesden, in West Hampstead, the summer of 1990, that nothing he did later in his life could top it. From his first Raggastani crowd, he had expanded and developed tribes throughout the school, throughout North London. He was simply too big to remain merely the object of Irie's affection, leader of the Raggastanis, or the son of Samad and Alsana Iqbal. He had to please all of the people all of the time. To the Cockney wide-boys in the white jeans and the coloured shirts he was the joker, the risk-taker, respected lady-killer. To the black kids he was fellow weed-smoker and valued customer. To the Asian kids, hero and spokesman. Social chameleon. And underneath it all, there remained an ever-present anger and hurt, the feeling of belonging nowhere that comes to people who belong everywhere. It was this soft underbelly that made him most beloved, most adored by Irie and the nice oboeplaying, long-skirted middle-class girls, most treasured by these hair-flicking and fugue-singing females; he was their dark prince, occasional lover or impossible crush. (Smith, 2000, p. 269).

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

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

Conclusion

White Teeth is above all, a story of multiculturalism which has unquestionably escorted London for many generations. It is a story about a few families who, despite many

differences, especially cultural ones, maintain friendly relations and try to find themselves in the changing culture of the West. The novel flawlessly drafts the problems and communal predicaments which the characters experience. The issues such as the logic of distinctiveness, adaptation or the reputation of religion in the modern world are understood. The young generation is still looking for their place on earth. *White Teeth* is a novel about the new contemporary authenticity in which cultures mix, ethnicities become a risk, and foreignness becomes a deliverance. This is a obstinate analysis of a multicultural society which shows immigrants as defenseless rather than threatening. Clinging to their customs, religions and traditions, they become dangerous to themselves, their ideas blur, they cannot come to terms with who they have become in a foreign country, they cannot accept the fact that the transformations which they experience may lead to their own progress. Zadie Smith's novel claims that immigrants can no longer live in their own ghettos. Her London is not a mixture of ethnic groups who defend themselves against the influence of one hostile white culture. Zadie Smith presents a real combination of characters and their attempts to preserve individuality which becomes the greatest threat.

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

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

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