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Diplomová práce

Multicultural World in Zadie Smith's Recent Novels

Multikulturní svět v románech Zadie Smith

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Abstract

Initially, the diploma thesis introduces the overall context of contemporary Anglo-American post-colonial literature and defines its fundamental postulates, such as ethnicity, cultural diversity, hybridity, globalization, and multiculturalism. Furthermore, the thesis briefly mentions several British authors of various ethnic background (Zadie Smith, Hanif Kureishi, Salman Rushdie). The main aim of the thesis is to analyze Zadie Smith's three most recent novels (*White Teeth*, *On Beauty*, *N-W*) in the context of multicultural environment of contemporary Anglo-American world. The thesis further concentrates on author's narrative techniques, prevailing themes in the novels, the influence of English literary tradition, namely of E. M. Forster and David Lodge, and examines verbal and situational humor of the aforesaid novels.

Anotace

Práce nejprve zmíní celkový kontext současné angloamerické postkoloniální literatury a v úvodu definuje její základní postuláty (ethnicity, cultural diversity, hybridity, globalization, multiculturalism). Práce dále ve stručnosti představí britské autory z různých etnických skupin (Zadie Smith, Hanif Kureishi, Salman Rushdie). Jádrem práce bude rozbor posledních tří románů Zadie Smith /*White Teeth*, *On Beauty*, *N-W*/ v kontextu multikulturního prostředí současného angloamerického světa. Práce se soustředí na proměnu vyprávěcích postupů autorky, tematiku jejích děl a vliv anglické literární tradice (E. M. Forster, D. Lodge) a zaměří se na jazykový a situační humor zmiňovaných románů.

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Introduction

The diploma thesis centers around the literary works of Zadie Smith, a representative of contemporary post-colonial literature in scope of Anglo-American environment, and examines author's three recent novels *On Beauty*, *N-W*, and mostly *White Teeth* in terms of its multicultural setting in contemporary world.

Zadie Smith is considered to be one of the most influential authors that bring attention to the struggle of identity that people with ethnic origin have to face while attempting to assimilate in society. The author manages to portray such struggles of everyday life with wit and humor, but also emphasizes the pressing reality of the multicultural world. Who else than Zadie Smith should address such issues, for she herself comes from a mixed marriage of her Jamaican mother and an English father? Given Smith's hybrid origin, the themes explored in her novels are arguably derived from Smith's own experience. The author mainly points attention towards matters such as social assimilation of immigrant generations, identity crisis, discrimination, predestination, or racism.

To fully understand the motives that draw writers such as Zadie Smith, Hanif Kureishi, Monica Ali, or Salman Rushdie to engage in the themes reflecting the multicultural society on the break of the 20th and the 21st century, one must retrospectively look at the historical background of post-colonial literature. In this sense, the thesis aims to determine fundamental moments in history and establish terminology, together bringing a desired and needed perspective on the incentive of genesis of multiculturalism. This newly obtained view on the presence and form of multiculturalism in the society helps to analyze Smith's novels in deeper understanding.

Zadie Smith is mainly recognized for her debut novel *White Teeth* (2000) and she continuously secures her position among other popular authors by publishing a number of novels where she addresses issues connected to multicultural society, as she herself experiences it through the eyes of an individual of hybrid origin and a descendant of immigrants in society. Given the irreversible course of presence of

multiculturalism in the society, Zadie Smith evidently represents an author whose work is worth looking into.

1. The Genesis of Post-Colonial Literature

Given the fact that more than three-quarters of the people living in contemporary world have had their lives shaped by the experience of colonialism, it is a natural outcome that such experience is being projected into various spheres, such as political and economic, but also into art, be it literature, painting, music, or dance. For the thesis' main aim is to examine literary works of Zadie Smith, this chapter will strive to bring light on the historical setting which resulted into the birth of post-colonial literatures.

Colonialism

Colonialism, as an historical era, dates back to the 16th century, until the first half of the 20th century. The term describes an act of spreading political power of one nation by establishing a colony on a territory of another nation. The reasons were mainly economical, for the newly gained territories were endowed with local natural resources, labor force and local market.

Many problems have naturally arisen from the relationship between the colonizer and colonized, which stemmed from the fixed hierarchy of such relation. Nations such as Great Britain, Spain, France or Portugal were among the European powers that were repeatedly involved in colonizing African and Caribbean countries, Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Malaysia and others. Race of the indigenous peoples versus race of the colonizers represented a serious issue, predispositions being caused on both sides.

In such situations the idea of the colonial world became one of a people intrinsically inferior, not just outside history and civilization, but genetically pre-determined to inferiority. Their subjection was not just a matter of profit and convenience but also could be constructed as a natural state. (Ashcroft, Griffiths, Tiffin, 2000, p. 41)

Colonized territories were primarily set up to provide raw materials for the burgeoning economies of the colonial powers. This fact, together with other motives such as urgent need to civilize and educate, or rather control, a particular nation, were defended by using different titles for colonies.

The development of such territorial designators as ‚Protectorates‘, ‚Trust Territories‘, ‚Condominiums‘, etc. served to justify the continuing process of colonialism as well as to hide the fact that these territories were the displaced sites of increasingly violent struggles for markets and raw materials by the industrialized nations of the West. (Ashcroft, Griffiths, Tiffin, 2000, p. 41)

The process of gaining independence of the colonies was usually provoked by the colonized nation itself, which fought hard against the ruling political power. The independence was given to the colonies rather involuntarily, usually because of the strong and violent opposition of the colonized. In Great Britain’s case, granting independence to its colonies was not an outcome of proactive and intended strategy but rather of a strong resentment coming from the colonies.

Colonialism plays its part in the development of racial discrimination, too. Rather obvious reasons, such as the hierarchical stratification in colonies, represent the crib for unequal, therefore discriminating intercultural relations. The genesis of racism itself was extensively a result of the post-Renaissance colonial expansion, as Ashcroft et al. notes: *„Racial discrimination was, in the majority of cases, a direct extension of colonial policy and continued to receive both overt and covert support from the ex-colonial powers [...]“* (Ashcroft, Griffiths, Tiffin, 2000, p. 44) Not only did the colonized nations have to fight for their independence, but also for its preservation and protection. Examples of such actions are British India and European African colonies, where fierce rebellions and conflicts took place.

Post-colonialism

Post-colonialism is a term generally describing a historical period which began after a colony gained its political independence. The designation aims to characterize and portray economic and cultural situation in the post-independence period in a complex way; in general – the post-colonialist discourse examines the effects of colonization on cultures and societies.

Even though the process of decolonization firstly occurred in the end of the 18th century (particularly in North America) and continued in the first half of the 19th century, the term itself has been used for the first time after World War 2: *„As originally used by historians after the Second World War in terms such as the post-*

colonial state, 'post-colonial' had a clearly chronological meaning, designating the post-independence period." (Ashcroft, Griffiths, Tiffin, 2000, p. 168) However, a few decades later, the expression found its new usage: „[...] *from the late 1970s the term has been used by literary critics to discuss the various cultural effects of colonization.*" (Ashcroft, Griffiths, Tiffin, 2000, p. 168) Then not only the term is being used to refer to the historical era of post-independence period of former colonies, but it also serves to describe the interindisplinary and critical analysis of cultural heritage of colonialism both in former colonies and the metropolis.

Post-colonial literature

Consequently, many questions arise while trying to define what post-colonial literature actually is, due to a number of aspects that need to be considered. Until when does the post-colonial literature date back in the past? When does it end? Given the number of colonies that gained independence, can we put them all under just one term 'post-colonial literature' ? What about other literatures, that are not written in the 'colonial' language – the language of the colonizer (English, French, Spanish and others), but in the indigenous languages that cannot naturally get that much attention? And, is the society being racist by emphasizing the authors that write their texts in colonial languages?

According to Boehmer's statement, there is a difference between the terms ‚postcolonial' and ‚post-colonial', which is a crucial turning point for the purposes of this thesis and Boehmer's book. ‚Postcolonial', written without the hyphen, refers to such literature that was written after the rise of the empire. In their literary works, writers focused on the following:

[...] postcolonial writers sought to undercut thematically and formally the discourses which supported colonization – the myths of power, the race classifications, the imagery of subordination. Postcolonial writing, therefore, is deeply marked by experiences of cultural exclusion and division under empire. (Boehmer, 2009, p. 3)

On the other hand, the hyphenated term ‚post-colonial' refers to the era after the Second World War, when also the main issue of this thesis is dated.

2. Fundamental Postulates of Post-Colonialism

New policies in society caused by colonization and decolonization brought forth new terminology that later became the basis around which the whole concept of post-colonialism and multiculturalism centers.

Ethnicity

Ethnicity is a term used predominantly in social and cultural studies and its usage has been increasing since the 1960s with only slight nuances in meaning. The term itself comes from the Greek language, where *ethnos* means 'nation' and in its initial connotation it described culturally different, or 'heathen', nations. From the point of view of sociology, ethnicity represents a set of elements such as culture, tradition, shared values, norms, language, social patterns and ancestry by which the ethnic groups differ from each other and unite at the same time. In the contemporary use of the term, it refers to groups that are not in the center, that are not conventional and common. Therefore, when focusing on the Anglo-Saxon group in the settler colonies, which was usually dominant, we do not consider it to be an ethnic group because:

[...] its ethnicity has constructed the mythology of national identity. Such an identification is not limited to colonial experience, but does reveal the 'imperialistic' nature of national mythology, and the political implications of any link between ethnicity and nation. (Ashcroft, et al., 2007 p. 77)

As far as the name of a particular ethnic group is concerned, it usually derives from the originating nation, even if the nation does not exist anymore. Ethnic groups are to be found both in the settled colonies where peoples immigrated to, such as the USA, Australia or New Zealand, and also in colonizing countries, where colonized peoples migrated to. Such actions then resulted in the following outcome. *"One further consequence of this movement is that older European nations can no longer claim to be coterminous with a particular ethnic group but are themselves the heterogeneous and, in time, hybridizes, mixture of immigrant groups."* (Ashcroft, et al., 2007 p. 76)

The difference between *ethnicity* and *race* needs to be stressed out, too. Whereas *ethnicity* focuses more on human variation in terms of culture, tradition and social patterns, the term *race* on the other hand stands for the classification of human being into physically, biologically and genetically distinct groups, which to a given extent is the cause of establishing a hierarchical division between nations, which brings forward a certain negative connotation. Opposite to that lies the term *ethnicity*, which is usually understood as a rather positive expression of self-perspective, from which its members and users can benefit.

Creation of new ethnic groups is still an on-going process, which may be also backed by political reasons (as it happened in the 1960s during the 'ethnic revolution' whose outcome was the birth of several new ethnic groups). For establishing new ethnic groups, there do not need to be many elements that differ or unite one group from the other. These elements can be of various nature, beginning with the languages itself, shared history, name, cultural values, religion or art, literature or music. It is not necessary to fulfill all these premises for an ethnic group to evolve and vice versa – it is not necessary for an individual to fulfill all the premises to consider himself a member of the group. *"No ethnic group is completely unified or in complete agreement about its own ethnicity and no one essential feature can ever be found in every member of the group."* (Ashcroft, et al., 2007 p. 79)

Cultural diversity

Cultural diversity is a term used to describe the variety of culture and its differences that exist in world, or in a particular society or group. It derives from the fact, that there is a countless number of different cultures, which vary in numerous aspects, or standards regarding the social interaction (including the personal space distance, eye contact, body language, etc.) These differences become the motivation for *cultural diversity* as such.

The opinion that the term *cultural difference* is interchangeable with term *cultural diversity* collides with results of Bhabba's study, where he comments that it is not enough to simply recognize a set of separate and different systems of behavior, attitudes and values; for such attitude implies the differences to be exotic or abnormal and make us assume that a culture has a 'pre-given contents and customs'. (cf.

Bhabba, p.53 2007) As Bhabba further denotes, *cultural difference* suggests that: “[...] *cultural authority resides not in a series of fixed and determined diverse objects but in the process of how these objects come to be known and so come into being.*” (Ashcroft, et al., 2007 p. 53)

Hybridity

The term hybridity initially comes from the field of horticulture, where it describes the process of cross-breeding two species by grafting or cross-pollination form a third, hybrid species. In terms of post-colonial studies: “[...] *hybridity commonly refers to the creation of new transcultural forms within the contact zone produced by colonization.*” (Ashcroft, et al., 2007 p. 108) Hybridity, in the context of social sphere, represents the means of transport between two separate cultures that have mixed bringing the third way, which Bhabba refers to as the ‘Third Space’ – a space where cultural identities emerge. For this space: “[...] *may help us to overcome the exoticisms of cultural diversity in favour of the recognition of an empowering hybridity within which cultural difference may operate.*” (Ashcroft, et al., 2007 p. 108) The state of hybridity (poised bilingual position between two cultures) brings along two ways of understanding and diverse possibilities of interpretation enabled through two kinds of rhetoric, mixing and crossing languages, forms and styles via which “[...] *colonized writers evolved polysemic – truly creolized - modes of expression.*” (Boehmer, 2005 p. 112)

Globalization

Globalization is a longtime process happening within the field of economy, culture and politics, which affects individual lives and the whole world in terms of spreading and accelerating the trade business, products, people, ideas and other aspects of culture worldwide. Major factors that further support globalization, not to say the economic and cultural independence, are the transportation and telecommunications infrastructure, mainly the Internet and mobile phones. In the end, all the above-mentioned actions are “[...] *the process of the world becoming a single place.*” (Ashcroft, et al., 2007 p. 100) What we witness as the result of globalization is a change in the organization of worldwide relations, meaning that the

more access to global knowledge and culture individuals and communities have, the less importance the 'nation' itself has.

There are many points of view and opinions on globalization. One considers it a positive feature, which enables the society to use all the advantages of a modern era all over the world, such as the technology, information services and markets from which the local communities benefit and where the dominant society contributes to universal prosperity. The question in such cases is whether globalization is:

[...] a form of domination by 'first World' countries over 'Third World' ones, in which individual distinction of culture and society become erased by an increasingly homogeneous global culture, and local economies are more firmly incorporated into a system of global capital. (Ashcroft, et al., 2007 p. 101)

Another questionable fact is pointed out: whether globalization affects all the communities equally beneficially and to the same extent, and questions the way by which globalization was spread across the globe, since it was not a spontaneous act as it emerged from the centers of capitalist power.

However, if we think of globalization as of a process of meeting and mixing cultures, and not as of a result of some nations being 'dominant' over others, then we witness such a condition where local communities have the power to decide and influence the global systems through strategies of representation, organization and social change. Such result then: "*[...] may free one from local forms of dominance and oppression or at least provide the tools for a different kind of identity formation.*" (Ashcroft, et al., 2007 p. 103)

One possible outcome which globalization could bring, is a condition when the global culture develops to such extent that the tools societies use will become homogenous and the differences will wash off, such as strategies, techniques, assumptions and interactions of cultural representation. Therefore, what the globalization studies are concerned about the most, are the means and style of interaction between the 'global culture' and 'local culture', which is present at all different aspects and forms of social life.

Multiculturalism

The term multiculturalism is usually used in the field of social and culture science, connected to many more postulates, such as ethnicity, race, language or culture itself. It was used for the first time in the 1960s in Switzerland and later in Canada where it described the process of mixing Francophone and Anglophone population. Nowadays the term carries more than one possible meaning. It describes the coexistence of multiple cultural societies with different and specific traditions, institutional systems, values and attitudes under one jurisdiction. There are two options how multiculturalism is created; either the jurisdiction of the country consists of amalgamating areas with two or more different cultures, or the multicultural state is caused by immigration of peoples from different jurisdictions. The aim of multiculturalism is to provide a friendly environment for the development of education, culture and traditions and is based on a mutual respect and tolerance of particular nations and ethnicities. Not always are the coexistence, cooperation and interaction among the different cultures peaceful, though.

The ideology behind multiculturalism is that all the cultures share similar values and are equal; therefore, create such an environment suitable for mutual and meaningful enrichment.

3. Contemporary Anglo-American Literature in the Post-Colonial Context

Commonwealth literatures, Third-World literatures, New literatures, Post-colonial literatures. All of these terms aim to represent literatures that were written in the English language in the former colonies or even outside of them. Literatures written in English language then do not only come from Great Britain and United States, but there are also representatives from Africa, Australia, Canada, India, New Zealand and West Indies. For example, the term Commonwealth literatures, was rather obviously referring to English texts written only on the soil of former British colonies that later formed a union named the Commonwealth countries. An interesting fact is that literature coming from Great Britain itself is not regarded to be included in Commonwealth literatures, as Bijay Kumar Das mentions in his study:

Since it is apolitical term, the countries have the option to opt out of 'Commonwealth' or can be expelled from it leaving the question of the identity of literatures written in English in these countries open-ended. Moreover, Great Britain being a part of the Commonwealth, English literature is not considered a part of 'Commonwealth literature. (Kumar Mas and Khan, 2007, p. 1)

Focus on the Commonwealth literatures as an individual discipline was brought in the early 1960s both in the United States and Great Britain. A separate branch in the MLA for this area was established also in the 1960s under a title 'World Literatures in English outside the United States and Britain'.

The authors writing their works in English language have naturally a higher chance of expansion to the English speaking literary market. Many of those writers leave their homeland to try to pursue their success either in the USA or in Great Britain, which results in a market filled with immigrant literatures. What influences such trend is also a current escalation of the usage of English language in other branches, starting with the international politics, science, culture, travel and education.

4. British Literary Representatives with Various Ethnic Background

4.1. Zadie Smith

Novelist Zadie Smith was born in North London in 1975 to an English father and a Jamaican mother. She was born as Sadie Smith, which she changed into Zadie when she was 14 years old. Her mother originally comes from Jamaica and she migrated to England in 1969, where she married Zadie's father (for whom it was already a second marriage). Smith has four siblings and two of her brothers are known from the entertainment industry – one of them acts as a stand-up comedian and the other as a musician.

Smith attended Cambridge University where she studied English literature, from which she graduated in 1997. During her studies, Smith contributed to the *Mays Anthology*, which is a collection of short stories written by students of Oxford and Cambridge universities. She also guest edited the 2001 collection. In 2003 Smith left for the USA, where she worked at the Harvard University and experienced the academic environment also from the position of a teacher and from both banks of the Atlantic Ocean.

Smith has so far written six novels – *White Teeth* (2000), *The Autograph Man* (2002), *On Beauty* (2005), *N-W* (2012), *The Embassy of Cambodia* (2013) and the newest novel *Swing Time* (2016). Except for novels, Smith also published a number of stories and other writings, such as book introductions – for example an introduction to the Bloomsbury edition of Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There*.

Thanks to the big success of her debut work *White Teeth*, released in 2000, she is often compared to several other novelists, most regularly to the works of Salman Rushdie and Hanif Kureishi, who will be shortly introduced in the following chapter. Similarities in *White Teeth* are to be found in various aspects of Smith's writing, such as “[...] its use of repetitions, digressions and hyphenated constructions to Rushdie's style, but its closer to Kureishi's in its extensive use of social satire rather than methods that could be likened to those of magic realism.” (Childs, 2005 p. 201) What makes Smith's writing different is the use of language that the author provides the characters

with, for in Smith's writings the language represents a great part of the identity of her characters.

Themes which Smith stresses the most in her novels are the questions of ethnicity, multiculturalism, hybridity, social assimilation and stratification, and to that related issues such as racism and discrimination, or affirmative action. The readers witness Smith's characters having themselves identified with different cultures even within one family generation, and observe the effects of multiculturalism on a society by depicting the impacts on individual characters. Smith also emphasizes the power of unpredictability, which may take our lives (and the characters) into never-foreseen directions and therefore opens a wider scale of choices and opportunities.

Up to now, Smith has won numerous book awards for her works, including the Whitbread First Novel Award, her third novel *On Beauty* won her Orange Prize for fiction and was also a finalist for the Man Booker Prize in 2006. The novel *White Teeth* was also listed on the Time magazine's list of *100 Best English-language Novels from 1923 to 2005*.

4.2. Hanif Kureishi

Hanif Kureishi is an author of novels, story collections, plays and screenplays, born to a mixed-raced family to a Pakistani father and an English mother. His father came from a wealthy Madras family, which settled in Pakistan, and later he went to England to study law. Hanif was then born in London in 1954 and took a degree in philosophy in King's College in London.

Kureishi wrote my *Beautiful Laundrette* in 1985, a screenplay that was directed into a film by Stephen Frears. It follows a story of a Pakistani-British boy that is gay, growing up in London in the 1980s. The work is to a given extent autobiographical. Kureishi's other screenplays are for example *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid* from 1987, *My Son the Fanatic* (1997), *Venus* (2007) and several more.

Hanif Kureishi's novels got worldwide attention of the literary spheres. The novel *The Buddha of Suburbia* published in 1990 won the Whitbread Award for the best first novel and later it became available to a broader public through a BBC series. The author's another novel *Intimacy* (1998) is considered to be autobiographical, as

Kureishi's own personal experience is reflected in the narrative. The novel was later made into a film by Patrice Chéreau, which was labeled by the public as controversial due to its explicit sex scenes.

Themes appearing in Kureishi's works are mainly the issues of identity connected to nationality, race, social status or sexuality, which is believed to be autobiographical, as Kureishi himself said that: [...] *the derision heaped on Pakistanis in England led him, like Karim, to deny that side to his self.*" (Childs, 2005 p. 148) Through Kureishi's first work, we are offered a new perspective on the issue of hybridity, as the author regards it a positive aspect that widens the spectrum of opportunities. *"The book takes this traditional logic and inverts it, arguing that hybridity means doubleness not homeless, addition not division."* (Childs, 2005 p. 148)

4.3. Salman Rushdie

Salman Rushdie is a British Indian novelist and essayist born in 1947 in former British India in Bombay. He was born into a Muslim family, his father worked as a lawyer and graduated from Cambridge, and his mother was a teacher. Rushdie got his education at history at King's College University of Cambridge. Rushdie has got married four times.

Rushdie has so far published up to ten novels and several essays, stories (among them also children's books). His first novel *Grimus*, published in 1975, was not particularly successful, but as his second novel *Midnight's Children* (1981) followed, it brought Rushdie a great amount of popularity and literary success. For this novel Rushdie won the Booker Prize and was awarded the Best of the Bookers as the best novel to have received the prize during its first 25 and 40 years. The story covers a life of a child with special powers that was born at midnight as India gained its political independence. In 1983, the novel *Shame* followed. Rushdie's novel that brought the most attention is called *The Satanic Verses* (1988). This work is considered to be very controversial and for the author it has become quite problematic, because of the consequences which followed after its publishing. *The Satanic Verses* caused a heated discussion in the Islamic World because of irreverent depiction of Muhammad and blasphemy. As a result, there was a so-called fatwa declared upon Salman Rushdie by

Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini, forcing Rushdie to live under police protection for years hiding under a pseudonym Joseph Anton. Since *The Satanic Verses* were published, several translators and publishers have been attacked, injured or even killed; bookstores have become the targets for fatwa-supporters and Rushdie himself faced a handful of threatening situations. Among his other novels we can list for example the following: *The Moor's Last Sigh* (1995), *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* (1999), *Fury* (2001), *Shalimar The Clown* (2005), *The Enchantress of Florence* (2008) and the newest from 2015 *Two Years Eight Months and Twenty-Eight Nights*.

Numerous awards mark Rushdie's success on the literary field, such as The Booker Prize of 1981 for *Midnight's Children*, Prix du Meilleur Livre Étranger (Best Foreign Book) for *Shame*, Hutch Crossword Book Award for *Shalimar The Clown*, James Joyce Award, Hans Christian Andersen Literature Award and many more.

What we can witness in Rushdie's works is the resemblance to the actual history of his birth country. As Pakistan was broken off from India, it has also been set free from the British rule and later Bangladesh was established out of East Pakistan. Rushdie, and his characters along with him, found themselves in the middle of India – Pakistan – Britain mix of cultures, creating the hybrid and unclear identity feeling, which is the issue his character's face. Omar, a character in the novel *Shame*, works for us as an example of this hybrid pattern because the fact, who exactly his parents are, is not known to him, demonstrating that: "[...] identities in the novel as well as being split, are hybrid: are composites or amalgamations echoing the story of the creation of Pakistan." (Childs, 2005 p. 190)

5. On Beauty

Zadie Smith's third novel *On Beauty* was written in 2005 and explores the lives of two families, the Kippses and the Belseys, who are set in a nowadays college town of Wellington located in New England, America. The setting and the storyline of the novel clearly indicates Smith's incentive to create a campus novel, for its resemblance in themes to David Lodge's work named *Changing Places*. However, Smith weights the novel down with the aspect of multicultural society and brings forward several issues that concern the contemporary academic world in terms of social stratification due to one's origin, as well as it offers an insight into the politics of academe dealing with multicultural society. Zadie Smith takes time to reflect on the impact of the academic-multicultural clash, which is evidently projected into her characters. As the name of the novel indicates, Smith pronounces an alluded question regarding beauty and society's perception of it. Through the ending of the novel, Smith delivers a metaphorical message on the transcendent value of beauty as permeated through art. Additionally, Smith links her novel to E. M. Forster's novel named *Howard's End*, for Smith borrowed Forster's work as an inspiration and openly pays homage to Forster. However, Forster is not the only author that inspired Smith. Thoughts of Elaine Scarry from her essay *On Beauty and Being Just* penetrate throughout the novel, too. A philosophical text by Elaine Scarry was written in 2000 and it endeavors to carry out a message that society as a human kind should put more emphasis on the real value of beauty provided to us through art. Scarry also suggest that by human inner need to seek more, by the attempt to understand and find the key to beauty, society undermines the genuine value of beauty, together with the perception of it. Scarry says:

Something beautiful immediately catches attention yet prompts one to judgements that one then continues to scrutinize, and that one not infrequently discovers to be in error. Something beautiful fills the mind yet invites the search for something beyond itself, something larger or something of the same scale with which it need to be brought into relation. (Scarry, 2000 p. 29)

In general, Smith is at pains to portray nowadays multicultural society in the academic environment and illustrate the issues that arise in such society.

Furthermore, by both the direct and indirect references to Forster, Lodge and also Scarry, Smith arguably aims to embrace the literary tradition and create a novel that combines the traditional with the contemporary.

5.1 The Overall Presence of Multiculturalism in *On Beauty*

As mentioned above, the storyline Smith created is to a given extent inspired by the works of David Lodge and E. M. Forster. Smith may have echoed some of the events from the two novels, yet she managed to produce a distinctive novel of her own offering a new perspective. Noticeably, Smith arguably likes to play with the characters' multicultural background, which sooner or later creates a tension and eventually also a feeling of uncertain identity. Given the fact that Smith herself comes from a mixed marriage (Smith has a Jamaican mother and an English father), it is evident that this reality was inevitably projected into her characters, as it clearly happened in Smith's first novel *White Teeth* and the character of Irie Jones.

In *On Beauty*, the main focus is laid on two families that are rather different, not only in their course of lifestyle, but also in political tendencies, yet they are notably similar given their mixed marriages. Firstly, the reader is acquainted with the Belsey family, which consists of Howard and Kiki and their three children Jerome, Zora and the youngest Levi. Howard is a white British man, whose London family belonged to a working class, and his character represents one apparent feature that is typical (or stereotypical) for English people – that is his undeniable intellectualism which is somewhat contrary to his working class background. Howard devoted his life to art and its analysis, which magnifies and in fact causes his intellectualism. Politically speaking, Howard clings to a liberal, left-wing political stance. Typically for Smith's characters, Howard married Kiki – a black American woman of Jamaican origin. Kiki is not as profoundly interested in art as Howard, for she rather spends her energy and time on nurturing others around her, which is confirmed by her working at a hospital. Kiki brings the warmth and assurance into her home, being the caretaker of her family but also of all people she finds fit of her nurture.

The bearers of true hybridity are the Belsey's children are thrown into a medley of two origins and two attitudes and values. Each of the children tackles the arising issue of disjointed identities in a different way, metaphorically (and comically) either choosing one parent as the dominant one or neither of the parents. At first, Smith introduces to the reader Jerome, the eldest son, who happens to be in some kind of war with his father, putting his mother in favor. Jerome's mild rebellion acts against his father are marked for example by his choice of university, his choice of internship, or his choice of girlfriend. Jerome also emphasizes the importance of religion for him, which is frowned upon by Howard, who is an atheist. The middle child Zora shows much deeper attachment to her father, who represents a role model to her and Zora is his number one admirer. Zora's scheduled life stoutly marches towards her intellectual and respected academic future, being inspired and motivated by her father's. Zora blindly follows her plans to succeed and only acts in the name of good, however her determination is often exaggerated and her justification of her own actions is sometimes too extreme. The youngest son in teenage years Levi is the one where the struggle for true identity is the most visible. Levi does not look up neither to his mother or father, therefore he searches for the model outside the family. Levi rebels against his parents, and also initiates a strike in Megastore, where he has a part-time job. Consequently, Levi found his life revolving around groups of people identifying themselves with black street culture and hip-hop, where he sees his true identity lies. Eventually, Levi participates in a movement to support Haiti against its exploitation by other nations, namely America. Levi is the character that explicitly articulates the hypocrisy in people's, including his own family's, joining in the exploitation. Noticeably, similar issue is also addressed in Smith debut novel *White Teeth*, where Millat Iqbal in his teenage years joins a radical group, too.

As for the other family, Smith introduces the Kippses who are in contrast to the Belseys. Sir Monty Kipps is a black British man of Caribbean origin, who has a tenure at a university and his fields is art history, same as Howard's. The immediate attention is brought to Monty's title "Sir", which is clearly associated with British nation, therefore emphasizing and assuring the reader of his Britishness by such notion. Monty's ultra-conservativeness pervades also throughout his professional work for his reactionary politics, views on homosexuality, the role of women or affirmative action. Monty's

wife Carlene is also of British-Caribbean origin and except for implying Carlene's warm character, the reader does not get much information about her. However, from what the narrative states, Carlene stands in opposition to Monty, representing the heart rather than the brain of the family. The Kipps children Victoria and Michael bear resemblances of their father, for being determined individuals, however sometimes impersonal and shallow in relationships to others.

Except for the two families, Smith naturally further integrates several more characters that shape the storyline as it evolves. The reader meets Carl Thomas, a young black man, who tries hard to work on himself. Carl experienced the social disadvantages due to his African-American origin, be it racism or discrimination, but also experiences the affirmative action by getting a job at the university. Carl is a representative of the street culture and shortly becomes the role model for Levi for his 'true blackness'. Through Carl's character, Smith articulates the problems of contemporary multicultural society that creates social stratification impossible to overcome. Last but not least comes the character of Clare Malcolm, a white petite poet and a lecturer, who is distinguished for her efforts to overcome the aforesaid social gap. Clare Malcolm can be seen as the one character that is aware of the social gap and in fact strives to make a difference by her own actions. By presenting Clare's character, Smith probably attempted to reflect on her own perspective in terms of hoping for better future, and Clare's character may function as a representative of the contemporary society and by setting such example show the direction the society should take.

In general, Smith uses the academic environment as a sample group where she illustrates and employs the multicultural aspect affecting all of her characters. Both of the families face similar social and cultural issues, like tackling with their multicultural origin. Concerning the characters, Smith at the same time contrasts the two men, who are though surprisingly similar in some situations, such as they are both rather impersonal and cold – which puts them in contradictory positions to their wives whose key characteristics is their warmness.

Throughout the narrative, it seems like Smith's key aspect in this novel is coincidence. Coincidence is what created the deep hatred between Howard and Monty, when Monty humiliated Howard for his unfortunate factual error in a paper on

Rembrandt. And it was something between coincidence and revenge, when Jerome accepted an internship with Monty in London, followed by a coincidence, even though an evil one, that brought Monty to Wellington. Coincidence is what moves the characters in the novel on. Smith narrative technique aims to address the authenticity of her characters, however given its model in traditional literal works, such as Forster's and Lodge's, Smith follows the traditional structure of narrative. Where Smith demonstrates the contemporariness is the individual language of the characters. Smith equips individuals with a language according to the social status, further marking the stratification and by extension also the individual identities the characters bear and identify themselves with. The perfect example of such case is Levi, who imitates the language (and the clothes, too) of the street hustlers, as he searches for the right identity for himself.

5.2 Multicultural Aspects: The Setting

Zadie Smith chose an environment which confronts the cultural barrier between the USA and Great Britain in the novel *On Beauty*. By creating mixed marriages among the characters, Smith made sure that the feeling of belonging, or rather not belonging would prevail at least at some of her characters. Having been inspired by Lodge's *Changing Places*, Smith places the novel onto university ground, creating a closed community resembling a "small world". Fittingly, Lodge's second novel following the *Changing Places* bears the name *Small World* (1984).

As mentioned before, the story is set in the United States in the state of Massachusetts, the New England area, in a fictional town of Wellington, allegedly located in the close proximity to Boston. Here the Belsey family is settled in an old Victorian house they inherited from Kiki's mother. Howard himself comes from Great Britain, London in particular, where his father still lives. In Wellington there are several places where the novel unfolds.

Given the fact that the novel is considered to be written in the traditional genre of campus novel, it is set in the academic environment, which becomes the ground for different issues to revolve, often non-related to academe itself, as Arata notes on the purpose:

On the one hand the localization serves as a containment strategy, whereby theory's account of the novel can be branded as merely academic, and superseded as fiction "graduates" to more serious concern. Yet, in a deeper sense, the campus in these works becomes a staging ground for reflection on the genre's form, value, and historical development. (Arata, et al., 2015 p. 272)

Wellington College

Wellington College, an alleged Ivy League university near Boston, is a place in which Smith tries to get close to the *Howards End* atmosphere of the setting. The landscape Smith describes gives the impression of being somewhat forgotten in time and archaic,

[...] insular landscape of an east coast American university outside Boston, which prides itself on having liberal principles but remains almost wholly estranged from a world in which prejudice, poverty, crime, terror and fear are the forces that move that outside academia." (Allen, 2008 p. 161)

Wellington College represents a small world, as also in case of Lodge, a bubble within which all the participants live without being fully conscious of the outside world and its problems. It is expected to be a place, where education and the process of learning should be granted to every single student that attends college without any differences. However, college is also something unreachable for some people for certain reasons and therefore represents also one of the impacts of social stratification Smith points the attention to in the novel. For example, Clare Malcolm is trying to diminish some of those impacts by accepting discretionary students who cannot afford such education. Wellington College as such sends the message that it is only for the 'chosen ones' and it does not always depend on the extent of the talent or the level of knowledge. College also should not be a place where private affairs take place, it should be estranged from such matters, but as we learn soon in the beginning, Howard and Clare's affair is soon used by Zora to help her succeed on the academic ground and whether it was used rightfully or not, there should not be place for such behavior on the academic ground.

The ways Smith refers to Wellington are arguably connected to her own individual experience of such environment. During the years 2002 and 2003, Smith

traveled to the USA to Harvard University where she worked as a Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study Fellow. That is how Smith encountered both the English and the American university setting, which she later gained from while writing *On Beauty*. In the novel, Smith clearly questioned the relevance of education of Western standards and the book thus became a piece of critical realism directed at the issues of Western education.

Bus Stop Café

Bus Stop Café marks the presence of multicultural aspect in the novel, as it is owned by a young Americanized Moroccan man Yousef and his German-American wife, who welcomed students happily, “[...] *enjoyed their presence and understood their needs.*” (Smith, 2005 p. 212) Smith describes the bar on a rather positive note, for the encounters that happen there illustrate the tolerance in society. The place itself may be seen as somewhat contrasting to the university, because it is open for everybody without difference. Bus Stop bears the reputation of a place for meeting people willingly, a place that provides a chance to express oneself through performance on the regular Spoken Word nights, and offers a chance to listen and to be listened to. Bus Stop was here for everybody:

The black kids from Boston were down with Morocco, down with its essential Arab nature and African soul, the massive hash pipes, the chilli in the food, the infectious rhythms of the music. The white kids from the college were down with Morocco too: they liked its shabby glamour, its cinematic history of non-politicized Orientalism, the cool pointy slippers.” (Smith, 2005 p. 212)

For the hippie movement supporters coming to Bus Stop was “[...] *a way of showing solidarity with foreign suffering.*” (Smith, 2005 p. 212) Smith’s characters come here to get inspired, to have fun, to relax, Clare Malcolm’s students of poetry come here also to learn how to be critical and conscious of the poetry, to see something new:

Neither rap nor poetry, not formal but also not too wild, it wasn’t black, it wasn’t white. It was whatever anybody had to say and whoever had the guts to get up on the small boxy stage at the back of the basement and say it. For Claire Malcolm, it was an opportunity each year to show her new students that poetry was a broach church, one that she was not afraid to explore. (Smith, 2005 p. 212)

Bus Stop represents a place where everybody gets a chance, and as we witness in *On Beauty*, it mediated Carl's chance to get him somewhere higher in the imaginary social ladder.

In general, Bus Stop resembles a 'small world', just as it is in the case of the university. However, the characteristics of the two small worlds are different in vast majority of cases, for the Bus Stop genuinely celebrates diversity and multiculturalism in society from its very own nature, whether the university clings more to theoretical education about diversity and multiculturalism. However, the case of Clare Malcolm's field trip to Bus Stop aims to combine the two, yet, it is met with both success and failure.

Boston streets outside Megastore

The imaginary opponent to the university is represented by the streets where the black street culture groups meet and bloom from. The people of the street do not accept the importance of education and in general oppose the social stratification which they rebel against. It is also where the hip hop admirers and hustle tradition are to collide and where they reach out to Levi. The streets represent freedom of the social scale and unquestionable true blackness, which are exactly the entities Levi searches for himself. Subsequently, Levi identifies with people he meets there and he tries to become one of them, however, due to his social status it is not quite possible for him to truly fit in, which brings another feeling of being on the brink of finding his identity nowhere near. Yet, Levi also comes across the Haitian nationalists here and the group offers to Levi a much desired sense of belonging and indispensability, which Levi tries to enhance by imitating the members' way of talking and clothing.

5.3 Multicultural Society: Beauty, Race, Art

Beauty

Beauty as an entity penetrates throughout the whole novel and it is analyzed and looked at from different angles in *On Beauty*. Smith puts the physical and the non-physical beauty next to each other, weights it, explores it through her characters, and "[...] tests the essential value of art and beauty." (Tolan, 2010 p. 377) Art and beauty

are being evaluated and its purpose is being looked for. If we take into account Elaine Scarry's essay, where "[...] Scarry moves to demonstrate that beauty is a fundamental good, inherently bound up with justice." (Tolan, 2010 p. 377), Smith also puts emphasis on the good intentions in her character's actions, where "[...] Manifestations of beauty permeate the narrative in terms of physical beauty, moral actions deemed beautiful by the text and notions of the divine." (Tolan, 2010 p. 376)

Smith takes time to emphasize the notion of beauty in particular characters, such as in the case of Kiki whose state of beauty seems to be a fundamental issue for both Howard and Kiki. The reader learns that Kiki has changed a lot in the past twenty-eight years of marriage with Howard, "*Kiki – whom Howard had once, twenty-eight years ago, thrown over his shoulder like a light carpet, to be laid down and laid upon, in their first house for the first time – was nowadays a solid two hundred and fifty pounds, and looked twenty years his junior.*" (Smith, 2005 p. 14) We immediately get the message of a somewhat negative evaluation of Kiki's body and Howard's dissatisfaction and judgmental attitude is obvious. However, soon Smith provides more information of Kiki: "*Her skin had that famous ethnic advantage of not wrinkling much [...]*" (Smith, 2005 pp. 14-15), pointing out Kiki's national heritage, almost making us think that Kiki's face is the last thing about her that is beautiful. By giving the credit of Kiki's wrinkle-free face to her ethnicity, and additionally calling it 'famous', one might get the impression of Kiki being mocked. "*[...] but, in Kiki's case, the weight gain had stretched it even more impressively. At fifty-two, her face was still a girl's face. A beautiful tough-girl's face.*" (Smith, 2005 p. 15) Eventually, Kiki's description turns back to emphasizing her weight gain, which itself would be understandable after giving birth to three children and almost three decades that have passed since Howard and Kiki's wedding. Another reminder of Kiki's long gone body is hanging on the wall of their house. A ten-years old picture of Kiki and Howard, as Kiki is receiving a state award: "*A rouge white arm clinches what was, back then, an extremely neat waist in tight denim; this arm, cut off at the elbow, is Howard's.*" (Smith, 2005 p. 18) The collision rises once we learn about Howard's appearance. During almost thirty years, Howard has not changed much: "*Despite costume changes, the significant features remain largely unchanged by the years.*" (Smith, 2005 p. 18).

Actually, in comparison to other men of Howard's age, he is still to be considered merely attractive: „*When placed next to men of his own age and class, he has two great advantages: hair and weight. Both have changed little. The hair in particular is extremely full and healthy.*” (Smith, 2005 p. 19)

Kiki herself is aware of the changes that happened to her looks, and they naturally influenced Kiki's self-perception – especially after finding out who Howard cheated on her with. “*A little white woman,*’ yelled Kiki across the room, unable now to control herself. *‘A tiny little white woman I could fit in my pocket.’* “ (Smith, 2005 p. 206) In other words, as Kiki sees it, Howard was unfaithful to Kiki with a woman that is the total opposite of her – basically implying that choosing Clara over Kiki means choosing what is beautiful over ugly from Howard's point of view. Howard does not hesitate and expresses himself in a justifiable manner: “*All I said was...*’ ... *‘Well, I married a slim black woman, actually. Not that it's relevant.’* [...] *If you're asking me, obviously physicality is a factor. You have... Keeks, you've changed a lot.*” (Smith, 2005 p. 207) If we look at Howard's occupation of an art historian, basically all Howard does in his professional life is evaluating art according to its looks. The criterion is the level of beauty. Specializing in Rembrandt's paintings, that are themselves actually and literally shallow in its form, looking for details and hidden, but meaningful, paintbrush lines, maybe Howard got used to only see the physical beauty, as Tolan also comments:

Howard Belsey's moral failings in the novel are implicitly bound up with his more general disavowal of beauty. [...] This deconstruction of art and beauty, however, echoes the dismantling of personal relations. “[...] Similarly, the inability to recognize the beauty of his once-petite wife, Kiki [...] leads Howard to recurring infidelities. (Tolan, 2010 p. 380)

Not only Howard had an extramarital relationship with the ‘white and petite’ woman, but also, later in the novel, he had an affair with Victoria Kipps.

Victoria's beauty is depicted as striking and it is connected to her sexuality, too. Jerome Belsey also had an encounter with Victoria, where she helps to solve Jerome's situation of being virgin, unfortunately, their vision of their future encounters differed:

[...] right age, right gender, and as beautiful as the idea of God. Victoria herself, flush with the social and sexual successes of her first

summer abroad without her family, returned home to find a tolerable young man, weighed down by his virginity and satisfyingly unmanned by his desire for her. (Smith, 2005 p. 45)

Victoria represents the physical perfection contemporary society often exclusively looks for and appreciates. Victoria represents a strong woman owning her sexuality, but it also makes us think how conscious Victoria is of her actions and why she is making such decisions. What is the purpose for Victoria? Quite possibly, Victoria needs the reassurance of her beauty, in which case her actions would be the answers to Victoria's insecurities.

Finally, it is interesting to look at the opposition Smith created through the characters of Kiki and Victoria in relation to the concept of beauty of 21st century. In general, it is safe to say, and also according to Scarry, that there are two kinds of beauty distinguished by society. It is the notion of physical beauty and psychological beauty, or rather the beauty of mind. In this novel, Smith armed her characters usually with only one of the two kinds, which was further examined earlier in this chapter. However, even though Smith emphasized that it very rarely happens that an individual bears the characteristics of both, with the ending of the novel, Smith brought forward the notion of eternity of the beauty of mind. Having implied this, Smith arguably attempted to express the higher value that should be addressed to psychological beauty, promoting compassion and tolerance which is firmly tied to such notion rather than blind following of everything physically beautiful that is characterized not only by its passing character, but also bears doubts about the presence of the good.

Race

Theoretically, in the contemporary United States, especially with regard to its past, there should be no more social stratification of the society based on the race. *On Beauty* is a novel not only contrasting the lives of people of different race, but also of people belonging to a different social layer explicitly connected to race. In Smith's case, by race it is referred to the black diaspora, which becomes the matter of the Black Studies as an academic discipline at the fictional Wellington College, but also at other universities of the world, as Kanika Batra mentions: "[...] *the discipline occupies a relatively marginal position in the Euro-American academy even today.*" (Batra, 2010

p. 1080) However, the purpose of the Black Studies is being questioned. Further, in Batra's article, Batra points out that:

Douglas Davidson and Frederick Weaver, writing in the *Journal of Black Studies* in 1985, wrote that "a central education mission of Black Studies at White institutions is to enable students to see that the rest of the curriculum is White Studies" (Batra, 2010 p. 1080)

In *On Beauty*, Smith largely plays with the political motivation through the actions of her characters whose political sympathies differ. The clash happens between the two main characters' liberal versus conservative tendencies, but also with the presence of the Black Studies Department Smith draws more attention towards issues such as race and affirmative action.

The Black Studies Department becomes a home to Monty Kipps, whose interest is to free the university from Claire Malcolm's discretionary students, advocates against an affirmative action and whose political inclinations are rather right-winged. The Black Studies Department also houses Erskine Jegede, who is also an Assistant Director there, and even though Erskine has not officially expressed his sympathies either to Monty nor Howard, by extension to the liberal nor the conservative, Erskine helps out Claire Malcolm to keep Carl under the protective 'wings' of Wellington. This action of Erskine opposes Kipps's vision and locates Erskine in the middle between Howard's liberalism and Monty's conservatism. The department itself therefore represents a somewhat of a 'no-man's-land' that keeps on going in its own direction, which Batra describes as "[...] a means of securing a balance between the liberal and conservative elements [...]" (Batra, 2010 p. 1083) Erskine's position in the Black Studies Department enables him to provide Carl with a job.

[...] Erskine, in his capacity as Assistant Director of the Black Studies Department, simply gave them a job. He created a job where before there had been only floor space. Chief Librarian of the African-American Music Library had been one such invented post. Hip-Hop Archivist was a natural progression." (Smith, 2005 p. 372)

By doing so, sometimes also for purely personal purposes, as not to be his happiness and peace taken away from him, Smith by these actions undermines the seriousness and value of Black Studies within Wellington that makes us question where else the rules are being bended. Smith indirectly implies whether the affirmative action is

possibly being taken advantage of. On the other hand, Monty Kipps is taking lead in the opposition, bringing forward a certain level of irony, as Smith makes “[...] *a black man responsible for advocating an anti-affirmative action policy.*” (Batra, 2010 p. 1084), thus Monty Kipps’s character “[...] *echoes voices against the dilution of academic standards by affirmative policies in American universities.*” (Batra, 2010 p. 1084)

The feeling of not belonging is reflected in Kiki Belsey, a black American woman, a hospital administrator, who acts like a strong, independent woman that has to face Howard’s infidelity with an exact opposite of her. However, Kiki’s emphasizing the fact that Howard chose a ‘white’ woman over her, reveals her insecurities about being of different skin color. Eventually, Kiki explicitly articulates this issue by likening the environment she lives to ‘sea of white which functions as an interesting simile and draws out the real issues through metaphor:

Everywhere we go, I’m alone in this...this sea of white. I barely know any black folk any more, Howie. My whole life is white. I don’t see any black folk unless they be cleaning under my feet in the fucking café in your fucking college. Or pushing a fucking hospital bed through a corridor. I staked my whole life for you. (Smith, 2005 p. 206)

From Kiki’s speech it is evident that still, even though theoretically all races are equal, our actions still, though unintentionally, make a difference. By saying that Kiki ‘staked her whole life’, it is implied that there are actually two kinds of lives – the white one Kiki lives with Howard, the artificial one, and the other life – the really genuinely Kiki’s, the black one, which she gave up for Howard. For Howard works at a Wellington College that is considered predominantly ‘white’, also Kiki is surrounded mostly by white people, which in the end can make one feel like the exception Smith addresses the issue of isolation. For Kiki, more contact with her ‘people’ was mediated also through Carl, who she invites to the Belsey anniversary party adding:” *We could do with a few more brothers at this party.*” (Smith, 2005 p. 78) Referring to Carl as to a brother, Smith provided Kiki’s words established the connection, more or less based on the fact of shared skin-color, further pointing out the feelings of isolation.

Smith quite demonstrates the contrast of social stratification in the relation between Kiki and their new cleaner Monique, which we learn is “[...] *a squat Haitian*

woman, about Kiki's age, darker still than Kiki [...]", who had "a look of apologetic apprehension, sorry for what would go wrong even before it had gone wrong." (Smith, 2005 pp. 10-11) Smith articulates the issue of social stratification through Monique's humble attitude which expressed her gratefulness for having the job, which represents a source of money, bringing a feeling of inappropriateness: "Kiki stayed in her strange moment, nervous of what this black woman thought of another black woman paying her to clean." (Smith, 2005 p. 11) However, Smith makes not only Kiki, but also Levi, aware of the non-fairness of the situation. The youngest Levi Belsey, with his newly obtained realization of the situation in Haiti was introduced to him through his meeting with the street hustlers and only after that he becomes aware of the reality that exploited foreigners experience:

Levi's anger at this situation includes an awareness of Wellington's exploitation of cheap diasporic labor as well as at his family's participation in this exploitation by paying Monique less than four dollars an hour because she is not "American." (Batra, 2010 p. 1086)

Levi sees his own family as one of the exploiters, implying that black people are turning back on 'their people'. Levi's own way towards the authentic black identity contradicts with his upper-middle class social position. Levi is therefore trying to influence the aspects that lie within his powers, such as to "[...] adopt the style and slang of urban African Americans, with a faux Brooklyn accent." (Warikoo, 2009 p. 469) However, in the neighborhood the Belseys lived, the family itself was an usual for it was mixed race, which Levi notices in his every day's life by being mistakenly considered to be a thief: "[...] he lives here – yes, that's right – no crime is taking place – thank you for your interest!" (Smith, 2005 p. 83) By the ease Levi let go of this incident Smith implies the ordinariness and normality of such events. Even though soon the reader witnesses Levi being judgmental of other black people assuming that he has become a target for everyone in this neighborhood. "[...] she looked like she was trying to work out if I was gonna kill her." Following by "Any black lady who be white enough to live on Redwood thinks zackly the same way as any old white lady." (Smith, 2005 p. 85) The ultimate source of authentic 'blackness' for Levi is mediated through Carl, but when Carl breaks out to the academic social sphere, he immediately loses his authenticity. For Levi, arguably, being authentically black means also being poor, by which Levi in a way turns away from his upper-middle class family, who he inexplicitly

evaluates as not true and genuine. Consequently, Levi experiences another level of racial identity through his interactions with Choo, a former teacher of French language and literature from Haiti, who now hustles imitation goods and makes money waiting tables for a minimum wage or less. Choo once works at a College dinner and expresses his feeling to Levi: *“Fucking serving like a monkey... teacher becomes the servant. It’s painful!”* (Smith, 2005 p. 361), even the slavery issue is being brought up: *“Wear a monkey suit and look a monkey and serve them their shrimps and their wine, the big white professors. [...] An then they pay us in cents to serve them. The same old slavery. Nothing changes.”* (Smith, 2005 p. 361) Choo’s anger towards his position in society is intensified by him having to serve Sir Monty Kipps – which he sees as a black man serving another black man, which *“indicates the modalities of race and class in the diaspora [...]”* (Batra, 2010 p. 1086) Choo pays his, by extension his Haitian people’s, revenge for Monty Kipps’s robbery by stealing the Haitian painting back. *“You rob the peasants of their art and it makes you a rich man! A rich man! Those artists died poor and hungry. [...] ‘Everybody,’ he said, pounding the carpet with a fist, ‘tries to buy the black man. But he can’t be bought. His day is coming.’”* (Smith, 2005 p. 362)

Looking at Smith’s characters of African American origin, there are representatives of different social stratification in the novel. Choo and his Haitian group, cleaner Monique, Carl tilt towards the lower positions in society, on the other hand the presence and existence of the Black Studies Department, along with Monty Kipps and his family, Erskine Jegede and the Belseys are settled at the opposite end of the social stratification. As Kanika Batra points out in her article from 2010, according to Houston Bakre, Manthia Diawara, and Ruth Lindeborh there is a need to recognize the terms ‘vernacular’ and ‘theoretical’, therefore Batra further explains multiple meanings being carried by the terms: *“vernacular is understood as lived reality, social activism, and, more recently popular culture; the theoretical connotes an analysis of the vernacular most evident in academic discourse.”* (Batra, 2010 p. 1080) Additionally, Wellington’s Black Studies Department itself has become the example of the combination of the two terms, as Smith describes it as following:

The Black Studies Department’s graduate crowd were out in force, mostly because Erskine was well loved by them and they were, anyway, by far the most socialized people at wellington, priding themselves on their reputation for being the closest replicas on

campus to normal human beings. [...] They were invited to all the parties and came to all of them too. (Smith, 2005 p. 107)

Carl's character represents the collision between the two realities. According to the location where Carl's and Belsey's first encounter takes place, Smith's conveys Carl's effort to work his way up to a different, higher, the 'theoretical' place „*Carl had figured a year ago that if he started going to events like this he would meet the kind of people he didn't usually meet [...]*“, to interact with the people “*More and more these days he found himself listening to people talk, wanting to add something.*“, to learn “*I get my culture where I can, you know – going to free shit like tonight, for example. Anything happening that's free in this city and might teach me something, I'm there.*” (Smith, 2005 p. 72) Carl and the Belseys meeting resulted to a party invitation for Carl, where further interactions between the 'theoretical' and the 'vernacular' continued to happen. As Carl gets more and more involved in the Wellington academe, it is the demonstration of such interactions. Claire Malcolm's offer to Carl to participate in her poetry class with the intention to help Carl further unwind his literary talent, soon followed by the opportunity by Erskine Jegede to work for the department, mark the positive kind of clash between the 'theoretical' and the 'vernacular'. The opposite case is articulated via Monty Kipps, who, as mentioned above, advocates against such interactions. Eventually, even though Carl attempted to be a part of the academe to the extent it was allowed to him, eventually he ascertained the truth about it. Carl got to see through the academe and the people connected to it, concluding that the falsity, hypocrisy, pretense, insincerity do not correspond with the kind of person he is, which he expressed in an argument with Zora, Victoria and Jerome. “*You people don't behave like human beings, man – I ain't never seen people behave like you people. You don't tell the truth, you deceive people. You all act so superior, but you're not telling the truth!*” (Smith, 2005 p. 417) Carl further articulates his intentions:

“*I'm just trying to get a stage higher with my life. [...] But that's a joke around here, man. People like me are just toys to people like you... I'm just some experiment for you to play with. You people aren't even black any more, man – I don't know what you are. You think you're too good for your own people. [...] I need to be with my people, mam – I can't do this no more.*” (Smith, 2005 pp. 418-419)

In the end, Carl distances himself of the academe and its society, bringing along the implication that social status, and race may influence one's life direction and opportunities, but how people behave has nothing in common with such matters, emphasizing that 'his people' are not spoiled very much because they did not experience the luxury the Belseys and Kippses did. Therefore, all the interactions that were mediated between Carl and the academe, the Kippses and the Belseys – by extension between the 'vernacular' and the 'theoretical' failed in promoting the good, proposing a question if these connections are only created in order to be able to self-justify the social stratification. As Batra articulates it, such “[...] encounters reveal the pitfall of the liberal multicultural utopia that intellectuals like Howard, Claire, and Zora attempt to create through their personal relationships and vocal political convictions.” (Batra, 2010 p. 1088)

Art

Smith uses art in the novel to convey several reflections. Even though art can be studied, looked at, and analyzed, one concludes that only good can come out of this absolute cognition, the deconstruction of art. Smith puts this approach into contrast with Howard's personal life, which is affected by this attitude, for, as mentioned above, Howard was able to see everything, but the non-physical beauty of Kiki until he reevaluated its importance. On the other hand, art – this time the art of spoken word and poetry – has become the medium for different kinds of people to interact and the medium for articulating “*their own individual statement of moral purpose.*” (Tolan, 2010 p. 376) Musical art presented through the Mozart concert, which represented a chance for the Belsey family to share experience and spend time together. The Haitian painting Carlene Kipps owned and later gifted to Kiki, functioned as a symbol and was of different importance for different kinds of people. Even though the painting itself was stained with wickedness: “*Bought, exported, transported, bequeathed, stolen, hidden, contested, reclaimed: the painting becomes a synecdoche of colonial histories that moves its significance in the novel far beyond its aesthetic worth.*” (Tolan, 2010 p. 383), still, for Carlene and Kiki it has become the symbol of their friendship. Therefore, Smith uses art as physical element that enables people to reassess their values and sense of the good through it. As Tolan says:

In the novel, Smith depicts the giving of the painting as emblematic of what she describes in her essay on Forster (quoting from Martha Nussbaum) as “truly altruistic instincts, ‘genuine acknowledgement of the otherness of the other.’” Art and beauty, for Smith, as for Scarry, are generative, prompting aesthetic appreciation, replication, and, through a consequent impulse towards redistribution, generosity and a move towards human connection rather than division. (Tolan, 2010 p. 378)

As Smith signifies the importance of art as a matter of morality and moral values - that is something above the physical - the question of transcendence also arises, which Tolan describes as: “*Art’s capacity to retain its essential values across time and cultures*” (Tolan, 2010 p. 380) Such transcendence combined with the ‘move towards human connection’ is depicted through the Mozart concert, for Smith demonstrates that art “[...]brings people together, overcoming barriers of race, class, and political and religious belief.” (Tolan, 2010 p. 383)

In the novel, Smith managed to successfully depict the importance of art, by extension of the morality art provides and brings along with itself. Smith introduced art as a universal language everybody speaks regardless of social status, race, or political stance, that bears the ability to carry out positive ethical choices.

5.4 The Reflection of the English Literary Tradition in Zadie Smith’s *On Beauty*

In various spheres of contemporary art, the history and past experience provide inspiration in many different aspects. Literature is no exception, as it functions as a mirror of particular historical era and it reflects the general mood in society. Writers often experience incomprehension from society of given epoch, and their thoughts and ideas are appreciated after more time passes. The problems which authors point attention to address diverse issues and the texts often serve as a satire aimed at the system and the society. Therefore, this chapter aims to examine the extent to which Smith’s *On Beauty* was inspired by English literary tradition and focus in detail on the similarities found in themes of the novel and storyline elements.

Zadie Smith has been, among other authors, collecting the inspiration for writing also from the past. Going back to the roots and traditions is nothing unusual, coming up with new, fresh air to an already run practice brings always an unexpected

combinations and results, as Allen further comments on similar approach seen in works of other contemporary writers:

Authors such as Zadie Smith and Kureishi have invigorated the form but surely they have also written texts that can be regarded as coming from within the traditional English canon. Kureishi constructs *The Black Album* (1995) for instance like a traditional bildungsroman, and Smith constructs her latest novel *On Beauty* as a homage to E. M. Forster." (Allen, 2008 p. 43)

However, it is not only Forster's work from who Smith took a good deal of inspiration, for David Lodge and his novel *Changing Places*, written as a campus novel, became a model structure for Smith, too. Given the fact that *On Beauty* is constructed as a campus novel, it is safe to say that Smith followed Lodge's example in terms of the setting and storyline. On the other hand, Forster's novel *Howards End* addresses the issue of social stratification and social assimilation, a theme close to Smith due to her immigrant origin. *On Beauty* therefore bears the characteristics of both novels of English traditional writers.

Smith's academic experience on the Harvard university in the United States during the years 2002 and 2003 mediated the author an authentic experience of the academic world. Consequently, such encounter arguably directed Smith towards writing *On Beauty* in the traditional genre of campus novel that was published in 2005, only a few years after Smith's American academic experience.

As for the key characteristics and history of the campus novel, the term and the genre, also known as academic novel, was introduced to public for the first time in the 1950s and its birth is usually associated with Kingsley Amis publishing his novel *Lucky Jim* in 1954. What influenced this genre's growing popularity was the increasing importance of universities and education in both the United Kingdom and the USA, and the fact that many American and British writers worked also as professors of literature and writing. Since that time, many literary works have been set in the environment of a university, focusing on the atmosphere on the academic ground, where the teachers and professors often represented the main characters.

Aida Edemariam of Guardian notes on some of the typical features of the genre:

It is a finite, enclosed space, like a boarding school, or like Agatha Christie's country-houses (the campus murder mystery being its own respectable sub-genre); academic terms, usefully, begin and end; there are clear power relationships (teacher/student; tenured professor/scrabbling lecturer) - and thus lots of scope for illicit affairs; circumscription forces a greater intensity - revolutions have been known to begin on campuses ... (Edemariam, 2004)

As for the traditional patterns, campus novels usually use parody, satire, irony and humor elements in general. As mentioned above, the characters usually come from the academic ground, which means, that also the reader should have experience from such environment to fully interpret and appreciate particular elements of humor and parody in the situations. Commonly, the aspect of humor is mediated through the actions of the main character, which somehow incites the academic society, makes a faux pas and whose personal, often sexual; life is not seen as conventional.

It is interesting to explore the borders of campus novel, for its explicit association with only American environment considering the word 'campus' is an American word. According to Edemariam, Lodge pointed out:

the distinction between the campus novel and the varsity novel - the latter being set at Oxbridge, and usually among students, rather than teachers, thus disallowing the joys of Zuleika Dobson, or Jill, or Brideshead Revisited; he claims Kingsley Amis's *Lucky Jim* (1954) as the first British campus novel, and a template. (Edemariam, 2004)

Aida Edemariam further comments on the popularity of campus novel in the second half of the 20th century, trying to analyze reasons for campus novel's sudden disappearance and unpopularity. Edemariam states that with establishing new universities new hope was brought into the society, too. :"*... in those days universities were intensely hopeful" you could afford farce, because "you had a solidity. Now they're terrified and cowering and underfinanced and overexamined and overbureaucratized."* (Edemariam, 2004) Yet, there are still some exceptions to that statement, for instance Lodge's 2001 campus novel *Thinks ...*, or Zadie Smith's 2005 *On Beauty* which took a good deal of inspiration from not only Lodge's previous works.

E. M. Forster and David Lodge, both representatives of English literary tradition, became models for Zadie Smith while writing *On Beauty*. E. M. Forster (1879-1970) himself was a Cambridge graduate, just like Smith, and also an English

novelist, short story writer and librettist. Forster became a well-known author of novels using irony to depict and direct emphasis at various social themes, such as class difference, issues connected to gender, homosexuality, and hypocrisy in the beginning of the 20th century society. One of the most known novels by Forster named *Howards Ends* (1910) has become an inspiration for Smith's novel *On Beauty*, as Smith explicitly addresses: "[...] this is a novel inspired by a love of E. M. Forster, to whom all my fiction is indebted, one way or the other. This time I wanted to repay the debt with homage." (Smith, 2005 p. acknowledgements)

Smith's other role model was David Lodge (born in 1935), an English author and a literary critic, and one of the most recognized representatives of the campus novel. In Lodge's narrative, he also often uses irony, a feature that is in particular apparent in the "Campus trilogy" parodying the academic life. The trilogy consists of the following titles: *Changing Places: A Tale of Two Campuses* (1975), *Small World: An Academic Romance* (1984) and *Nice Work* (1988). Lodge is an author not only of novels, but also of literary and critic essays, such as *The Art of Fiction* and *The Practice of Writing*, which are often built on Lodge's own writing experience.

5.4.1 The Storyline and Themes: Common Patterns of E.M. Forster's, D. Lodge's and Zadie Smith's Novels.

As mentioned before, E. M Forster and his novel *Howards End* (1910) became an inspiration for Smith in terms of addressing issues of social stratification and social assimilation. If taken under consideration the year of Forster's novel's publishing, it makes one wonder how could a novel from a break of the 19th and 20th century relate to the reality of the 21st century. However, given Smith's immigrant origin and hybrid identity, the connection between the two writers arises. In the reality of the 21st century, social stratification together with social assimilation still represent one of the major issues that the contemporary society has to tackle. Probably for such reasons Forster became one of the most influential writers whose themes are still current in nowadays world, at least from Smith's point of view. Zadie Smith openly showed respect towards Forster and explicitly mentioned his name in the Acknowledgements.

However, throughout Smith's novel, not only the overall theme resembles Forster's novel, but also several particular situations in the storyline match Forster's narrative, as it is further focused on.

One of the typical themes Smith pays attention to in her novel is the theme of marginality. In Smith's presentation of being marginal and experiencing marginality, something the society became more aware of during the not so old past that is explicitly connected to race, origin, nation, or class. Zadie Smith is an author of contemporary novels, therefore at the first glance, it could seem that comparing Smith's *On Beauty* (2005) and Forster's *Howards End* (1910) may not bring many results. However, Smith's homage to Forster in the acknowledgements is very on spot, as we witness Forster's influence throughout the whole story. What could have been marginal about Foster's persona was his sexuality, even though Smith's pays attention only to themes of Forster's seminal work.

It would be reductive to call *On Beauty* an updating of Forster's novel – Smith alters some of the configurations of the relationships between the characters and new themes are introduced [...] (Allen, 2008 p. 161) The central focus remains on the conflict between two different families “[...]of opposing political and moral sensibilities, issues of class, behavior, ambition and opportunity in a society with prescribed rules and roles. (Allen, 2008 p. 161)

Further, Smith did not wait long to confirm the homage to Forster, as the very first sentence of *On Beauty* is basically identical to Forster's : “*One may as well begin with Jerome's e-mails to his father.*” (Smith, 2005 p. 3), while Forster started his novel with a sentence: “*One may as well begin with Helen's letters to her sister.*” (Forster, 2007) Further, another apparent feature comes out, for Smith drew connection to Forster's novel by naming her character Howard Belsey, evidently linking the name to Forster's novel's name *Howards End*.

As far as the storyline itself is concerned, in *Howards End* there are several turning points that bear similarities with Smith's novel. In both novels, there are two families, different in many aspects varying from the political stance to the nationality. In *Howards End* it is the Wilcox family the reader meets – a family socioeconomically prejudiced and balancing on a higher social ladder who represents the embodiment of tradition. The opposing family are the Schlegles – resembling more ordinary people,

who are always willing to help. In Smith's work, the reader is in the same manner acquainted with the Kipps family – rather conservative, religious and traditional, and the Belsey family – liberal and lively. Similarities in the storyline count many examples, such as that in the beginning of Forster's novel, we learn about a new relationship that has formed between Helen Schlegel and Paul Wilcox that resumes into a haste decision to get engaged, soon after followed by calling the engagement off with an assistance of Helen's aunt. In Smith's novel, the situation comes about in a very similar matter, also intensified by an intervention – in Smith's case by the father, Howard Belsey. In Forster's novel, other family members of the no-longer-engaged couple befriend each other, same as it happened with Kiki Belsey and Carlene Kipps in Smith's novel.

Further resemblances are to be found in terms of symbolism of particular items. In *Howards End*, the name 'Howards End' itself refers to the house in the possession of the Wilcox family – a great magnificent family mansion with a long history and tradition, that for the family itself, except for Paul's mother Ruth does not mean much more than a way of housing and the economic value of the house in real estate market. However, Ruth sees the house as a set of other values and history, too, with the intention to show Margaret, Helen's eldest sister, around the house. Margaret, unfortunately, never gets the chance to see the house, because Ruth suddenly dies from an illness she did not tell anyone about. Yet, before Ruth's death, Ruth considered Margaret fit to take over the ownership of the house – Ruth's husband got rid of Ruth's last will and Margaret never knew about this generous gift. In Smith's novel, the resemblance of Forster's narrative is very palpable, as it is again rather identical. However, instead of a house Smith uses the Haitian painting as the symbolic linking item, for that it is something Kiki easily connects to due to her multicultural origin. Other members of the Kipps family do not pay much attention to the painting, until Carlene's unexpected death comes around and the Kippses discover Carlene's last intentions with the painting. The Kippses decide to keep it a secret, which emphasizes the instant change of the value of the painting. Consequently, as Forster's story progresses, Margaret and widower Henry Wilcox find themselves spending time together in an enjoyable manner. Eventually, Margaret and Henry get engaged. The new relationship brings stress to Henry's children, mostly to his son

Charles and his wife Dolly, who are afraid of Margaret's hidden intentions to become the owner of Howards End. The couple in Forster's novel resembles Smith's characters of Michael Kipps and his fiancée Amelia, who are afraid to lose the painting.

Furthermore, in both novels a young man from the working/lower class appears on the scene and in both cases the encounter takes place in a concert – in *Howards End* it was a Beethoven concert, while in *On Beauty* it was in a Mozart concert. Eventually, both of the men become involved in the families' struggles which enables the men to see the messy reality under the prosperous, successful and non-conflicting shell of the higher class. Even though in Smith's novel it is no longer dealt with the term 'class', but rather 'social stratification', the basis of the meaning of both words equals. The young men, in both novels, function as representatives of lower social stratification that prove the presence of social gap and its impossibility to overcome it.

As mentioned before, E. M. Forster was not the only author that Smith used as a model while writing *On Beauty*. David Lodge's *Changing Places* became Smith's inspiration, too, as it mirrors mostly in terms of the setting, but also storyline elements and use of satire. Smith borrowed the main storyline from Lodge's novel - that is the conflict of differences rooting mainly from the characters' political tendencies, social status, personalities and lifestyles. The kind of inspiration that projected into Smith's novel, relates more to the genre itself, rather than to a particular social issue. Therefore, the following part will attempt to point out some of the similarities found in Lodge's and Smith's narratives.

Firstly, there is the major resemblance between the two novels concerning the environment. Since Lodge's work is considered to be the representation of the campus novel and Smith follows this pattern, too, however the setting she creates is arguably further influenced by Smith's personal academic experience, which adds to the authenticity of the narrative. Consequently, the storyline centers around conflicting characters whose professional and personal lives mutually intertwine and affect each other's, implying the tight connection between the professional life and the personal life and the impossibility to tear such connection apart:

As in Lodge's campus fiction, the scholarly dispute in Smith's novel refracts a personal one. This disconnect lies between Howard and his wife Kiki, a black Floridian who, after following Howard to Wellington, and living in its stilted milieu, is understandably upset at his infidelities. (Arata, et al., 2015 p. 281)

The storyline Smith created partly corresponds to Lodge's, as the following analysis proves. Initially, as the title *Changing Places* itself implies, Lodge's novel is set in two different cultures in two different places and follows lives of two families, which eventually intertwine. On one side, there is Desiree and Morris Zapps – a couple settled in the USA where Morris teaches at the fictional State University of Euphoria, and the other couple of characters are Hillary and Phillip Swallows living in Great Britain, where Phillip is a professor at fictional University of Rummidge. The American/British setting, as well as the occupation of the leading characters are to be found also in Smith's novel. This resemblance itself would be enough to positively state the evident presence of inspiration. However, Smith further engages some of the particular elements in the storyline, such as that Morris Zapp specializes in Jane Austen and he intends to write a series of commentaries on Jane Austen so magnificent, detailed and final, that no other work will ever be needed to complete this field of study. The character of Morris is therefore linked to Smith's character of Howard Belsey. As Lodge's narrative further continues, the reader learns that Morris is a very ambitious man, having achieved the American dream which equals to having a successful career, a wife, a house, two cars and security. Morris's dream is then broken by his wife's, Desiree, call for a divorce, which endangers his success. As mentioned before, Smith's character of Howard Belsey correlates to Morris, for also Howard's planned book on Rembrandt is long awaited and therefore the expectations are high. Same as in Lodge's novel, in *On Beauty* the marriage is jeopardized by Howard's secret extramarital affair. Both of the men then manage to avoid the immediate breakdown of their marriages. Morris Zapp accepts an offer to go to Great Britain for six months to teach there at a University of Rummidge in exchange for Desiree's postponing the divorce until Morris comes back. Opposite to the Zapps are Hillary and Phillip Swallows, a conventional couple living an ordinary family life, following a day-to-day routine, which resemble Smith's Kipps family. When Phillip

Swallow is offered to go to the USA for an exchange, it symbolizes a hopeful, fresh beginning of something new for the couple.

Exchanging workplaces as it happened in Lodge's novel is to be found in Smith's novel in a similar way, when Smith sends Monty Kipps to Wellington as a guest lecturer. Smith makes the issue of origin more complicated with international marriage of Howard and Kiki, because Howard, himself being British, moved to USA for Kiki, and the matter of 'changing places' actually only concerns the Kippses.

Finally, Lodge's novel mainly aims to address issues such as social status, marriage relationships and relationships in general, and work related problems. Lodge's novel bears characteristics of a satire and is heavily permeated by humorous elements, so typical for the genre of campus novel. One of Lodge's key narrative elements is the presence of coincidence that causes involuntarily meetings or 'changing places', which is an aspect that also mirrors in Smith's novel. Lodge brings forward the issue of open sexual matters, as the characters of his novel continuously commit infidelity. In comparison to *Changing Places*, Smith's novel is also full of humorous situations and in a way functions as critique of the academic world, however this issue is further intensified by the multicultural aspect.

In conclusion, it is important to say that the novel *On Beauty* is heavily built on the English literary tradition. Given Zadie Smith's education on the Cambridge university and the later American academic experience on Harvard, choosing a genre of campus novel does not come out as a surprise. Lodge's novel is evidently reflected in Smith's *On Beauty*, and as it was mentioned before, the main resemblance lies on the storyline itself, setting and mainly the presence of humor and elements of satire. On the other hand, Forster's novel *Howards End* became an inspiration to Smith mostly in terms of its focus on the social stratification - a constantly current theme that still concerns even the contemporary society.

6. N-W

Zadie Smith's novel *N-W* (2012) is mainly recognized for its unusual narrative technique and the contemporary setting in nowadays London, particularly in the northwest area of the city, where the author grew up. In this novel, Smith brings attention towards the issues connected to the presence of multiculturalism in contemporary society and sheds light on its impact on individuals. Therefore, the chapter will at first concentrate on a brief introduction of the protagonists, for the narrative follows the lives of four local characters, mainly focusing on the friendship of two – Leah and Natalie (née Keisha), whose adult lives differ dramatically considering they both grew up in the same neighborhood and were given equal opportunities. The chapter will further examine the northwest area of London with the aim to analyze the environment in the context of multicultural reality and its reflection in one's identity. Lastly, the narrative techniques will be looked at, presented and Smith's incentive explored.

6.1 Leading Characters

Leah Hanwell

Leah was brought up in a Caldwell housing estate located in the northwest of London by her mother Pauline, who was an Irish Protestant from Dublin and this makes therefore Leah also an immigrant and brings forward possible feelings of uncertain identity. Leah attended a local school being in a same class as Natalie, and later enrolling to a college in Edinburgh. In the novel, Leah is thirty-five years old, married to a hairdresser Michel, living in a rented apartment in northwest London and working for a charity.

Smith explores Leah's self-consciousness development from her very young age, giving the reader a chance to understand her actions. Since Leah's early teenage years, she was always very compassionate and generously kind, as depicted through the eyes of Natalie: Leah was "*[...] wide open to the entire world – with the possible exception of her own mother. [...] she befriended anyone without distinction or boundary, but the hopeless cases did not alienate her from the popular and vice versa*

[...] “ (Smith, 2013 p. 182) Leah became the ‘cool kid’, following trends, being popular among the peers. For Natalie it meant that *“being Leah Handwell’s friend’ constituted a sort of a passport, lending Keisha a protected form of access in most situations.”* (Smith, 2013 p. 194) Later, in the college, Leah experimented with different kinds of lifestyles, trying new things, pushing boundaries, experimenting sexually, and she also got involved with a voluntary organization protecting the planet. Everything Leah did was shaping her identity as a person.

At the time the events that construct the plot are happening, Leah works in a town office, on a work position she is over-qualified for, not only being the only white woman there, but also the only one without children. By providing such basic information, Smith arguably attempts to draw attention to Leah’s feeling of not fitting in, which is caused by the unexpected situation that Leah is the only white woman among her colleagues, which is an occasion at least unusual. Consequently, Leah’s life seems to have become a day-in-day-out routine. Leah is struggling to articulate the truth about not wanting to have children, therefore she pretends to be trying to conceive, when actually she is still taking birth control.

When the reader meets Leah for the first time, she is *“in a hammock, in the garden of a basement flat. Fenced in, on all sides.”* (Smith, 2013 p. 3) Soon the reader learns that *“Leah is as faithful in her allegiance to this two-mile square of the city as other people are to their families, or their countries.”* (Smith, 2013 p. 6) Those two statements indicate Leah’s loyalty to the space she grew up in, but also the image of being ‘fenced in’ implies a certain level of isolation. *“Except for her stint at university, Leah never has protracted experience outside NW anywhere in the novel.”* (Slavin, 2015 p. 103) Leah’s comeback to the NW of London figuratively ended her years of experimenting connected directly to her university stay and progressed into the lethargy she is living her life with now. Ignoring her mother’s and Michel’s concerns of Leah’s age, Leah does not want to move forward with her life, as she says: *“I am eighteen in my mind I am eighteen and if I do nothing if I stand still nothing will change I will be eighteen always. For always. Time will stop. I’ll never die”* (Smith, 2013 p. 24) Leah’ strong reluctance, or maybe disability to move on with her life corresponds with the lack of experience outside northwest, as she admits that she was *“born, bred, never goes anywhere”* (Smith, 2013 p. 52)

Natalie Blake

Natalie Blake, formerly known as Keisha, is a daughter of Jamaican immigrants. However, the reader learns this fact throughout the narrative and not in the beginning. By this action, Smith arguably wanted to point out the prejudices the society makes on the basis of being of particular origin. Given Smith's own multiculturalism, this example supposedly roots from author's own experience with racism or discrimination. Further in the narrative, we learn that Natalie lives in a small apartment in the estate in the northwest London with her siblings and mother. Since Natalie's young age, she was friends with Leah. Natalie regularly attended the church, she was a good student, which made her doubt herself as a person with identity. Natalie is presented as a determined child:

It was clear that Keisha Blake could not start something without finishing it. [...] This compulsion, applied to other fields, manifested itself as 'intelligence'. Every unknown word sent her to a dictionary – in search of something like 'completion' – and every book led to another book, a process which of course could never be completed. [...] She wanted to read things – could not resist wanting to read things [...] Wasn't it possible that what other mistook for intelligence was in fact only a sort of mutation of the will? [...] In the child's mind a breach now appeared: between what she believed, she knew of herself, essentially, and her essence others seemed to understand it. She began to exist for other people [...]. (Smith, 2013 pp. 180-181)

The moment Natalie started favoring books and learning to keeping up on the trends with Leah, their life trajectories began to fractionate. As Leah's interests shaped her as a person, Natalie uttered whether *"she herself had any personality at all or was in truth only the accumulation and reflection of all the things she had read in books and seen on television."* (Smith, 2013 p. 187) Eventually, Natalie enrolled to a law school, where she began the process of shaping her personality. Natalie changed her name, stopped practicing her religion and discovered music, literature and politics instead. Natalie took even part in a humanitarian trip, which she later evaluates as: *"representing a sort of pinnacle of radical youthful possibility. Of sex, protest and travel, fused."* (Smith, 2013 p. 212) Natalie embraced a decadent lifestyle and that became her personality. She worked hard to become a successful lawyer, not to say a successful African-American female lawyer arising from poor conditions. Natalie

worked hard and eventually deserved her success. At the time the novel is unfolding, Natalie is married to a wealthy businessman Frank De Angelis with whom she has two children and the family moved back to northwest London to a big house. The family belongs to a higher social stratification and it is obvious that they are not bound by money deficiency. Natalie however looks for a getaway from her life by starting an email address under her former name in order to look for opportunity to broaden her sexual experience. However, Frank finds out about Natalie's 'second life', which leads to an argument. Natalie wanders the streets of northwest London, briefly thinking of jumping off the bridge, but eventually heading back home – to northwest London.

The character of Natalie is the one in which the identity crisis springs to the surface the most. Natalie tries to fight her fate by changing a name, going to law school, marrying a decent man, but still it seems like the color of her skin determines the future. However, not only Natalie's origin plays a key role in the direction her life heads towards, but also the environment which she sees as a prison she needs to escape.

Nathan Bogle

Nathan Bogle is a former classmate of Natalie and Leah, but his character is portrayed as a rather sad figure. Nathan lives in poor conditions, which is obvious from the description he gets:

The Afro of the man is uneven and has a tiny grey feather in it. The clothes are ragged. One big toe thrusts through the crumby rubber of an ancient red-stripe Nike Air. The face is far older than it should be, even given the nasty way time has with human materials. [...] Been sliced, deeply, on his cheek, not long ago. [...] Now missing a tooth here and there and there. Devastated eyes. What should be white is yellow. (Smith, 2013 p. 46)

What it said about Nathan's state brings out the desperation by itself, yet the feeling is even magnified when put into contrast of the past:

Nathan Bogle: the very definition of desire for girls who had previously only felt that way about certain fragrant erasers. A smile to destroy the resolve of even the strictest teachers, other people's parents. At ten she would have done anything, anything! (Smith, 2005 p. 47)

Smith uses Nathan's figure to put it into contrast with Leah's and Natalie's lives, pointing out the major difference in the direction their lives took.

Felix Cooper

Felix appears in the story as a character, that never meets in person with neither of the previous three characters. Yet, in certain way, Felix intervenes with them eventually. Felix is the youngest of four children and he is on his way to set his life straight. Felix comments on the development of his life by reminiscing of the place where he met his current girlfriend Grace, which he sees as a sort of savior: *"Five and innocent at this bus stop. Fourteen and drunk. Twenty-six and stoned Twenty-nine in utter oblivion, out of mind on coke and K."* (Smith, 2013 p. 119) However, Felix's intention to point his life towards a better future is aborted by an incident in public transport, consequently, Felix got stabbed and died on the street. Smith expresses the irony of life itself: Felix, not only determined to get a better life for himself, but also dies because of his act of help when defending a pregnant woman on the public transport. Unfortunately, Nathan and a friend of him felt the need of revenge for Felix's behavior.

Felix's sudden death then reaches to Natalie, as she bumps into Nathan, the presumptive culprit, just a moment after the murder. Secondly, the news of the incident then hits Leah while attending a party. Smith connects all the three characters to Felix in a way, although Felix himself never gets to meet them.

Smith draws lines connecting all the four main characters together, by which she contrasts them. The fact that Natalie, Leah, and Nathan all come from (more or less) same background makes the reader nothing but wonder how can lives of people that were given the same opportunity, differ so radically. Leah is stuck in her lethargy, having doubts about herself; Natalie is successful lawyer and mother, and seems confident in her actions; Nathan, a former girls' dream boy, now a wrecked person. However, Felix's end only deepens the feeling of hopelessness, because his act of kindness and redemption was 'rewarded' with death. Smith herself comments the intention of the novel as following:

„I really meant it to be a question for every reader," she says. "The question of whether people 'get what they deserve.' It's in one way just a simple demotic thing that people say to each other, but in the end it's a very serious ethical question. Whether you believe that or not creates all kind of political difference and moral difference so I don't want to enter into it. The book was written exactly for that reason, to create a little problem you enter and solve for yourself." (Neary, 2012)

Finally, in this novel Smith arguably attempted to project some of her own personal experience as an inhabitant of the northwest London, an area which she introduces as a rather determining for some of its resident, yet Zadie Smith, herself a successful writer, assertively marks the exception.

6.2 Northwest as a Label

Northwest part of London, particularly the Kilburn and Willesden area is a unique place. The location itself bears certain implications; firstly, northwest only represents a given part of the city. It is not in the city center, which is generally considered to be 'the London', the genuinely British one, the one where all the tourists head to in order to experience Great Britain. Kilburn and Willesden rest on the periphery of London, which is seen as rather unimportant by many, and also as Slavin suggests "NW" could also stand for "*a nowhere in the capital of the former largest empire in the world*" (Slavin, 2015 p. 98) By implying that the location matter less than the central London, it is being questioned whether the inhabitants and their lives matter also less. Naturally, if central London bears more importance and characteristics of true Great Britain, then the peripheries must be less 'British'. In the novel, Smith uses the persona of Margaret Thatcher via whom she refers to this issue. Thatcher's quote says: "*Today this is Brent. Tomorrow it could be Britain!*" (Smith, 2013 p. 45) Slavin further comments on the commonly accepted cognitive map "*of the myth of England, which claims that high tea and Trafalgar Square and English, while meat patties and Kilburn are just somehow not.*" (Slavin, 2015 p. 100) According to Smith's word, Kilburn/Willesden is a hopeless area, forgotten land with a palpable sense of certain failure; in other words, an area not representative enough for Great Britain. Smith depicts it as following:

Boom and bust never come here. Here bust is permanent. Empty State Empire, empty Odeon, graffiti-streaked sidings rising and falling like a rickety roller coaster. [...] In the 1880s or thereabouts the whole thing went up at once – houses, churches, schools, cemeteries – an optimistic vision of Metroland. Little terraces, faux-Tudor piles. All the mod cons! Indoor toilet, hot water. Well-appointed country living for those tired of the city. Fast-forward. Disappointed city living for those tired of their countries. (Smith, 2013 p. 48)

As Smith said, Kilburn was an area where people came with a vision of better living, often from foreign countries. That is also the case of the two main protagonists, for Natalie was a descendant of a Jamaican family and Leah had Irish roots. Smith refers to the multiculturalism of Kilburn and Willesden at the very beginning of the novel saying: *“In Willesden people go barefoot, the streets turn European [...]”* (Smith, 2013 p. 3) Assuming that the story is set in London - clearly in Europe, Smith points out that the streets are not usually European which only adds to the image of Kilburn as a peripheral small world within London, by extension the true Great Britain.

An element of assurance that Willesden is still part of Great Britain is mediated through the presence of a church. In the novel, Leah, Natalie, and her children are looking for the Willesden church, which happens to be easily unnoticeable, for its exact location is unknown to everybody present. Even though Leah and Natalie both grew up in the area, they have never even noticed this church. As the group progresses, they spot the church: *“A little country church, a medieval country church, stranded on this half-acre, in the middle of a roundabout. Out of time, out of place. [...] It is eleven thirty in the morning, in another century, another England.”* (Smith, 2013 p. 71) By having said that the church is seemingly “out of time, out of place” and knowing that it is “medieval” church, it implies, again, the improbability of the presence of such church in Willesden, that means an area not “truly British”, which creates contrast. However, the reader is being assured that the church is still in England, even though it is “another England”, as also Slavin suggests: *“Although the church is hardly part of their daily lives [...] it is still part of the geography of the community, ensuring that the presence of Britain is felt even in the heart of Brent.”* (Slavin, 2015 p. 106)

Church from “another England”, as was mentioned above, refers not only to the location and its meaning of the parish, but also to the current composition of the congregation and the vicar, as he is “*as he would have been in 1920 or 1880 or 1660. He is the same, but his congregation is different. Polish, Indian, African, Caribbean.*” (Smith, 2013 p. 73) This is a point of palpable meeting of “another” and “former” England. The vicar functions as a representative of what is being thought of as the “true England”, and the congregation represents the over-looked London, the one that is seemingly not part of it. The presence of both elements further marks that London “*is composed of many constituent elements and cannot subscribe to one monolithic cartography.*” (Slavin, 2015 p. 107) Slavin also very poignantly describes such composition of elements as “layers” and further explaining that “*it is possible to layer contemporary realities over central myths and expectations, and, moreover, that the definition of London is many Londons [...]*” (Slavin, 2015 p. 107) The final image London presents itself with, is therefore the result individual realities which differ by their very nature.

6.3 Narrative Techniques and Their Specific Elements

In the 2012 novel *N-W*, Smith combines traditional narrative with postmodern literary techniques, occasionally including literary experiments similar to English modernism. Such approach resulted into a novel that is rather different in its narrative. However, experimenting may not always pay off and in the case of *N-W* it is probably this feature that caused less significant reaction of the literary scene.

NW is divided into five main sections, whereas every one of them follows a different pattern of narration. Yet, not only Smith makes distinction between the narrative techniques, but also makes use of the word form itself, emphasizing the message via occasional calligrams, uncommon usage of punctuation, or time of narration.

The first section is further divided into subchapters, to a large extent written in a stream of consciousness method. The reader witnesses Leah’s interior monologue conveyed to the reader in a third person narrator. Smith unusual way of signaling the direct speech by using dashes draws more attention to the figure and mediates the

feeling of immediacy. A calligram in the shape of a tree is used to accompany a text about an apple tree, which is directly followed by a block of text, which Guignery recognizes as following:

This arrangement is redolent of the pages divided in two columns in B. S. Johnson's *Albert Angelo*, the left one for direct speech, the right one for the professor's simultaneous thoughts. Like Johnson, Smith is here attempting a truthful transcription of simultaneous thoughts and monologue, without any narratorial intervention. (Guignery, 2013)

Smith again uses calligram to convey such information she does not directly express in the text, when describing a rather talkative woman, which irritates Leah, by extension the narrator. Smith plays with the distribution of the words on one line, and adding to that omitting all marks signaling the direct speech. Such condition results into what looks like a perplexity, which corresponds and even matches to the nature and content of the conversation itself. Smith manages to express the reality of her characters making use of what the language and writing style offer. Smith also does not hesitate and omits all punctuation at all, marking a sense of urgency.

Smith inclines to use very interesting kinds of approach, for instance when she puts next to each other a modern technology element, that is a factual Google navigation, and right after it contrasts it with Leah's interior monologue. Such result is the realization of the complexity of a character, highlighting the non-stopping state of being conscious. Guignery points out the following resemblance:

As Leah is walking from one place to the other, she observes, smells and hears people, scenes, objects around her, and the text records her impressions in a cumulative and enumerative mode that is reminiscent of Joyce's *Ulysses*. (Guignery, 2013)

The second section is remarkably different from the first one. First of all, the narrator changes from Leah to Felix, secondly, the story is now continued to be told by a third person narrative in a rather traditional sense, totally omitting the former stream of consciousness pattern. Smith uses capital letters to emphasize urgency or when a character is screaming, as well as she uses letters in bold to demonstrate a text message being sent. The whole section follows a day in a life of Felix, which is a figure appearing in works of other authors: *"This technique of a one-day narrative bears obvious echoes of Ulysses and Mrs Dalloway but also Ian McEwan's Saturday."*

(Guignery, 2013) Smith marks the location of Felix's personal "map" by pointing out the postcode of the particular area – therefore the reader keep track of Felix's position to fulfil the observation.

The third section again changes the narrator, this time the story is being told by Natalie and it reaches a few decades back. The section is divided into 184 chapters, each of them following a particular situation somehow distinctive for Natalie's development. Smith often makes the chapters end in the middle of a statement or situation, leaving the reader only guessing. Smith once again pays attention to the distribution of words on one line, for more authenticity. Chapter 113 depicts Natalie's and Frank's honeymoon, basically by enumerating words – this approach multiplies the feeling of relaxed atmosphere, also expotentiated by several kinds of alcoholic beverages being named, which Natalie, as the narrator, consumed. Overall, the style Smith used in this section, corresponds with Natalie's confusing identity-shaping; similarly, as Guignery articulates it: "[...] *the fragmented form (maybe typical of a more postmodernist vein) possibly reflecting the fragmentation of Keisha's identity.*"

The fourth section pays further attention to Natalie and relates directly where the previous section ended. Smith follows Natalie on one particular evening, when Felix from the second section was murdered. Because the night was full of rush for its characters, meaning Natalie and Nathan, in order to emphasize such atmosphere Smith completely omits every kind of marking out direct speech, which "*gives a greater sense of immediacy (also conveyed by capital letters when people are shouting) but also blurs the frontiers between speech and narration.*" (Guignery, 2013) Especially the just mentioned blurring adds the urgency conveyed by the content. Smith also follows the couple on an imaginary map, almost like Felix in the previous section, this time not using the postcode, but addressing the streets and direction. The last, fifth, section stays focused on Natalie. However, Smith uses other names to refer to Natalie, such as "woman" or "mother", which provides a sense of greater distance than before.

Smith's narrative approach is a mixture of innovations and inspiration from the past times, which in the case of NW resulted in an interesting novel combining the traditional with the newly established. Smith manages to take advantage of the plasticity of words, and by extension of the language, too. Smith experiments with the

tool of dialogue to a great extent, especially then with its non-traditional quoting using dashes, or simply letting the direct speech dissolve in a block of text – both of these approaches, among others, bringing a new perspective on the text.

7. White Teeth

The novel *White Teeth* was published in 2000 from the pen of twenty-four-year-old Zadie Smith, even though it was first introduced to public in 1997 through partial manuscripts being published simultaneously. The novel has become an instant bestseller and brought immediate fame to the author.

Smith's novel *White Teeth* depicts the modern London, which has become an example of a medley of nations. Smith follows the clash of cultures that is the progressive West and the traditional East, and sets the novel into the late 20th century and illustrates London as a 'melting pot', where first and second generations of immigrants find themselves in a conflict. Smith, herself a second generation Jamaican immigrant, contrasts the first generation immigrants with their children born in London, "*who are now paving the way to a completely new society.*" (Pavičić-Ivelja, 2014)

White Teeth covers lives of individual characters that are brought together in the novel, which is multilayered and spans up to three generations of the characters. Smith explores the past of each of the families presented, providing background information on the family history and offering an insight into the characters' actions. The foundation of the novel is a friendship of Archie Jones, a British man, and Samad Iqbal, a Bengali man, who were in the war together, and eventually they both end up living in the same neighborhood with their much younger wives. Archie married a Jamaican-of-origin Clare, while Samad married a Bengali woman named Alsana in an arranged marriage. Smith makes the two couples the center of the novel, following their interweaving lives, until they both become parents. Subsequently, Smith turns the attention to Millat and Magid Iqbals, and Irie Jones, and illustrates the hardship of being on schism of diverse identities and cultures, but also brings forward the question of generation gap between them and their parents in the context of first and second generation of immigrants. Continuously, a third family appears in the story, the Chalfens, a middle class family of intellectuals, whose presence mirrors the lives of all three families in terms of finding a post-colonial identity for themselves. Smith not only emphasizes the struggle that is connected to being of different origin, but also to

other issues not in direct connection to race – such as infidelity, generation gaps, religion and social stratification.

7.1 Multiculturalism: The Conflict of Identity

The aspect of multiculturalism pervades the novel in all of its layers. Smith's characters, and their lives are shaped by being of various origin and culture, although Smith provides each of her characters with a different story development. The multiculturalism is not only mediated through the characters themselves, but also through the setting of the novel. Smith sets the novel in Willesden, a north-west part of London, where she herself lived, therefore was acquainted with the environment as Smith later proves in the novel *NW* (2012). The multicultural aspect was projected in all layers of the story: the variety of characters, the multicultural setting, also the themes that are brought up.

As mentioned above, the initial attention is paid to the friendship of Archie Jones and Samad Iqbal, which is built on their shared war experience, fighting for the British troops. Samad, a Bengali Muslim, whose nationality is continuously being mistaken for a different one, becomes Smith's main protagonist that faces the impacts of being a foreigner by being mocked:

'Sultan...Sultan...'Samad mused. 'Do you know, I wouldn't mind the epithet, Mr Mackintosh, if it were at least accurate. [...] I am sure I have explained to you that I am from Bengal. The word "Sultan" refers to certain men of the Arab lands – many hundreds of miles west of Bengal. (Smith, 2000 p. 85)

Yet, as hard as Samad locates himself only to Bengal, later he comments on the complicated history of Bengal, which also means his history and marks his own search for identity: *"I'm not actually from India, you know. [...] I'm from Bangladesh. 'Previously Pakistan. Previous to that, Bengal.'" (Smith, 2000 p. 133)* For Samad, becoming a British citizen means abandoning not only his country, but also his culture, which represents one of the biggest of Samad's personal struggles. The 'new' post-colonial Great Britain, which is formed by its newcomers, becomes a 'melting pot' where assimilation rather than integration is expected. Samad feels strongly about assimilation, fighting against it as much as it is within his powers. Samad emphasizes

the importance of tradition, be it religion or culture, and he is deeply saddened by the behavior of his own family – both the nuclear and extended, who ‘betrayed’ him and their culture, as he says:

Well, take Alsana’s sisters – all their children are nothing but trouble. They won’t go to mosque, they don’t pray, they speak strangely, they dress strangely, they eat all kinds of rubbish, they have intercourse with God knows who. No respect for tradition. People call it assimilation when it is nothing but corruption. (Smith, 2000 p. 190)

However, Samad spots the effect not only at his family, but also at himself, as he becomes the victim of Great Britain and blames it for his problems, as he notes: *“I should never have come here – that’s where every problem has come from. Never should have brought my sons here, so far from God. [...] Now: what kind of a model am I for my children?”* (Smith, 2000 p. 145) Obviously, Samad feels responsibility for his sons’ future and criticizes multiculturalism in Great Britain, further sees assimilation as the cause of the problems, even though he is - at the same time - the one creating multiculturalism. Through Samad’s character, Smith articulates the schism that arises when two opposing cultures meet. Smith bears the theme of disjointed realities continuously throughout the novel, most apparently via the development of Samad’s twin sons Magid and Millat. For Samad, Great Britain itself becomes the biggest threat to his sons, because Samad sees the country as spoiled due to its westernness, which he himself experienced. *“I have been corrupted by England, I see that now – my children, my wife, they too have been corrupted. Maybe I have been frivolous. Maybe I have thought intellect more important than faith.”* (Smith, 2000 p. 144) Samad refuses to accept the fact that he, his identity and alongside with that his culture, family tradition, religion and the overall roots in the home country, should blend in with the western one, for these are the only values that matter for an immigrant: *“I don’t want to be a modern man! I wish to live as I was always meant to! I wish to return to the East!”* (Smith, 2000 p. 145) Through Samad’s wish to return to the East Smith denotes his strong connection to his native culture and along with that rather traditional tendencies, which causes the assimilation to fail. However, as much as Smith questions Samad’s ability and willingness to assimilate, it is more Samad’s fear that prevents him from full assimilation. Samad’s fear that his culture (and along with that

his life and the purpose for life) fades away is then projected in all of his relations, as he expects the same from others –from his wife and mostly his sons, which is though disabled by the undeniable generation gap. Again, to emphasize the disjointness of immigration, Smith only introduces Samad with two opposable options how to prevent his sons from being spoiled as he himself is and to preserve their cultural identity. Through Abdul-Mickey's words Smith brings forward the issue of assimilation, as Mickey noted: "Accept it. He'll have to accept it, won't he. We're all English now, mate." (Smith, 2000 p. 192) All in all, Samad's everyday life is interweaved with a struggle between the two cultures – the one he carries with him from Bengal that he is not willing to give up, and the other one – his English identity, which has not put down roots deeply. Smith demonstrates the collision of cultures in every day's situations, such as when the Iqbal family had to escape their unsafe house during a mighty storm, Samad urges all members of his family to only take "the life or death things" (Smith, 2000 p. 221). The items Alsana and Millat took, count the following:

Millat: Born to Run (album) Springsteen, Poster of De Niro in 'You talkin' to me' scene from Taxi Driver, [...] Shrink-to-fit- Levis 501 (red tab), Pair of black converse baseball shoes, A Clockwork Orange (book) [...] Alsana: Sewing machine, Three pots of tiger balm, Leg of lamb(frozen), Foot bath, Linda Goodman's Starsigns, Huge boy of beedi cigarettes [...] (Smith, 2000 p. 222)

Smith enumerates the items in two separate columns that mark the culture they are clinging to and by extension proves the gap between the generations. Smith makes Samad's realization that neither his son nor wife took the Qur'an sound both amusing and depressing, as also Tew notes that:

Smith plays with this urban myth of the incongruous items people grab in a crisis to emphasize the impracticality and commercialized nature of people's lives [...] and further comments that "These items are literal and symbolic, representing cultural as well as personal selections [...]" (Tew, 2007 pp. 168-169)

Samad's fear to assimilate, thus to lose his cultural identity, is an aspect that Smith further articulates as an issue that concerns every immigrant, but at the same time, Smith questions the readiness of the native population to accept immigration, as also Pavičić-Ivelja mentions:

From positive discrimination to unintentional insults, Smith glides through the fabric of the late 20th century London, ripping its courteous and always proper seams apart in the process, exposing the bare interior composed of confused Englishmen either unsure as how to, or even unwilling to accept the change that is the new era of globalization that is surely upon them. (Pavičić-Ivelja, 2014)

Through Smith's text the reader witnesses the existence of the 'cultural medley' late 20th century London bears:

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 (like a man returning to his lover's bed after a midnight walk, 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. There are still young white men who are angry about that; who will roll out at closing time into the poorly lit streets with a kitchen knife wrapped in a tight fist. But it 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. (Smith, 2000 p. 327)

Samad's fear of 'disappearance' is further projected to his twin sons. Magid and Millat, who had been given the same conditions to evolve in, but turned out to take different paths. Samad's resentment towards the 'westernness' and the lack of tradition, is in direct contrast with the interests of his sons. Millat, being a London-born son of non-English parents, evidently identifies himself with the English lifestyle. Millat is a great admirer of popular culture, that is Pacino's movies, popular music, trendy fashion, but he also in his very young age turns into a womanizer, which is deeply inconsistent with Samad's belief. On the other hand, Magid seems to be more corresponding with Samad's image, as Magid's development takes more of a conservative direction, however despite being brought up outside Great Britain he leans towards the English culture anyway. The issue the twins aim to tackle is the fact, that they are *"more English than they are Bengali and yet they never seem to be English enough."* (Pavičić-Ivelja, 2014) As an example of Magid's wish to belong Smith depicts his childhood manner to having renamed himself to Mark Smith, a name that cannot be and sound any more British. Such action marvelously contrasts with

Samad's fear of losing cultural identity, which is - much to his displeasure – happening with the help of his own blood.

Through the characters of Millat and Magid, Smith emphasizes the utopia of the effort to fully assimilate in order to feel the sense of belonging. Although both of the sons were born in London, they gave up their mother tongue and speak only English language, they are still not English enough for the society and oscillate on the margins, always being seen as 'the other'. Even though Millat himself feels like he is *"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 p. 351), the society and its non-acceptance fused with the pressure coming from his father, eventually were the forces that made Millat become an Islamic fundamentalist. Magid, on the other hand, identifies himself with the English culture trying to cut loose of his Bengali identity. Magid becomes everything his father fears, that is a secular intellectual. Magid's awakening is in an explicit contrast to that one of Millat, denoting that one simply cannot merge the two cultural identities and must choose one. Smith does not hesitate to imply that the hunt for an assimilation the native society pronounces through contributing to margins creation caused by the society's non-acceptance, may lead to increasing numbers of fundamentalism supporters. *"Smith is at pains to point out that racism and the isolation that it can produce for a marginalizes character can be a contributing factor to the formation and the recruitment of such groups."* (Allen, 2008 p. 87)

However, the ironically opposing lives of the twins is not the only case where Smith demonstrates the confusion of identity people experience. As Childs comments:

White Teeth is a novel deeply concerned with national identities in a way that undermines the arguments of those who would link Britishness to ethnicity: few people in the book identify with one country or culture, and instead, through the fortunes of war, work, allegiance, heritage, identification, or travel, see either no reflection or too many reflections of themselves in the mirror of history." (Childs, 2005 pp. 202-203)

The burden of colliding identities lies vehemently on Irie Jones. Factually speaking, Irie is a daughter of Archie, a white British man, and Clare (née Bowden), who is of Jamaican origin. However, Smith also depicts the family history of the Bowdens, which

to a given extent corresponds with the history of Jamaica, and by extension implies the British-Jamaican relation in terms of the post-colonial world. Irie's grandmother Ambrosia was impregnated and later left by a white British captain Charlie Durham, by which Smith may have wanted to make the reader draw the connection to actual history of exploitation by colonizing. Eventually, Ambrosia's daughter Hortense became a practitioner of the Jehovah's Witnesses religion, which in the future represents the unsurpassable issue for Clare – Irie's mother and a second generation immigrant to Britain. The relationship of Clare and her mother bears similarities of the relation among Samad and Millat and Magid. By this correspondence Smith draws the implication that the gap between the generations of immigrants is undeniable. In the case of the Bowden family, it was the strong emphasis on the religion, that eventually caused the separation followed by isolation of the two generations.

The fact that Irie's mother has already successfully come through the struggle to assimilate and got rid of her 'other' identity (given that she is already the second generation immigrant), having married a white British man Archie provided her the sense of belonging. Clara

[...] begged Archie to take her as far away from Lambeth as a man of his means could manage – Morocco, Belgium, Italy. Archie had clasped her hand and nodded and whispered sweet nothings in the full knowledge that the furthest a man of his means was going was a newly acquired, heavily mortgaged, two-storey house in Willesden Green. (Smith, 2000 p. 46)

Subsequently, Irie's family history is not the only aspect that causes her pervading feelings of not fitting in. Irie's struggle to accept her identity and place herself into the society is mainly caused by her low confidence concerning her appearance. Irie dreams of resembling more the 'English' than Jamaican, placing her on the frontier of the cultures not only mentally, but also physically. Smith makes Irie take the role of a non-fitting in misfit, however the character of Irie is very sympathetic, as the reader witnesses her boy troubles and teenage problematic issues. Irie's struggle to fit in culturally is therefore influenced heavily by her appearance: *"There was England, a gigantic mirror, and there was Irie, without reflection. A stranger in a stranger land.* (Smith, 2000 p. 266) Consequently, Irie turns into her grandmother's hoping to find there a sense of belonging, as they share roots,

as well as physical features. Smith pictures all of her characters as outsiders in the social circle they oscillate, and mostly this feeling of not belonging roots from their personal struggles connected to comprehension of oneself.

As mentioned before, the isolation Smith's characters perceive stems in general from underestimation, however, when the Chalfen family appears on the scene, their isolation is caused by their feeling of superiority. The Chalfens label themselves as the middle class Jewish family and are proud intellectuals and enhance such position by their non-conflicting lives. Even though the family is presented like a flawless example of a traditional British family, they were

[...] immigrants too (third generation, by way of Germany and Poland, née Chalfenovsky), [...] To Irie, the Chalfens were more English than the English." Irie felt like 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 p. 328)

By implying that the family is so anglicized that they are unrecognizable from 'native English', Smith basically gives the opportunity to see what a third generation of immigrants looks like, making Irie compare the family with her own. For Irie, the Chalfens immediately become the ideal she wishes for herself and Irie becomes their sole admirer. Yet, even families who achieve to be 'more English than the English' cannot deny their blood. *"You go back and back and it's still easier to find the correct Hoover bag than to find one pure person, one pure faith, on the globe. Do you think anybody is English? Really English? It's a fairy tale!"* (Smith, 2000 p. 236)

It is interesting to focus on how the profession of the Chalfens correspond with their attitude towards Irie and Millat. Joyce Chalfen is an Oxford graduate and horticulturalist, and Marcus is a scientist focusing on selective breeding. Both Chalfens basically aim to create something better, something stronger and metaphorically be in control of one's identity. Smith brings forward the theme of hybridity and cross-fertilization via a metaphor of Joyce's book *The New Flower Power*:

Where once gardeners swore by the reliability of the self-pollinating plant in which pollen is transferred from the stamen to the stigma of the same flower (autogamy), now we are more adventurous, positively singing the praises of cross-pollination where pollen is transferred from one flower to another on the same plant (geitonogamy), or to a flower of another plant of the same species (xenogamy). [...] Yes, self-pollination is the simpler and more certain of the two fertilization processes, especially for many species that

colonize by copiously repeating the same parental strain. But a species cloning such uniform offspring runs the risk of having its entire population wiped out by a single evolutionary event. [...] The fact is; cross-pollination produces more varied offspring that are better able to cope with a changed environment. It is said cross-pollinating plants also tend to produce more and better-quality seeds. (Smith, 2000 p. 309)

Joyce's article also conveys a metaphor to her marriage with Marcus, as she hoped for progeny of 'better-quality'. The Chalfens only meet with those who have 'good genes' - of which the Chalfens are the true representatives: *"two scientists, one mathematician, three psychiatrists, and a young man working for the Labour Party."* (Smith, 2000 p. 316) The Chalfens measure intelligence, hence good genes, by the amount of success, and subsequently their success defines their class status, which delivers the desired sense of belonging to the English society. Marcus's long awaited project the FutureMouse aims to create a genetically engineered mouse that will live forever and that will be free from human weaknesses. Both Joyce and Marcus themselves are hybrids in the society, although evidently due to their success they managed to fit it, but also they make living creating hybrids and the moment Irie and Millat start spending time with the family, for Marcus and especially for Joyce it is an opportunity to 'hybridize' Irie and Millat. Therefore, the metaphor of cross-pollination rises to another level - from hybridity of the origin to the 'social' hybridity.

The hybridity is to be found not only in the terms of gardening, or genetic engineering. Smith also draws attention to the horti-multicultural view of Britain, where hybridity roots from daily London life - from the melting pot:

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 Irie Jones humming a tune. Children with first and last names on a direct collision course. (Smith, 2000 p. 326)

Smith adds humorous overtones to the reality of modern Britain, and by granting the aspect of hybridity to the children, thus demonstrates that hybridity is *"a powerful and even an unstoppable force that has survived every attempt made in the last century to end the process."* (Allen, 2008 p. 88) The novel also brings forward the

diversity which occurs at school, again in a rather comical way, as the headmistress enumerates all the celebrations, be it religious or secular:

[...] Christmas, Ramadan, Chinese New Year, Diwali, Yom Kippur, Hanukkah, the birthday of Haile Selassie, and the death of Martin Luther King. Harvest Festival is part of the school's ongoing commitment to religious diversity [...] (Smith, 2000 p. 129)

Diversity is recognized and celebrated on the soil of education, expressing the importance of tolerance and implying that the future generations will be taught such values, which will theoretically eventually lead to a more peaceful world.

As the novel reaches the finale, Smith delivers several fundamental implications on multiculturalism of the whole book by turning attention to three occurrences. Firstly, Smith highlights the story of Irie and flash forwards to a time when Irie gave birth to a daughter. Irie was though never sure who the father is, if either Magid or Millat. However, Irie now lives by a Caribbean Sea with Joshua Chalfen. By that Smith brought together all the three main families via Irie's daughter "*mixing British, Caribbean, Bangladeshi, and Jewish heritage.*" (Childs, 2005 p. 214) Smith follows to draw implication by illustrating a major turning point – that is, on the very turn of the millennium on the 31st December 1999, Smith takes the reader to O'Connell's, a bar which Archie and Samad like "*for its supposed unchanging familiarity*". (Childs, 2005 p. 214) Throughout the story, the pub represented the clash of identity being called a typical Irish name, but owned by an immigrant Abdul-Mickey, who banned women from entering and banned pork meat from being served. However, on the last night of 1999, the reader witnesses something what Smith describes as a "*historic night when Abdul-Mickey finally opened his doors to women*" (Smith, 2000 p. 541). Smith having chosen this particular date for such happening, evidently marks the indication of tolerance that the society aspires to in the new millennium.

Consequently, The FutureMouse, the metaphorical and literal hybrid, is set free by Archie – a man who in a way promotes hybridity and multi-ethnic mixture by particular actions of his life, as marrying Clara and befriending Samad - and the mouse flees into the air vent, by which Smith express the unstoppable process of multiculturalism and hybridity.

7.2 Fundamentalism and Ideology in *White Teeth*

In *White Teeth*, Smith brings to contrast several fundamentalist implications that clash throughout the novel, for Smith provides her characters with beliefs that shape their development, be they political, religious, scientific, or lifestyle concerned. Organizations, actions, and movements that Smith's characters participate in, are often the result of their feelings of personal significance and tendencies, as Childs states: "*Most conscious decisions thus seem undercut by personal considerations or undermined by the vagaries of others.*" (Childs, 2005 p. 211), as Smith makes the characters acquainted with Islamic fundamentalism, environmental activism, the Nazi ideology, or the science of genetic engineering, presenting political activism devoted both to human and animal rights.

Initially, it is interesting how Archie's and Samad's development evolves, given their shared war experience. During the Second World War, they fought in France against the Nazi troops, where they encountered Dr Perret known as the French 'Nazi sterilizer' Dr Sick. Archie and Samad, having wanted to finally do their significant action against the Nazis, decided to execute Dr Sick. However, Archie set the doctor free without telling Samad. In the long run, this action is the reason for Samad's sons to turn their back on him. Smith is at pains to point out that the past cannot be escaped, in the same way the author refers to the issue of undeniable cultural heritage every person carries along, as having been examined in the previous chapter. Consequently, the Nazi Dr Sick became the teacher of Marcus Chalfen, who is the promoter of genetic engineering with the goal of producing a flawless creature. Smith brings forward the connection, that Marcus's experiments and intentions, in fact, relate to the ones of Nazi ideology, that is to set the human kind free of flaws. By Marcus Chalfen becoming the inspiration for Magid, it is where the gap between Samad and Magid deepens, as Magid actually becomes the representative of the ideology Samad was fighting against, and by extension becomes the enemy of Samad.

Yet, Millat's development took a different course, as he found himself sympathizing with the Islamic fundamentalist group. Smith depicts the group in a rather satirical tone, mocking not only the unfortunate acronym of the group, but also the background of the group's actions. The group's full name states *Keepers of the*

Eternal and Victorious Islamic Nation, creating the acronym KEVIN. Smith illustrates Millat to be on the frontier of the 'traditional' and the western and not being capable to "purge himself of the taint of the West." (Smith, 2000 p. 444) Smith does not hesitate to imply that what forced Millat into the open arms of KEVIN was the feeling of isolation and experiencing racism. Therefore, Smith turns the attention to the threat of recruitment of such groups as a result of society being non-tolerant towards 'the others'. Smith continues to examine other motives of the KEVIN members through an event that appears in the novel. The reader witnesses a demonstration against the publication of Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* from 1988 where Millat and other members decide to travel. However, none of them has read *The Satanic Verses*, which immediately makes the reader question the credibility of such action and marks Smith's effort to degrade such political ideas, as fundamentalism, with evident satire. But, as Allen notes, "[...] rather than suggesting that Millat's actions are solely born of ignorance, Smith is at pains to point out that fundamentalism can be the result of prejudice and discrimination." (Allen, 2008 p. 88) Smith further proves this intention on emphasizing the feelings that are connected to *The Satanic Verses* publishing, rather than to the content of the book, as Smith tells us that Millat "recognized the anger, though it recognized him and so grabbed it with both hands." (Smith, 2000 p. 202) Smith draws out a link between Millat and Samad, since they both were in a kind of war or protest when they were of similar age. Samad fought against Nazism, therefore against racial exclusivity, and Millat fights for the fundamental Islam to prevail. The KEVIN's intention is to stop Dr Perret from genetic engineering by killing him, since the fundamentalists see the experiments as opposing the will of Allah. Millat and Magid are actually fighting against each other and at the same time they both represent what their father fought against. Due to Millat's fundamentalism and Magid's alliance to Nazi scientists, both of Samad's sons become the very embodiment of what Samad fought for and only add to the clash within the family.

Another character's involvement in fundamentalist ideas Joshua Chalfen, the eldest of the Chalfen children, experiences an awakening and joins the FATE organization, which stands for 'Fighting Animal Torture and Exploitation', who are "like the hardcore Greenpeace or whatever. [...] they're not just hippy freaks, they're coming

from a solid scientific and academic background and they're working from an anarchist perspective." (Smith, 2000 p. 403) However, Smith implies that the motives for Joshua to join the FETA were rather personal, as he is smitten by the beauty and grace of the main leader and also by the chance to oppose his father. Suddenly, it is clear that though the character of Joshua Chalfen the author emphasizes the unpredictability of reasons that lead people to join activist or other groups. Joshua consents himself to the FETA to free himself of his 'too perfect' family. Also, Smith describes the group again in a rather humorous way, which only emphasizes to the irony of the war Joshua leads against his own father over a mouse that the FETA wants to set free. Many times Smith addresses the issue of generation gap through various situation throughout the narrative. However, the father-son opposition is in *White Teeth* represented twice – by Marcus and Joshua Chalfens, and Samad and Magid and Millat. The analysis of these relations clearly marks the presence of generation gaps and its further impact on both sides. For generation gaps cause the opinions to differ in many aspects – in politics, religion, gender, race, lifestyle, and naturally result in ideological clash.

In the final scene of the novel, Smith takes the reader to a conference where the FutureMouse is being presented. All of the just mentioned ideological and other groups are present, each of them ready to fight their individual war, as through the words of Allen *"Smith presents a picture of Britain at the turn of the century in which organization, groups and societies are the primary way in which people make political or moral gestures [...]"* (Allen, 2008 p. 87) As mentioned above, the past cannot be escaped, and at the night on the conference, Smith proves this by introducing Dr Perret, also known as Dr Sick, on the scene again, meaning that Archie's lie about having killed him in the war will be revealed. However, Smith aims to convey a different message. As Millat tries to kill Dr Perret in the name of KEVIN, Archie saves the doctor by taking the bullet for him, therefore saving him already for the second time. *"This act is not simply an act of either weakness or kindness on Archie's part; rather it can be read as a demonstration of the lack of power of Perret's Nazism."* (Allen, 2008 p. 88) In fact, the character of Archie himself, is a representative of the opposition to Nazism since he led a life that promotes hybridity, unlike the character of Samad who:

...stands as an example of how despite the continuation of notions of a restricted version of 'purity', the persistence of monomania and cultural bigotry (in any and all of its many forms in the novel), hybridity and change are not fragile elements in need of protection and artificial life support (such as that attempted by Mrs Chalfen). (Allen, 2008 p. 88)

Yet, Smith connects the two characters and they overcome the obstacles the society brings and preserve friendship. The novel functions as a multi-layered narrative - firstly Smith implies that the way people of different origin, classes or beliefs influence each other's lives, which in consequence brings an aspect of 'newness'. Smith also illustrates the particular issues multicultural world brings along on the particular lives of individual characters, making the reader sympathize with such notion and possibly promote tolerance.

The novel shifts the ground upon which Britain's future will be shaped into the realm of the personal, and thus implies that it may be possible that the powerful hold that mainstream (white) culture initially has over Irie, and that immigrant nostalgia has over Samad, and that fundamentalist activist group has over Millat might start to lose its grip in the new millennium. (Allen, 2008 p. 97)

The novel thus prioritizes the everyday interactions and everyday life that connect people to politics of race which only causes division of society and clash of cultures. Via the novel, Smith expresses the secondary importance of political debates that occur among the KEVIN and other groups concerned about the future, since the future is something already happening with the existence of society itself.

7.3 White Teeth as a Metaphor

Zadie Smith poignantly uses 'the teeth metaphor' throughout the novel to point the attention to several issues. Given the fact, that the novel deals with characters of different origin and race, Smith employs the symbol of teeth to carry out the idea that teeth are the same for everyone, or more precisely that everyone is the same under the skin. Teeth represent something that has the power to be the mutual connection to all people and unite them, and at the same time teeth are something that differentiates one person from another, because no two sets of teeth are the same, making each person unique.

Smith leaves allusions of the white teeth now and then throughout the novel, yet, explicitly focuses on 'white teeth' when Magid, Millat and Irie go to visit Mr Hamilton in the occasion of celebrating the Harvest Festival. Mr Hamilton shares his war experience with the children, emphasizing the importance of clean teeth. Mr Hamilton also reveals how he shot Africans by seeing the flash of their white teeth, stating:

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 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. (Smith, 2000 p. 172)

White teeth therefore for some people, like the Africans in Congo, became the curse that meant death for them. Yet, for most of the society white teeth mark certain social status, the imaginary value, on which Mr Hamilton further notes: *"And when your teeth rot ... there's no return. They won't look at you like they used to. The pretty ones won't give you a second glance, not for love or money."* (Smith, 2000 p. 173) Through the words of Mr Hamilton, Smith emphasizes again the importance of teeth, for it represents a person as a whole; *"teeth become an image of care and wisdom, neglect and rot: they must be looked after, brushed three times a day, and protected."* (Childs, 2005 p. 213) Smith returns to the image of 'shining' white teeth once again, when Samad and his mistress Poppy are spotted by Samad's sons: *"Samad opened his eyes and saw quite clearly y the bandstand his two sons, their white teeth biting into two waxy apples, waving, smiling."* (Smith, 2000 p. 182) It is interesting that Smith used the reoccurring scene, but reversed the 'victim' being it not the carrier of the white teeth, but Samad who was spotted by the 'teeth'. The metaphor generally implies that teeth of a person become a part of one's identity and they should be taken care of, because they could be lost easily. Smith metaphorically links the teeth to one's origin, emphasizing the significance of root canals which stand for a *"symbol of history, memory, and a shared colonial past."* (Childs, 2005 p. 213)

Consequently, the protection the teeth need is contrasted with the case of Clara. At her young age, Clara's life was deeply connected with Jehovah Witnesses, but as she freed herself of the binding religion, she also lost her upper teeth during a motorcycle accident, which links the two actions together as Clara lost a part of her identity in both physical and psychological way. However, Clara's upper teeth were restored with the presence of Archie, who provided her with a new life and a new set of teeth. Yet, Clara's 'false' teeth have no roots, just as Clara herself lacks the connection to her own roots. The moment Clara's daughter Irie finds out that her mother's teeth are false, Irie flees to her grandmother in order to look for the sense of roots there, but more importantly to look for her identity.

Smith uses terminology of teeth to name the chapters of the novel, such as Teething Trouble, Molars, The Root Canals, Canines: The Ripping Teeth. Each of the chapters metaphorically corresponds with the content, such as in the Root Canals, Smith examines the roots of Archie and Samad, Mangal Pande, and Hortense Bowden. As Childs articulates it, *"Teeth are to this extent used as a metaphor for a sense of identity: they have roots, they grow, they decay, and are in one sense the same in another sense different for everyone."* (Childs, 2005 p. 213) The chapter named Ripping Teeth then focuses on the lives of the Chalfen family. Canines are a kind of teeth that are involved in the first bite and at the same time carry a negative connotation being associated with predator's teeth and thread. In the same way Alsana thinks of the Chalfen family, metaphorically ripping their children from their own families and the children from each other at the same time. In the chapter Teething Troubles, Smith points the attention to Archie at the very beginning of his marriage with Clara. As the term 'teething troubles' itself refers to difficulties at the beginning of a project or activity, it also refers to an actual process of growing teeth of a baby. As this chapter focuses on Archie's development, Smith in a way employs both of the possible implications. Child comments: *"Even Archie's second chance in life is seen in terms of his transition from baby teeth to adult teeth."* (Childs, 2005 p. 213)

Furthermore, it is interesting to take note of Irie's determination to become a dentist. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Irie is considered to be the closest character resembling Smith herself due to her mixed raced origin, and Child notes that it is *"arguably a metafictional reference to the fact that her closest real-life equivalent,*

Zadie Smith, is writing a book called White Teeth." (Childs, 2005 p. 213) Since teeth also represent tradition, the fact that Irie wants to become a dentist could be therefore seen to imply her desire to protect one's tradition from decay.

In conclusion, Smith uses teeth as a linking theme, with the intention to emphasize the uniformity of teeth. The novel pays attention to the metaphorical connection teeth represent for all the people, but at the same time it is the aspect providing uniqueness of individuals, by extension teeth represent people and people (and their relations), as well as teeth need to be looked after.

7.4 The Sense of the Grotesque: Humor in *White Teeth*

Zadie Smith produced a novel that is in its most basic layer a satire reflecting the reality that first and second generation immigrants face in a multicultural society. Smith managed to depict the everyday London life in the second half of the 20th century with the help of humor and irony, through which she enriched the narrative, whether it is by employing situational humor, language humor or colloquial humor. Smith's use of such elements resulted into a novel typical for its light grotesque satirical interpretation of more important and crucial issues, such as social assimilation, discrimination and racism. Smith's own experience, as she belongs to a second generation immigrant herself, was arguably projected into the narrative.

Actions of Smith's characters are often rather ridiculous, which only adds to their feeling of certain hopelessness and addresses the particular issue through poignant comments. In Smith's novel, the reader might often get the idea that the whole book is intertwined with a solid amount of black humor. At the very beginning of the novel, a good example is to be found when Archie is getting ready to commit suicide but chooses a wrong parking spot outside of halal butcher's shop:

'No one gasses himself on my property,' Mo snapped as he marched downstairs. 'We are not licensed.' ... 'Do you hear that, mister? We're not licensed for suicides around here. This place halal. Kosher, understand? If you're going to die round here, my friend, I'm afraid you've got to be thoroughly bled first.' (Smith, 2000 p. 7)

The palpable presence of black humor roots from the seemingly random choice of Archie's parking spot, which brings a great opportunity for the narrator to toss a grotesque comment about bleeding.

Smith continues to mock the characters by projecting their inner motivation for certain actions. If looked closely at the events of Josh's joining the FATE organization, Smith makes the reasons of his sudden participation clear. Behind Josh's membership stands his enchantment by the group leader's beautiful wife Joely, rather than honest compassion with the animals. Millat's involvement with the KEVIN group is intensified by his teenage dream to be a gangster (due to his hobby of watching films of the 'west' production). Samad blames Britain for his infidelity as it represents permanent evil and Poppy is, in his eyes a white seductive English woman, and therefore he purifies himself of all the responsibility for his infidelity. Last but not least, the butcher Mohammed Hessein Ishmael decides to become a member of KEVIN because of a promised protection from the attacks of white thugs.

There are many examples of different kinds of humor in the novel. Such as the situation between Samad and his wife Alsana, who decides to make Samad suffer for having sent their son Magid to Bangladesh without telling her. Alsana only limited her answers to 'maybe', banning herself from explicitly saying 'yes' or 'no'. This case of a mild rebellion of the wife brings in an insight into a domestic comedy. Smith arms her characters with apt ironical comments, such as when Samad and Alsana attend a school meeting. Samad's objections against the celebration of Harvest Festival are turned down by the politically correct headmistress, as she notes that all religions must be represented in the school calendar, Samad's ironical annoyance escalated quickly: *"I am certain the Solar Covenant of Manor School Witches and Goblins will be delighted with the decision."* (Smith, 2000 p. 131)

Smith plays with the development of her characters, turning their future upside down against all predictions. Such an example is represented by Magid and Millat. As their father Samad made effort to navigate their development in the direct he had in mind, Smith grotesquely reversed the events. Yet, as Samad says:

"You try to plan everything and nothing happens in the way that you expected...' ... 'There are no words. The one I send home comes out a pukka Englishman, white suited, silly wig lawyer. The one I keep here is fully paid-up green bow-tie wearing fundamentalist terrorist. I sometimes wonder why I bother.'" (Smith, 2000 p. 407)

Smith is at pains to depict the irony of one's fate and its impossibility to ever truly fulfil the expectations of others. Another grotesque situation where Smith humorously

depicts the way immigrants tackle the confrontation of the two cultures is when the reader finds out the background story of how the O'Connell bar's owner was given his name.

Perhaps the most emblematic and humorous solution of the essence of such hybrid identity is the way chosen by Abdul's family: all the sons in the family are called Abdul ... but for purely practical reasons the children ingeniously added English names so now they are called Abdul-Mickey, Abdul-Colin, Abdul-Jimmy etc. In this way their very first names at once indicate their double origin and hybrid character. (Kolek, 2015 p. 56)

Smith often uses the element of comic enumerations and similes, as in the case of Irie, who seemed to be *"genetically designed with another country in mind, another climate"* (Smith, 2000 p. 266) and resembled of *"the love child of Diana Ross and Engelbert Humperdinck."* (Smith, 2000 p. 289), or the walking style of Millat and his group described in a very funny matter: *"And they walked in a very particular way, the left side of their bodies assuming a kind of loose paralysis that needed carrying along by the right side"* (Smith, 2000 p. 232) Example of such enumeration is to be spotted when Samad wins a card game against Russian soldiers: *"three jeeps, seven guns, fourteen medals, the land attached to Gozan's sister's house, and an IOU for four horses, three chickens and a duck' and then also the prisoner, the Nazi Dr Perret."* (Smith, 2000 p. 117) The order of the prizes, as they are enumerated, has a humorous effect, as one might expect the order to be from the most valuable to the least valuable. Yet, the narrator places Dr Perret on the last position, contradictory to the expectations of the reader, which results in a comical outcome. Another case of enumeration, which is sensed as ironical even though it aims to emphasize the real trouble of Millat, is the list of rebellious children including Millat.

"Mutinous Millat aged thirteen, who farted in mosque, chased blondes and smelt of tobacco, and not just Millat, but all the children: Mujib (fourteen, criminal record for joyriding), Khandakar (sixteen, white girlfriend, wore mascara in the evenings), Dipesh (fifteen, marijuana), Kurshed (eighteen, marijuana and very baggy trousers). Khaleda (seventeen, sex before marriage with Chinese boy), Bimal (nineteen, doing a diploma in Drama)." (Smith, 2000 p. 206)

This extract clearly aims to contrast the 'real problems', such as drug use, with other less important manners. However, putting both of these cases next to each other on the same level of significance, naturally comes out as satire towards the judgmental

society. At the same time, Smith mocks some of the 'traditions' according to which wearing mascara and baggy trousers is just as much denounced as having sex before marriage. Comparing doing a diploma in Drama to other issues that are in fact in collision with law, only successfully tops off the satirical enumeration.

Archie's system of making decisions appears to be rather satirical. Several times throughout the novel, Archie's indecisiveness is solved by tossing a coin. Ironically, by this act Archie makes more harm to himself, as also Childs comments: "*Archie tries to avoid making his own decisions by tossing coins, yet it is oddly the act of tossing the coin, rather than its outcome, that gets him shot: twice.*" (Childs, 2005 p. 211) Smith repeatedly made a point satirizing the way individuals attempt to control their future, which delivers the desired sense of irony of such acts.

The finale of the novel brings forward another portion of irony. Archie was shot to his leg by Millat, who however aimed at the Nazi Dr Perret. Yet, given the fact that Millat and Magid are identical twins, the witnesses were not able to identify the shooter.

"... and there is surely a demographic pattern to all those who wish to see the eyewitness statements that identified Magid as many times as Millat, the confusing transcripts, the videotape of uncooperating victim and families, a court case so impossible the judge gave in and issued four hundred hours community service to both twins, which they served, naturally, as gardeners in Joyce's new project, a huge millennial park by the banks of the Thames..."

Smith once again demonstrates the impossibility of predicting one's future by such simple tasks as identifying a shooter in a room full of people. No matter how the twins differed in so many aspects, they are again in the end brought together, denying the significance of all of their previous encounters.

Smith's narrative is full of humor and irony and the whole novel marks a significant millennial work in the terms of describing a multicultural society. Smith's novel generally ends on a positive note and celebrates multiculturalism through a depiction of on the level of personal characters and expands to the level of society, taking into consideration historical and ethnic background. The novel is commonly full of wit and functions as satirical mirror to the society.

Conclusion

The aim of the diploma thesis was to analyze works of Zadie Smith in the context of contemporary Anglo-American post-colonial environment. The main focus was brought into the themes and various elements of multiculturalism that are to be found in author's three recent novels *On Beauty*, *N-W* and mostly *White Teeth*. The thesis also concentrates on the genesis of post-colonial literature and briefly introduces other significant British authors that are engaged in the portrayal of social assimilation of hybrid multicultural individuals. All three novels were critically examined, having taken into account author's personal experience which was arguably crucial for Zadie Smith's literary development.

Initially, the Introduction shortly presents the overall topic of this thesis and explains the necessity to be fully aware of the historical events that led to the birth of multiculturalism as a result of colonial politics of nations, namely of Great Britain. Subsequently, the early chapters commented on the historical setting, and defined terminology that is later used in the analysis itself. The study of secondary sources offered a number of definitions for terms such as ethnicity, cultural diversity, hybridity, globalization, and multiculturalism, that formed the basis for further development of the diploma thesis. In order to display the frequency of the theme of multiculturalism in contemporary literary scene, the thesis also mentions other representatives of ethnic background, specifically a Pakistani-English author Hanif Kureishi, who wrote a novel *The Buddha of Suburbia* (1990), and an Indian-English author Salman Rushdie and his most significant novels *Midnight's Children* (1981) and *The Satanic Verses* (1988). Writers' mixed-race origin projected into the works and themes in both of the examples, and in Salman Rushdie's resulted also in declaring a fatwa upon the writer.

Finally, analyzing Zadie Smith's three novels provided evidence of presence of multicultural elements in author's works. At first, Smith's 2005 novel *On Beauty* was examined in terms of themes of multiculturalism that are present, and some of the key themes pervading throughout the novel were concentrated on. The issue of race, the metaphorical function of art, and further the multicultural environment the novel is set into, were in detail looked at. However, other matters reflected in this particular

novel, too. Due to Smith's academic experience abroad, specifically in the United States, the author easily related to the genre of campus novel, a genre that to a given extent provided inspiration for *On Beauty*; namely it was the novel David Lodge's *Changing Places* that bears similarities to Smith's novel. Yet, Smith's admiration of the English literary tradition does not end with David Lodge. E. M. Forster, a British author, a Cambridge graduate (just like Smith herself), became the object of Smith's homage, which she addresses in the Acknowledgements of *On Beauty*. Forster's novel *Howards End* became an inspiration to Smith in terms of its reference to social stratification; a theme Forster centers his novel around. In conclusion, the chapter analyzing *On Beauty* aims to recognize not only the multicultural elements this thesis mostly concentrates on, but also the influence of English literary tradition and its representatives on Zadie Smith. It is interesting to observe how Smith tackled the seemingly tricky task – that is to incorporate the reality of multicultural society of the 21st century into a traditional genre of campus novel, and topping it off with homage to Smith's favorite author.

Secondly, the chapter devoted to *N-W* (2012) brought focus into different aspects and occurring themes. As it is often referred to, this novel is considered to be nonconventional in terms of the narrative technique. A mild experiment from Smith's pen resulted into a novel that bears several evidently different approaches towards narration, arguably due to Smith's broad scale of literary inspiration, spanning from the aforesaid English literary tradition up to Rushdie's magical realism. The chapter further concentrates on the setting of the novel. As we know from Smith's biography, the northwest of London is the area the author grew up in and it therefore represents a good deal of her individual identity, just in the same manner as it is seen in the characters of *N-W*. On that account, the space and its metaphorical meanings are examined, linking together *N-W* and its inhabitants, for the environment mirrors and defines the characters, just as much as the characters define the environment.

The final part was concerned with Zadie Smith's novel *White Teeth* (2000) in relation to the overall discourse of the thesis. The crucial part focused on multiculturalism and its impact on the characters and given Zadie Smith's hybrid origin, it was arguably at least interesting to observe the lightness and humor with which she addressed this topic. Such approach of narration probably implies author's

personal attitude that is further confirmed by the presence of grotesque, irony and other elements that altogether prove the general statement that claims that the whole novel functions as a satire pointed at the society and that it questions the limits of its system of tolerance. Several other themes were further examined, such as ideological and fundamental tendencies that Zadie Smith refers to through the actions of the characters, whose motives for this kind of participation - such as racism, search for protection, or desire to belong - aptly pointed at the real threats the modern society have to be ready to tackle. In conclusion, there were several hypotheses centering around the novel *White Teeth* concerning multiculturalism, identity crisis, or elements of satire. The aim of the chapter was to analyze those problems, find examples to confirm such assumptions, and relate all of the aforesaid to the biographical facts from author's life and the historical setting. If taken into account also the fact that *White Teeth* was a debut novel that came from a pen of 24-year-old Zadie Smith, still a Cambridge student at the time, it is truly a remarkable literary performance that rightfully secured the author a place to bask in the glory at the break of the millennium.

In the end, the presence of multiculturalism pervades throughout all three novels of Zadie Smith. Different aspects of multiculturalism were taken under a detailed examination, and connections and links of those aspects were found to be related to the author's individual perspective arguably based on her own experience. The author severely builds her novels on a satirical layer, which precedes all of the following narrative. Another crucial element that Smith puts in favor, is the presence of paradox and coincidence. By using all of the just mentioned elements, Smith emphasizes the impossibility and pointlessness to predict one's future, for the fate always acts in twisted ways.

Finally, it is important to state that Zadie Smith is a significant author whose literary works reflect on the contemporary society, sometimes in a rather bitter tone, sometimes with light wit and sometimes with apt seriousness. Either way, the issues that Zadie Smith addresses are only the fruit borne with the assistance of our colonial ancestors and it is up to contemporary society to harvest it. The themes that were examined in this diploma thesis strive to correspond with the aim established in the beginning, however it is absolutely clear that such a complex author as Zadie Smith

offers much wider scope of themes to closely look at and therefore represents a great object for further critical analysis.

Resumé

Cílem této diplomové práce bylo analyzovat díla spisovatelky Zadie Smith v kontextu současného anglo-amerického postkoloniálního prostředí. Práce se zaměřuje zejména na témata a prvky multikulturalismu v autorčiných románech *On Beauty*, *N-W* a *White Teeth*. Práce se také věnuje vzniku postkoloniální literatury jako takové a ve stručnosti představuje další významné britské autory zabývající se společenskou asimilací jedinců, kteří se vyznačují hybridní a multikulturní charakteristikou. Všechny tři romány byly podrobeny kritickému zkoumání s ohledem na autorčiny vlastní zkušenosti, které zajisté přispěly k jejímu literárnímu vývoji.

Práce je uvedena celkovým diskursem a objasněním nutnosti přehledné znalosti historických událostí, které vedly ke genezi multikulturalismu jakožto výsledku koloniální politiky daných národů, v tomto případě Velké Británie. Následuje kapitola, která se zabývá historickým zařazením a definováním terminologie, která byla později použita k samotné analýze děl. Studium sekundárních zdrojů poskytlo řadu definicí pro termíny jako ethnicity, cultural diversity, hybridity, globalization a multiculturalism, které nadále posloužily jako základ pro následný vývoj diplomové práce. Četnost výskytu multikulturalismu jakožto tématu zavedeného pevně v současné literární scéně byla doložena příklady dalších britských spisovatelů, a to pakistánsko-anglickým autorem Hanifem Kureishi a jeho románem *The Buddha of Suburbia* (1990), a dále indicko-anglickým autorem Salmanem Rushdie a jeho díly *Midnight's Children* (1981) a *The Satanic Verses* (1988). Smíšený původ obou autorů se projevil v tématice jejich děl, a v případě Salmana Rushdieho dokonce vyústil ve vyhlášení tzv. fatvy.

Samotné analýzy děl Zadie Smithové doložily přítomnost prvků multikulturalismu ve všech třech románech. Román *On Beauty* z roku 2005 byl podroben bádání s ohledem k multikulturnímu prostředí. Nadále bylo prověřováno několik klíčových témat a prvků vztahujících se k multikulturní společnosti, jako například rasa, prostředí a v neposlední řadě také metaforická funkce umění, které prostupuje celým románem. Tato kapitola se ovšem také věnovala jiné oblasti, a to vlivu anglické literární tradice na tvorbu Zadie Smithové. Autorčina zahraniční akademická zkušenost na americké univerzitě Harvard byla zajisté nápomocnou při výstavbě románu žánru campus novel neboli univerzitního románu. Zadie Smithová

čerpala inspiraci nejen ze své vlastní praxe, ale také z již zmiňované anglické literární tradice, a to zejména z románu Davida Lodge *Changing Places*, v českém překladu *Hostující profesori*, který se stal autorce inspirací hlavně v satirickém vyobrazení univerzitního prostředí. David Lodge nebyl ale jediným autorem, který Zadie Smithovou v její tvorbě ovlivnil. E. M. Forster, britský spisovatel a stejně jako Zadie Smithová absolvent cambridgeské univerzity, byl přímo autorkou jmenován jako zdroj inspirace. Forsterův román *Howards End*, v českém překladu *Rodinné sídlo*, se stal pro autorku předlohou v oblasti problematiky společenského rozvrstvení, kterému se Forster v díle přímo věnuje. Závěrem je potřeba říct, že celá kapitola zabývající se románem *On Beauty* se snaží nejen o rozbor díla v kontextu multikulturního prostředí, ve kterém je zasazen, ale také zkoumá míru a způsob, jakým anglická literární tradice Zadie Smithovou ovlivnila. Je proto zajímavé pozorovat, jak se autorka propracovala tímto na první pohled složitým konceptem, kde se snažila zkombinovat tematiku multikulturalismu ve společnosti 21. století s tradičním žánrem univerzitního románu, a navíc celé dílo nechala prostoupit odkazem autorčina oblíbeného spisovatele.

Druhým dílem Zadie Smithové určeným k analýze byl román *N-W* z roku 2012, který v českém překladu vyšel pod názvem *Severozápad*. Tento román bývá často považován za ne zcela konvenční, a to z důvodu novodobého, místy možná až experimentálního způsobu narace. Tento malý experiment z pera Zadie Smithové se vyznačuje hned několika různými vyprávěcími způsoby, k čemuž pravděpodobně přispělo široké spektrum literárních podnětů najednou, počínaje zmiňovanou anglickou literární tradicí a konče Rushdieho tak typickým magickým realismem. Kapitola se dále věnuje prostředí, ve kterém se román odehrává, protože zde můžeme znovu najít spojitosti mezi románovým prostředím a reálnou zkušeností autorky. Severozápadní část Londýna, která představuje dodatečnou postavu tohoto románu, je totiž také oblastí, kde sama Smithová vyrostla, a pomohla tedy při utváření osobnosti autorky, stejně tak jak se tomu děje v díle *Severozápad*. Kapitola má tedy za cíl prověřit prostor a jeho metaforický význam, čímž je doloženo spojení mezi prostředím a jeho obyvateli na principu vzájemného ovlivňování: tedy, že tak jako prostředí definuje své obyvatele a jejich identitu, tak i obyvatelé zrcadlí dané prostředí.

Závěrečná část diplomové práce se zabývá románem z roku 2000 *White Teeth*, který vyšel v českém překladu jako *Bílé zuby*. Analýza tohoto díla se pohybuje zejména okolo problematiky multikulturalismu a jeho dopadu na románové postavy. Vzhledem k hybridnímu původu samotné Zadie Smithové bylo zajímavé pozorovat, jak se autorky osobní přístup, či stanovisko reflektuje v narativu. Celý dílem totiž prostupuje nepřehlédnutelné množství prvků humoru, ironie, grotesky a satiry, které dokládá obecný předpoklad, že celý román je mířen jako břitká satira proti společnosti a míní zpochybnit míru tolerance ve společnosti. V práci bylo probráno několik dalších témat, jako například fundamentalistické a ideologické tendence, na které Zadie Smithová poukazuje skrz činy svých postav a vysvětluje motivaci pro jejich participaci jako například zkušenost s rasismem, hledání ochrany, či touha zapadnout – tedy motivy, které břitce poukazují na reálné hrozby pro moderní společnost. V této kapitole bylo pracováno s několika předpoklady, kolem kterých se román vinul, zejména tedy multikulturalismus, krize identity, a také prvky satiry a humoru. Cílem kapitoly bylo analyzovat tyto předpoklady, vyhledat dokládající příklady a celý tento proces reflektovat vzhledem k biografickým faktům z autorčina života a historickému zasazení. Pokud navíc vezmeme v úvahu, že *Bílé zuby* představují prvotinu 24-leté Zadie Smithové, v té době ještě studentky univerzity v Cambridge, je dílo doopravdy nevšedním literárním úkazem, které právem zajistilo autorce místo na výsluní na přelomu milénia.

Přítomnost prvků multikulturalismu v dílech Zadie Smithové byla nalezena ve všech třech románech autorky, které byly podrobeny analýze z různých pohledů. S jistotou můžeme říci, že multikulturní svět, který je v románech vykreslen, je do jisté míry spojen s autorčinou osobní zkušeností, která stojí na nepopiratelné realitě vlastního smíšeného původu a přítomnosti multikulturního prostředí. Zadie Smithová znatelně staví svá díla na satiru, jejíž přítomnost dále vykresluje nadhled autorky. Jedním z opakujících se motivů nalezených v románech je také přítomnost paradoxu a náhody, což společně s celkovým satirickým, ironickým a groteskním ražením narativu pouze umocňuje pocit nemožnosti a zbytečnosti snahy o nasměrování naší budoucnosti, což i sama Zadie Smithová ilustruje komickou souhrou náhod, která dokonale znemožňuje jakékoli záměry svých románových postav.

Na závěr je důležité konstatovat, že Zadie Smithová představuje jedno z významných jmen působících na poli současné multikulturní literární scény. Její romány vykreslují problematiku někdy břitkou satirou, někdy s pomocí odlehčeného humoru a někdy s veškerou vážností. Ať už však autorka použila jakýkoliv z těchto způsobů, problematika prostupující díla Zadie Smithové jsou ve výsledku pouze plody práce našich koloniálních předků a je na současné společnosti, aby všechny tyto plody sklídila. Témata, kterým se diplomová práce věnovala, byla koncipována tak, aby co nejvíce korespondovala s cílem a obsahem práce. I přesto je ale více než jasné, že autorka takového formátu jako Zadie Smithová a její komplexní rozsah tvory nabízí řadu dalších témat k podrobnému zkoumání, a proto představuje optimální objekt pro další kritické analýzu.

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