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THE INFLUENCE OF IMMIGRATION ON GREAT BRITAIN

Bakalářská práce

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Podpis.....

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Introduction

Since Britain was once a part of the Roman empire, much later a head of its own British empire, people from the colonized territories have been coming to Britain to live there. Although Britain is no more the empire it used to be, the impact of its history has still been visible today as the British society is so much diverse and multicultural. New flows of immigrants come in hundreds of thousands annually so that their numbers have increased rapidly since the post-war times (more on that in the chapter on modern immigration).

Throughout the English (and of course later British) history, there have been many either invasive, or peaceful immigrational waves, and every such a wave has had an influence on the way Britain looks like today. There were Romans, Germanic tribes, Vikings, Normans, colonial inhabitants, but also others who came to the British Isles to start a new life, either as conquerors, as refugees, or only as people believing that the country would have offered them higher prosperity which is the case of the last six or seven decades mainly. They brought with them their culture, their language, customs, families, created a new background, and some of them slowly more or less assimilated with the original inhabitants. Often did they bring something new to the British culture that is now a part of British identity.

This thesis will examine the history of immigration in England and Britain with emphasis on modern immigration after 1945, especially on the Commonwealth immigration. For the first and second part of the thesis, the sources used will be historical and socio-cultural monographies like *An Immigration History of Britain: Multicultural Racism since 1800* by Panikos Panayi or Colin Holmes's *John Bull's Island, Immigration and British Society, 1871-1971*, as well as books more focused on migration like *Ethnicity and Globalization* by Stephen Castles or *Citizenship and Immigration in Post-war Britain, The Institutional Origins of a Multicultural Nation* by Randall Hansen.

In the third part of the thesis, I will focus on the British post-colonial literature as a whole with sources often centered around one particular author, but I will also take information from Elleke Boehmer's *Colonial & Postcolonial Literature* and other more introductory works on this kind of literature. This post-colonial outline will be followed by a literary analysis of Zadie Smith's books *NW*, *White Teeth* and *Swing Time*.

Key Concepts to Immigration

1.1 Immigration

Andrew Geddes and Peter Scholten present the term ‘immigration’ with the concept of international migration, that is, “movement by people across state borders that leads to permanent settlement [...] viewed by receiving states as immigration,”¹ this definition may be specified with an addition of “more than one year,” that for example Nikola Mirilovic provides.² Less neutral association in connection to post-war immigration to Britain is introduced by Robert Miles who mentions other terms like ‘race’ and ‘colored,’ proceeding from the situation of Commonwealth migration since *British Nationality Law*, but, as he himself adds, it does not correspond to the actual composition of new immigrational inflows as the nationalities of newcomers were not of colonial origin only³ (see the chapter on modern immigration). Thomas Sowell said on behalf of migration that it is not “merely a relocation of bodies but, more fundamentally, a redistribution of skills, experience, and other ‘human capital’ across the planet. It is the process of cultural change that has transformed nations and continents.”⁴

Crucial for this thesis and the topic of immigration in historical and cultural context is mainly the explanation of immigration by Robert Miles, for the Commonwealth immigration was the one that has brought the most visible changes into the ‘race’ composition of the British nation, being one of the reasons of today’s multicultural and multiracial Britain. Nevertheless, proceeding from the other two given definitions, the conclusion may be that invasions are parts of immigration and therefore they have the full right to be included in the thesis.

¹ Andrew Geddes, Peter Scholten, “Why do people move? Explain mobility and immobility,” in *The Politics of Migration and Immigration in Europe*, 2nd ed., (Thousand Oaks, California: Sage, 2016), n. p., e-book, Google Books.

² Nikola Mirilovic, “The Politics of Immigration: Dictatorship, Development, and Defense,” *Comparative Politics* 42, no. 3 (2010): 273, accessed July 11, 2020, www.jstor.org/stable/27822310.

³ Robert Miles, “Nationality, Citizenship, and Migration to Britain, 1945-1951,” *Journal of Law and Society* 16, no. 4 (Winter 1989): 426, accessed July 11, 2020, www.jstor.org/stable/1410329.

⁴ quoted in: Anthony J. Marsella, Erin Ring, “Human Migration and Immigration: An Overview,” in *Migration: Immigration and Emigration in International Perspective*, edited by Leonore Loeb Adler, Uwe Peter Gielen (Westport, Connecticut, London: Praeger, 2003), p. 9.

1.2 Invasion

Be it Caesar's incursion into Britain in the times of the Roman empire or the Norman conquest in the Middle Ages, these events were violent entries of armed units on a foreign land, therefore also labeled as 'invasions.' Regardless of the uncommon integrating of the term invasion into the context of immigration, this term must be included as many invasions led to long-term settlements and occupations, that is, to immigration.

1.3 Assimilation

Assimilation plays in immigration a role of crucial process of living up to the elements of different culture the immigrants have to face. As I will attempt to show later in the historical overview and in the literary analysis, sometimes, assimilation is more successful, another time less, depending on the occurring factors. The process of assimilation may be both absolute, as Catherine S. Ramírez says,⁵ and partial, as on the other hand Richard Alba and Victor Nee⁶ understand it.

1.4 Culture

Tristan Garcia distinguishes between two paradigms of one term, though both carrying different meaning- 'culture,' and 'cultures'- 'culture' is defined as a "distinctive characteristic of humanity, in a sense close to 'civilization,'" whereas 'cultures' are defined as "a plurality of human modes of organization."⁷ In contrary, Raymond Williams provides three general definitions of culture: the first one 'ideal,' the second one 'documentary,' being "the body of intellectual and imaginative work, in which, in a detailed way, human thought and experience are variously recorded," and

⁵ Catherine S. Ramírez, "Assimilation," in *Keywords for Latina/o Studies*, edited by Deborah R. Vargas, Nancy Raquel Mirabal, and Lawrence La Fountain-Stokes (New York: NYU Press, 2017), p. 14, accessed July 13, 2020.

www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1pwtbpj.8.

⁶ cited in: Richard Alba, Victor Nee, "Assimilation," in *An Introduction to Immigrant Incorporation Studies: European Perspectives*, edited by Marco Martiniello and Jan Rath (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2014), p. 56, accessed July 13, 2020. doi:10.2307/j.ctt128780b.6.

⁷ Tristan Garcia, Mark Allan Ohm, and Jon Cogburn. "Culture," in *Form and Object: A Treatise on Things* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), p. 279, accessed July 13, 2020, www.jstor.org/stable/10.3366/j.ctt1g0b74h.19.

the last 'social' one, "in which culture is a description of a particular way of life, which expresses certain meanings and values not only in art and learning but also in institutions and ordinary behavior."⁸ Despite much more developed explanation of Williams's understanding of culture, Garcia's brief definitions are included in those, and vice versa, and all lead to a simpler explanation of culture as a complex element of human society that differs according to its organization, including its all manifestations like art, language, literature and others.

Adaptation to culture is an inseparable part of the processes of assimilation and immigration during which it comes about their intermingling and mutual influence, regardless if speaking about the Vikings in the early Middle Ages or the Commonwealth immigrants in the modern history.

1.5 National identity

Joseph Theodoor Leerssen and Menno Spiering submit the fact that although national identity had long been considered the condition for shaping the "social, historical, and political existence," later, it began to be seen rather "as a product of history and cultural activity."⁹

Ian O'Flynn goes deeper to the core of what national identity actually is. He divides national identity (subordinated to the term 'nationalism') into civic and ethnic identity. Civic national identity represents political identity, whereas ethnic (common) identity rather brings "a sense of belonging of the blood-and-soil type," but often only for "those who are born into the group, or who are willing to fully assimilate to its cultural demands [...],"¹⁰ and in our context, that is, in the context of immigration, the last named is also the one that we are most interested in.

⁸ Raymond Williams, "The Analysis of Culture," in *Culture: Critical Concepts in Sociology, Volume II*, edited by Chris Jenks (New York, Oxon: Routledge, 2003), p. 28.

⁹ J. Th. Leerssen, Menno Spiering, "Introduction," in *National Identity- Symbol and Representation: Yearbook of European Studies 4*, edited by J. Th. Leerssen, Menno Spiering (Amsterdam-Atlanta: Rodopi, 1991), p. vii.

¹⁰ Ian O'Flynn, "Deliberating National Identity and Citizenship," in *Deliberative Democracy and Divided Societies* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), p. 56, accessed July 14, 2020. www.jstor.org/stable/10.3366/j.ctt1r21n2.7.

1. Immigration in the Historical Context

Many books have been written on the account of immigration to Britain, however, majority of it refers to the last three or two centuries only (inclusive of the 21st century) with stress on the Commonwealth immigration. For the very beginning of immigration to Britain thus we must go back to the beginning of the history of the British Isles' inhabitants themselves, and here I borrowed a famous, often cited sentence from Winder's *Bloody Foreigners*: "[...] we are all immigrants: it simply depends how far back you go."¹¹

Though a non-academic,¹² Robert Winder summarized in his *Bloody Foreigners: The Story of Immigration to Britain* British immigration history, including also the invasion periods from the times of Caesar to the Norman conquest. Other authors like William Cunningham, Colin Holmes or Panikos Panayi offer only a brief early immigration overview, otherwise mostly concentrating on the modern immigration.¹³

Based on the summary of the early immigration made by the authors mentioned above, we may assume that the nations of Celts, Romans and Germanic tribes of Angles and Saxons were the immigrants building up the origins of England.

What all these early immigration waves brought, was, besides new settlers, blending of cultures and their constant influence, and in the case of Viking raids and settlements, it was no different, nor after the Norman conquest which had a profound influence on the country in the way of bringing a lot of changes into the state administration and other areas, to which especially William Cunningham pays a really detailed attention.¹⁴

After the Norman conquest, we do not talk about invasions anymore for since then, immigration is of non-violent character, built up first by Jews, traders, craftsmen, artisans like weavers or fullers, clerks, miners and others,¹⁵ later, how Panayi writes,

¹¹ Robert Winder, "Acknowledgments," in *Bloody Foreigners: The Story of Immigration to Britain* (London: Hachette Digital; Little, Brown Book Group, 2004), n. p., e-book, Google Books.

¹² Panikos Panayi, "Preface," in *An Immigration History of Britain: Multicultural Racism since 1800* (New York, Oxon: Routledge, 2014), p. viii.

¹³ Panayi, *An Immigration History of Britain*, Robert Winder, *Bloody Foreigners*, William Cunningham, *Alien Immigrants to England* (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1897), and Colin Holmes, *John Bull's Island, Immigration and British Society, 1871-1971* (New York, Oxon: Routledge, 2016).

¹⁴ Cunningham, *Alien Immigrants to England*, especially p. 42-62.

¹⁵ Holmes, *John Bull's Island*, p. 5, Cunningham, *Alien Immigrants to England*, p. 36- 38, Panayi, *An Immigration History of Britain*, p. 12.

from the 16th to the 17th century by religious, economic and slave migrants, and since then until the beginning of the 19th century mainly by economic migrants.¹⁶ Holmes introduces us closer to these slaves immigrants from Africa or West Indies¹⁷ who can be considered the first Commonwealth immigrants, even though only undeliberately as slaves and servants and therefore not in the modern understanding of Commonwealth immigration.

The multiple expulsions of Jews or the Bartholomew's Night in 1572 leading to French refugees searching for shelter in Eastern English towns¹⁸ indicate the hostility and xenophobia some of the incomers of various origin had to face throughout the centuries.

Since the 18th century, new immigration waves had brought in Irish migrants, French refugees, political refugees, or Russian, German and Polish Jews due to which the Alien Act of 1905 was released, restricting the entry to foreigners.¹⁹ During the Second World War followed others, this time war immigrants.

¹⁶ Panayi, *An Immigration History of Britain*, p. 12.

¹⁷ Holmes, *John Bull's Island*, p. 6-10.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 5-6.

¹⁹ More on summarized introduction to the history of the late 19th century immigration in Holmes, *John Bull's Island*, p. 11-16, also Panayi, *An Immigration History of Britain*, p. 20-23.

2. Modern Immigration after 1945

Shortly after The Second World War, Britain was still strictly a European-raced country, and, how Randall Hansen claims, with only about 30,000 people of different skin color.²⁰ The situation started to change with the Commonwealth immigration, though not well accepted by British public keeping its hostile anti-immigration attitude. Hansen comments on this immigration, saying it was “almost entirely unwanted,”²¹ but organized by the government to “fill the labor vacancies”²² produced by the shortage of laborers in the post-war years.

The British government was not restricted only to the Commonwealth immigrants, Irish and other European workers were welcomed, as well- Stephen Castles and others use for them the term ‘European voluntary workers,’ recruited to be allotted a specific job in the industry.²³

Despite the need of both European and Commonwealth migrant workers at the British labor market to reconstruct the post-war industry, still were the immigrants not meant to settle permanently. That was proved by the government policy restrictions in 1962 after the existing uncontrolled Commonwealth immigration had been discontinued.²⁴

As shown in the previous chapter, Britain had already been experiencing immigration for a significant time, and the modern history therefore became essential in applying new entry limitations or permissions. The year 1962 thus was not the first time the government stepped in vigorously in the issue of immigration. It was preceded most importantly by the restrictions of the Alien Act of 1905 and by the British Nationality Act in 1948, allowing the British Empire subjects, that is, the Commonwealth citizens, to “live anywhere across the empire,” as Ken Olende puts

²⁰ Hansen, *Citizenship and Immigration*, p. 3.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 8.

²³ Stephen Castles, “Western Europe: The ‘Guests’ Who Stayed: The Function of Labour Migration,” in *Ethnicity and Globalization* (London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage, 2000), p. 30.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

it.²⁵ So did the colonial inhabitants get the permission for a long-term settlement in Britain, making the situation result in the so-called Commonwealth immigration.

In 1950s and 1960s, the Commonwealth immigration was in full swing. The symbol of this immigration became the *SS Windrush* with Jamaican immigrants, arriving in June 1948,²⁶ nevertheless, despite the idea of ‘mother country’ that might have seemed promising and caring to the newcomers, some of them would surely regularly meet with unexpected obstacles, from one side definitely created by the government as mentioned earlier, that would have always gradually limited their entry through new restrictions like the Immigration Act 1971, finally banning the Commonwealth citizens from settling in Britain,²⁷ or also by protests and public performances, like that one of Enoch Powell’s known as *River of Blood Speech*,²⁸ that for example Amy Whipple writes about.

The series of restrictions put on the immigrants throughout the years together with permanently hostile environment have caused, according to Olende, the so-called Windrush Scandal quite recently with consequences heavily impacting on the Windrush Generation, that is, the Caribbean immigrants arriving between 1948 and 1971, in 2014 accused by the government of being in Britain illegally on the base of lack of evidence it is not so, being dismissed, refused to be provided health care, or even deported.²⁹

Amelia Gentleman says in her book *The Windrush Betrayal: Exposing the Hostile Environment* that “the Windrush Scandal revealed a number of unpalatable truths about Britain.”³⁰ How strictly against immigration the nation still is, or at least the nation represented by its government, and that despite the fact that Britain is strongly multicultural today, or how unthankful some people are to the Windrush Generation they invited during the restoration, be it the government or the press creating hostility

²⁵ The acts and citation from: Ken Olende, “The ‘Hostile Environment’ for Immigrants: The Windrush Scandal and Resistance,” in *Resist the Punitive State: Grassroots Struggles Across Welfare, Housing, Education and Prisons*, edited by Emily Luise Hart, Joe Greener, and Rich Moth, (London: Pluto Press, 2020), p. 150, accessed July 30, 2020, doi:10.2307/j.ctvs09qpz.12.

²⁶ Panayi, *An Immigration History of Britain*, p. 60.

²⁷ Olende, “The ‘Hostile Environment,’” p. 150.

²⁸ Amy Whipple, “Revisiting the ‘Rivers of Blood’ Controversy: Letters to Enoch Powell,” *Journal of British Studies* 48, no. 3 (2009): 717-35, accessed August 15, 2020. www.jstor.org/stable/27752577.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 152 and 154.

³⁰ Amelia Gentleman, “Introduction,” in *The Windrush Betrayal: Exposing the Hostile Environment* (London: Guardian Faber, 2019), n. p., Kindle.

against all new immigrants, as Panayi adds,³¹ and many other ‘dark sides’ Britain still has, leading us to the realization that ‘multiculturalism’ does not necessarily mean ‘acceptance.’

Although the Commonwealth immigration is one of the immigration waves that formed the British nation into its today’s multiracial society, there were other arrivals that deserve our attention. Similarly like before the war, there were often immigration waves called up by authoritative regimes or religious persecutions, Panayi gives us precise numbers of 12,000 Greek Cypriots, 15,000 Vietnamese, and the notion of others from Chile, Iran, Sri Lanka, the Soviet Union or Eastern Europe before and after the disintegration of the Soviet Union in the 1990s.³² An important document that Panayi mentions is the White Paper *Safe Borders, Safe Haven* released in 2002, handling about the problematics of migration, asylum seekers, and refugees in the first place, attracted, beside other things, by the free labor movement.³³

Alan Riley and Francis Ghilès consider the current European immigration as one of the causes for Brexit and the increase of hostility towards the immigrants arriving since 2004,³⁴ just as Tawhida Ahmed and Elaine Fahey do, stating that the EU membership has been seen by some as “unfairly providing access to British goods to foreigners who were not seen as British, or as entitled.”³⁵ To which extent it is true or not is disputable, but again is it a reason for a judgment that Britain has not quite come to terms with immigration yet.

³¹ Panayi, *An Immigration History of Britain*, p. 26.

³² Panayi, *An Immigration History of Britain*, p. 56-57.

³³ *Ibid.*, 64.

³⁴ Alan Riley, Francis Ghilès, “BREXIT: Causes and Consequences,” in *notes internationals* 159 (October 2016), p. 1-3, CIDOB.

³⁵ Tawhida Ahmed, Elaine Fahey, eds., “Introduction,” in *On Brexit: Law, Justices and Injustices* (Cheltenham, UK, Northampton, USA: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2019), p. 3, e-book, Google Books.

3. Immigration and Literature

The influence immigration has had on the British society has been visible in many areas of British life, be it the British cuisine, the post-war industry, economy or culture, often without us noticing. Besides all these things, literature might be understood as such a spokesperson for the rest of people, often immigrants or descendants of immigrants who cannot speak on their own.

Literature, regardless its closer characterization, is a product of culture, and as such it can bring a numerous amount of information about other cultural aspects by which the process of writing or its content were foregone or accompanied. Therefore, given the background of postcolonial literature, it may be possible to say that what it brings is a closer look at what is behind the consequences of that colonialism, be it an impact on the whole society or just on an individual. Elleke Boehmer emphasizes that postcolonial literature is not strictly the one following the end of colonialism, but the one that “critically or subversively scrutinizes the colonial relationship,” and she develops this idea with pro-colonization “discourses” that are attacked by postcolonial authors- “myths of power,” “race classifications,” and “the imagery of subordination.”³⁶

For this thesis’ literary analysis in the final part is focused on works written after the Second World War, I decided to stick to Boehmer, and to be using the more accurate attribute ‘post-colonial’ that she assigns to this period.³⁷

As the subsequent literary analysis’ books concern immigrants or descendants of immigrants with Jamaican, South Asian or African origin in most of the cases, this ‘British post-colonial literature’ introduction will be no exception and it will be centered around post-colonial literature produced by authors though living in Britain, but having that background.

³⁶ Elleke Boehmer, “Introduction,” in *Colonial & Postcolonial Literature*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 3.

³⁷ Ibid.

3.1. British Post-colonial Literature

Negative experiences of refusal, hate, discrimination or loneliness resulting from the hostile environment of the ‘mother country’ that some of the Commonwealth immigrants experienced served as a source to those who decided to create upon it, whether autobiographical accounts, or novels which both fulfill today a role of a fully-fledged component of modern British writing. However, not all British authors or authors of other nationalities with immigrational background based their story on these experiences, some of them preferring storylines set rather into their original environment, but always with a hint of immigration experiences they got in Britain.

Some post-colonial authors published relatively early in the first years of the Commonwealth immigration. To those belongs also a Trinidadian V. S. Naipaul, introducing the reader both positive and negative experiences with his stay in Britain. Elleke Boehmer claims that “rather than a confrontation of extremes,” in his case, it was “an eventual blending, and remoulding, on both sides.”³⁸ This is what she says on behalf of *The Enigma of Arrival* (1987), his autobiographical novel. But this sequence that Boehmer mentions is only one phase of his assimilating, the later and happier one. Naipaul does not accept Britain and the British as an ideal country and ideal citizens. For instance, he calls Oxford where he studied “a very second-rate provincial university,”³⁹ “an alien world,”⁴⁰ and his life in Britain during his studies and stay in London as “savorless, and [...] mean,”⁴¹ as he once said. Only during his settlement in Wiltshire, he discovers the kinder face of Britain.⁴² His other, earlier released novel *House for Mr Biswas* (1961) may be considered as his “most prodigious piece of imaginative writing.”⁴³ Set in the colonial surroundings of Trinidad but viewed from the postcolonial perspective, the main protagonist symbolizes the oppression of one culture by the other, more powerful one.

³⁸ Boehmer, *Colonial & Postcolonial Literature*, p. 166.

³⁹ James Atlas, “V. S. vs the Rest: The Fierce and Enigmatic V. S. Naipaul Grants a Rare Interview in London,” in *Conversations with V. S. Naipaul*, edited by Feroza Jussawalla (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1997), p. 99.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 102.

⁴³ Charles Michener, “The Dark Visions of V. S. Naipaul,” in *Conversations with V. S. Naipaul*, edited by Feroza Jussawalla (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi), p. 68.

Sudanese author Tayeb Salih is not typically seen as a British post-colonial author, probably because he published in Arabian and not in English as his colleagues did, nevertheless, he left for London in a relatively early age, there developing his writing career in the sixties, publishing his most famous works *The Wedding of Zein* or *The Season of Migration to the North* (1968).⁴⁴ The importance of his works lies in his depicted metaphorical fight of the post-colonial West with barbarism, both put into the character of Mustafa Sa'eed in the latter novel who represents, as the author himself comments on him, this "barbaric conquest of modern culture."⁴⁵ Mustafa fails in the western world and after his comeback to his native Arabic village, as well. *The Season of Migration to the North* might be, therefore, understood as a comparison of those two cultures where none of them is 'saving.'

In contrast with Salih stands Buchi Emecheta, one of the African women writers that grew up in their colonial homeland but later settled in England. Her works, especially *In the Ditch* (1972) and *Second-class Citizen* (1974), depict the autobiographical story of an emancipated woman living on the fringes of British society, struggling with racism, disillusion and alienation from both English and Nigerian identity, with elements characteristic for example for Phillips's protagonists. Her heroines are embodiments of emancipation and resistance, qualities that Salih's protagonist Mustafa misses after losing the fight over his life.

Salman Rushdie, the author of the provoking work *The Satanic Verses* (1988), celebrates through his sometimes controversial words and books one's immigration background and the "hybridity, impurity, intermingling, [and] the transformation" it brings.⁴⁶ He is famous for the religion and political controversy he has awoken, but he may, as well, arouse interest with his "formally inventive, stylistically exciting, and

⁴⁴ Constance E. Berkeley, Osman Hassan Ahmed, trans. and eds., "Notes on the Contributors," in *Tayeb Salih Speaks: Four Interviews with the Sudanese Novelist* (New York: New York University, 1979), p. 1.

⁴⁵ "Dialogue about Everything," in *Tayeb Salih Speaks: Four Interviews with the Sudanese Novelist*, translated and edited by Constance E. Berkeley, Osman Hassan Ahmed (New York: New York University, 1979), p. 21.

⁴⁶ Salman Rushdie, "In Good Faith," in *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-1991* (London: Granta/Penguin, 1991), p. 394, cited in: Philip Engblom, "A Multitude of Voices, Carnivalization and Dialogicality in the Novels of Salman Rushdie," in *Reading Rushdie: Perspectives on the Fiction of Salman Rushdie*, edited by M. D. Fletcher (Amsterdam-Atlanta: Rodopi B. V., 1994), p. 293.

thematically serious”⁴⁷ writing, as Philip Engblom argues. His clear postcolonial view is represented, for instance, in his breakthrough novel *Midnight's Children* (1981), focusing on the independence of India and its postcolonial development, or overall in magic realism he uses and which itself, stated by Stephen Slemon, “can be seen to provide a positive and liberating response to the codes of imperial history [...]”⁴⁸

Very different kind of fiction than one will find within Salman Rushdie's novels and in other prominent Indian writers' works produces an Indian post-colonial author and critic Amit Chaudhuri. His post-colonialism manifests itself otherwise than through magic realism, if I may use the quote by Saikat Majumdar, it is shown in his “complexity of his cultural sensitivity, one that is replete with a postcolonial hybridity.”⁴⁹ Chaudhuri's Indian background is obvious from his novels which, though written in English, treat stories of Indians with frequent setting of Calcutta or Bombay like in *A Strange and Sublime Address* (1991), or of London and Oxford where he himself spent some years of his life.⁵⁰

As ‘more British’ than the previous authors could be regarded Hanif Kureishi, a Pakistani British living in London all his life,⁵¹ using it as the scene for his narratives. The author of *Buddha of Suburbia* (1990) or of the screenplays to *My Beautiful Laundrette* (1985) and *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid* (1987) addresses the topic of multiculturalism, homosexuality, and the postcolonial issues like religion or racism, refusing, along with Stuart Hall, the unity and ‘positivity’ of black British community, as James Procter argues in his *Dwelling Places*.⁵² In *Buddha of Suburbia*, the story is set in the middle of historical events forming the mid-1970s, providing the reader with historical context including, according to Philip Tew, Englishness, which, depending,

⁴⁷ Philip Engblom, “A Multitude of Voices, Carnivalization and Diallogicality in the Novels of Salman Rushdie,” in *Reading Rushdie: Perspectives on the Fiction of Salman Rushdie*, edited by M. D. Fletcher (Amsterdam-Atlanta: Rodopi B. V., 1994), p. 293.

⁴⁸ Stephen Slemon, “Magic realism as post-colonial discourse,” in *Canadian Literature* 116 (1988), p. 21.

⁴⁹ Saikat Majumdar, “Of that Time, of that Place: Modernism and Indian English Fiction,” in *The Novels of Amit Chaudhuri: An Exploration in the Alternative Tradition*, edited by Sheo Bhushan Shukla, Anu Shukla (New Delhi: Sarup & Sons, 2004), p. 28.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

⁵¹ Kenneth C. Kaleta, “Liquid Windows: Kureishi as Storyteller,” in *Hanif Kureishi: Postcolonial Storyteller* (Austin: The University of Texas Press, 1998), n. p., e-book, Google Books.

⁵² James Procter, “Introduction,” in *Dwelling Places: Postwar black British writing* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), p. 7.

too, on foreign, immigrant factors produced by the suburbia, built up the multicultural and multiracial Britishness.⁵³

Retracing the path of her origin in contemporary black British writing is what also a Nigerian Londoner Bernardine Evaristo does. In her first novel *Lara* (1997), she places the woman protagonist of the same descent to her hometown London, then looks back retrospectively at her ancestors' past throughout the world. As a woman writer, she concentrates her works on women, as an immigrant, she makes them come from an immigration background. Very specific is Evaristo's fusion of poetry and prose in the novel *The Emperor's Babe* (2001) as well as the historical phenomenon she has chosen for this novel, that is, the presence of Afro-Caribbeans in London two thousand years ago. Though her focus is laid mainly on the immigrants' experiences, she does not leave out the topic of 'Englishness' and 'patriotism,' as Laurence Raw mentions in her biography.⁵⁴

Andrea Levy introduces in her first novel *Every Light in the House Burnin'* (1994) a Jamaican-English heroine Angela, very similar to a young girl Irie of the same descent in *White Teeth*. On the other hand, Kadija George Sesay compares her to Evaristo's Nigerian-English Lara,⁵⁵ but all three girls have in common their struggling with self-identity and attempts to fit into the 'normal' British society. Another Levy's novel *Small Island* (2004).

Caryl Phillips belongs for his scope and origin to the same category of post-colonial writers like Kureishi or Evaristo. Raised in Britain, though born in the Caribbean,⁵⁶ the motifs in his works are more or less the same as in their books- otherness, self-identity and national identity, belonging or unbelonging, all that enriched with disappointment and disillusion after the passage has been made, be it in his novels *The Final Passage* (1985), *Crossing the River* (1993), or in *A Distant Shore* (2003). Jopi Nyman provides a conclusion in his *Displacement, Memory, and Travel in Contemporary Migrant Writing* based on the migrant experiences in immigrant's narratives, capturing aptly

⁵³ Philip Tew, "Contemporary Britishness: Who, What, Why and When?" in *The Contemporary British Novel* (London-New York: Continuum, 2004), p. 31.

⁵⁴ Laurence Raw, "Foreword," in *Fiction Unbound: Bernardine Evaristo*, by Sebnem Toplu (aut.) (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011), p. xi.

⁵⁵ Kadija George Sesay, "Transformations within the Black British Novel," in *Black British Writing*, edited by R. Victoria Arana and Lauri Ramey (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 102.

⁵⁶ Renée T. Schatteman, ed., "Introduction," in *Conversations with Caryl Phillips* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2009), p. ix.

especially the substance of Phillips's novels by a statement that "while some narratives of the migrant experience represent their protagonists as individuals and suggest that the border crossings may lead to a better life and a possible reconstruction of home, many narratives display no such solutions but consider them utopian."⁵⁷ Some of Smith's characters come to such ascertainties, as well, as will be shown later.

Monica Ali is sometimes compared with her chronicle of a Bangladeshi family portrayed in her debut novel *Brick Lane* (2003) to Zadie Smith, publishing also a bildungsroman *White Teeth* three years earlier, experiencing an unusual success with it as Monica Ali with this novel.⁵⁸ But apart from Smith's north-western Willesden, Ali sets the family narrative into an East End street in East London with a Bengali immigrant community where the main woman protagonist gradually grows into a liberated person, though founding herself in a "sudden forced isolation in a culture very different from her own," which is, however, "something many an immigrant can identify with," how Sunita Sinha reminds.⁵⁹

For some of the authors provided but also left out because there are many of them, in this post-colonial 'Black British writing' overview are 'only' descents of immigrants settled in Britain, they did not experience the 'real' independence post-colonialism of the authors like Naipaul, Rushdie, Chaudhuri or Salih. Their writing is rather a comeback to the roots, introducing of the other, 'foreign' side of their mixed national identity. There are differences in the ways of manifesting it when comparing these two groups- the older, 'experienced' generation, which, coming out of the works mentioned, often prefers the setting of their native land, and the younger, 'descendants of immigrants' generation, which reckons Britain as their mother country, lightly entwined with other cultures, occupying themselves often, but not always, with questions on their identity and acceptance in the land they call home. Of course, both generations' scopes may overlap, like in *Lara* or in Smith's *White Teeth*. Zadie Smith will be introduced and analyzed more closely in the following chapter.

⁵⁷ Jopi Nyman, "Refugees and Displaced Migrants: Borders and Transitive Identities in Jamal Mahjoub's "Lat Thoughts on the Medusa,"" in *Displacement, Memory, and Travel in Contemporary Migrant Writing* (Leiden: Brill, 2017), p. 75.

⁵⁸ Sunita Sinha, "The Immigrants' Voyage' in Monica Ali's *Brick Lane*," in *Post-colonial Women Writers: New Perspectives* (New Delhi: Atlantic, 2008), p. 232.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 236.

3.2. Zadie Smith and the Immigration Background in Her Works *White Teeth*, *NW* and *Swing Time*

For the purposes of this thesis, I have decided to analyze three Zadie Smith's books whose narratives are situated in the area of north-west London, a place sought-after by immigrants of a whole range of nationalities.

Zadie Smith has been one of the most influencing immigrant authors of second generation since *White Teeth* (2000), after its releasing being classified, as Claire Squires explains,⁶⁰ as “a multicultural writer” on the grounds of both her ethnic origin and her story themes. She has produced another four novels during the following years, all of them closely touching the immigration and race topic as usual for post-colonial literature Smith has become part of. Besides that, she has published several collections of short stories and essays, among others *Feel Free* (2018), *Grand Union* (2019), or *Intimations* (2020).

The three books being the subject of this analysis are set in north-western London where Smith was growing up in a multi-racial Jamaican-English family, attending the local state schools, and after achieving success with *White Teeth* keeping on staying in the north-western area of London in Kilburn.⁶¹ This setting is present in the analyzed books, particularly the north-western district of Willesden in case of *White Teeth* and *NW* (2012) and Kilburn in *Swing Time* (2016).

In her books, ground drawbacks of modern society like racism, social differences, moral fall, or apathy but also other less or more positive aspects, for instance the present cultural diversity of London in which the protagonists themselves partake, examining their own origin and both national and personal identity, are uncovered and pointed out. An exclusive position is obtained by Jamaican background which is to be found in each of the novels as one of the identities of some of the main protagonists.

White Teeth is a generation novel handling about three families, primarily two families of two war veterans and friends - an Englishman Archibald Jones and a Bangladeshi Samad Iqbal, confronted with the Jewish-English family of the Chalfens with the main time span from 1945 to 1999.

⁶⁰ Claire Squires, “The Novelist,” in *Zadie Smith's White Teeth: A Reader's Guide* (New York-London: Continuum, 20002), p. 15.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

In *NW*, three narratives from the 21st century are concentrated around four locals- Leah Hanwell, Keisha alias Natalie Blake, and Nathan Bogle, mostly connected by friendship and common childhood with Felix being an element breaking this connection.

Smith's last novel *Swing Time*, with time roughly corresponding to the life of the author, concentrates on two best friends' narrated story from their common childhood to their separated adulthood, with one girl becoming dancer, and the other one, the narrator, being more observant, getting further than she could ever have imagined.

All three novels are examples of post-colonial literature of new, young generation of writers with immigration past of their families, making alive their own experiences of searching for self-identity and self-acceptance, dealing with prejudice and denial even in such multi-cultural world that London is. In this essay, I will attempt to examine the elements creating and accompanying the background rising from these people's otherness.

3.2.1. Setting as a cultural crossroads and as a life (un)predeterminer

3.2.1.1. *White Teeth*

Kadija George Sesay presents Homi Bhabha's *Re-inventing Britain's* theory of a so-called 'third space,' characterized by formation and re-formation of different British identities "in the collaborations and fusions occurring in the spaces in between cultures."⁶² *White Teeth's* multicultural and multiracial north-west London is exactly that 'third space,' that 'culture crossroads.' Not that *NW* or *Swing Time* lack that cultural background, but in *White Teeth* it protrudes more intensively via the characteristic language and the portrayal of three generations of British-Commonwealth families, one having origins in Britain and Jamaica, one in Bangladesh and Bengal, all complemented by the Jewish Chalfens.

White Teeth's setting is an area own and well known to the author, portraying lives of her protagonists which she herself might have lived. As a local, Smith attended Hampstead Comprehensive School in Willesden Green which, according to Claire Squires, mirrors the local demographic composition, and it serves as an inspiration for

⁶² Sesay, "Transformations," p. 99-100.

Glenard Oak in *White Teeth*.⁶³ But north-west London and its multi-nationality are not Willesden or Willesden Green only, as proved in *NW*, after all. In *White Teeth*, one finds himself in various streets of this London area while following the characters paths- at Cricklewood Broadway, encountering Mo Hussein-Ishmael running a halal butcher shop, in Hendon where Archie Jones inhabited his semidetached house with his Italian wife Ophelia before marrying Clara and where Samad Iqbal moved in with his new young bride Alsana Begum, or in Lambeth, home of Clara and her family after leaving Jamaica. This is but a short list of places in the multicultural north-west London which the reader is being introduced to.

One of the significant differences the reader may notice when reading both *NW* and *White Teeth* that the author lent this novel is the general paradoxical positiveness emitted by London streets and corners. Here London assumes the overall ‘tone’ of the narrated storylines and author’s language, corresponding to its inhabitants, opposing the narrator’s direct critique. The beginning of Archie’s narrative may serve well as an example:

“Squeezed between an almighty concrete cinema complex at one end and a giant intersection at the other, Cricklewood was no kind of place. It was not a place a man came to die. It was a place a man came to in order to go other places via the A41. [...] It made sense that Archibald should die on this nasty urban street where he had ended up, [...]. He wanted it to be perfectly quiet and still, [...] before the shops opened. [...] He watched them [pigeons] watch the slow and steady draining of blood from the dead things-chickens, cows, sheep- hanging on their hooks like coats around the shop.”⁶⁴

It is a section from the first chapter when Archie is attempting to commit a suicide, but despite this fact, despite his location in a street where a slaughterhouse of a Muslim Mo Hussein-Ishmael, in these hours fully active, is situated, the narrator’s ironical tone pointing out the function of this street as a linking-up to A41 or the flock of pigeons gathering on the building signifies that Archie’s end may not be so close, and makes so the situation comical, deflecting the effect the street would otherwise possibly have.

⁶³ Squires, *Zadie Smith’s White Teeth*, p. 8.

⁶⁴ Zadie Smith, *White Teeth* (New York: Vintage, 2001), p. 4.

Nevertheless, in contrary to the distanced comicality with which the author approaches the topic, and taking in account the broader context of British history in the second half of the 20th century, Britain was founding itself under the tough leadership of Margaret Thatcher in the 1980s, and the British society was deeply changed and divided, as Philip Tew and Richard Lane say to the context of contemporary fiction on this period.⁶⁵ The dissatisfaction was not only due to the Windrush immigrants, but they were definitely one of its causes, as the thesis explains earlier, however, Smith does not give weight to it in this novel. She rather focuses on “the ethnic plurality of London,”⁶⁶ and, as Dominic Head wrote, she “begins to find some kind of resolution in the intricate, but satisfying plot” making it the answer to the “complex problem of post-colonial identity and national affiliation [...]”⁶⁷ similarly like Kureishi in *The Buddha of Suburbia* and in *Black Album* and other post-colonial, second generation writers.

3.2.1.2. *NW*

Again, London is the foremost location of this narrative, with descriptions sometimes precise in the way of making the reader see that London himself, maybe with a clear image if he knew it by living there. When looking, for instance, at the passage in *NW* describing Natalie heading to Kilburn, beginning with

“[...]. [She] walked quickly away from Queen’s Park. She passed into where Willesden meets Kilburn. Went by Leah’s place, then Caldwell. In the old flat the kitchen window was open. A duvet cover- decorated with the logo of a football club- had been hung over the balcony to dry. Without looking where she was going, she began climbing the hill that begins in Willesden and ends in Highgate. [...]”⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Richard J. Lane, Philip Tew, “Urban Thematics: Introduction,” in *Contemporary British Fiction*, edited by Richard J. Lane, Rod Mengham and Philip Tew (Cambridge, UK-Malden, US: Polity Press, 2003), p. 71.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Dominic Head, “Zadie Smith’s *White Teeth*: Multiculturalism for the Millennium,” in *Contemporary British Fiction*, edited by Richard J. Lane, Rod Mengham and Philip Tew (Cambridge, UK-Malden, US: Polity Press, 2003), p. 107.

⁶⁸ Zadie Smith, *NW* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 2012), p. 263.

it might create an impression of London playing its own part in the book, and in the following example where the environment ‘speaks’ to Natalie, reminding her where she came from, the feeling of London living its own life is even much stronger:

“How have you lived your whole life in these streets and never known me? [...] What made you think you were exempt? [...] I am older than this place! [...] Spirit of these beech woods and phone boxes, hedgerows and lamp posts, freshwater springs and tube stations, ancient yews and one-stop shops, grazing land and 3D multiplexes. Unruly England of the real life, the animal life!”⁶⁹

Of course, the whole novel contains minority of London’s descriptions for the benefit of the plot as common for novels, after all, but what I wish to emphasize is the role of London in this book where characters are ‘actors’ playing in agreement with the city, otherwise being consumed, just like Nathan, Leah, Natalie, and Felix are to be. Neither in *White Teeth*, nor in *Swing Time* is such impression achieved.

Engelbert Thaler counts *NW* among the so-called ‘condition-of-England’ novels but emphasizes its difference from its predecessors in its “focus on the precarious state of the nation that recently culminated in the Brexit referendum outcome.”⁷⁰

An environment like London that has not lost its sometimes racist behavior and bias towards immigrants or their descendants may verify this statement, for that matter, Alan Riley and Francis Ghilès argue for the same opinion, as I have shown in the chapter on modern immigration, and as some moments of Smith’s book portray, for instance Shar, an immigrant as well, who calls Natalie ‘coconut’ for being black on the surface, meaning her Jamaican descent, but white inside-with ideals and a life of ‘whites.’⁷¹

How much the Caldwell background of the characters, “an area of the city notorious for poverty, crime and interracial tension, where lower-class citizens of many backgrounds live in apartment towers [...],”⁷² as Lynn Wells describes the area, the

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 64.

⁷⁰ Engelbert Thaler, ed., “Generic Pluralism: Post-Millennial Cultural Concerns and New Genres in an Age of Crisis,” in *New Literary Genres in the Language Classroom* (Tübingen: Narr Francke Attempto Verlag, 2019), n. p., e-book, Google Books.

⁷¹ Smith, *NW*, p. 9.

⁷² Lynn Wells, “The Right to a Secret: Zadie Smith’s *NW*,” in *Reading Zadie Smith: The First Decade and Beyond*, edited by Philip Tew (London-New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), p. 98.

immigration history and culture of London themselves actually matter, are questions related to that.

The possible answer to that could be found in the characters' beginnings. All four protagonists come from the local low-class Caldwell estate in north-west London, having attended Brayton School, but then, their paths divided. Nathan has been a drug addict for some time, begging on streets, running some sort of shady business, mugging, and being involved in Felix's death. Felix is a Jamaican Londoner having a past full of drugs and hanging around Caldwell with wrong people, but he decides to leave this behind and settle down with his new girlfriend, having a new, promising start before him. Leah stays in her office job she's never imagined staying in, with no ambitions or dreams. There is also her childhood best friend Keisha, now Natalie, a young black woman with Jamaican origin, ambitious, hard-working and having every goal achieved, being the only one who has 'escaped,' first to university, then into a 'posh' house in an expensive part of north-west London.

Keisha is driven by her longing for a getaway, encouraged by an unflattering image of her low working-class family, Felix also wishes to get rid of the 'Caldwell' side of his life, the only two constants are Nathan and Leah, Nathan racially unspecified, Leah being of Irish descent, maybe therefore appearing so lax in case of social self-improvement. Still, they all are overtaken by their past, with fictional Caldwell symbolizing their "predestination" and mutual origins, building up an image of the north-western postcode address standing for a symbol of 'lost generation.'

If the question depended only on the location, if their stories had not played out in the North-West, would it mean that Felix would not have been killed? Would Keisha have had the need of escaping if she had not been a Jamaican having grown up in Caldwell? Would anybody of them have found himself in such a position, at all? The answers to all these questions might well be negative.

3.2.1.3. *Swing Time*

Swing Time is very different from what Zadie Smith introduced to her readers in *White Teeth* and *NW*- though all three books are *bildungsromans* according to the characteristics that Maroula Joannou provides on behalf of the modern female *bildungsroman*, saying that "[...] Zadie Smith ha[s] used it [social integration] to

interrogate and subvert white, heteronormative patriarchy, undermining the supposed universality of male experience through woman-centered accounts of female maturation,”⁷³ their focus is somewhat else, *White Teeth* presenting a family saga, *NW* being an existential novel, and *Swing Time* written as a kind of Elena Ferrante-friendship narrative. Yet, a lot of similarities can be found among this and the two other novels, like the setting which I would call as an always repeating prototype of multiracially and multiculturally rich environment that Smith so often uses.

Already at the very beginning, the attention is drawn to the similarities and variances among the two girls and their mothers. Although both mothers are diametrically distinct, the girls are much more similar to each other, mainly for having an identical brown shade of skin. However, what connects the two families are the similar living conditions, as both live in estates, how the narrator fleetingly mentions.⁷⁴ Their estates have certain dissimilarities, though, giving accuracy to the financial situation of each of them through “a high-rise estate of poor reputation [...] where Tracy lived,” and one “nicer, low-rise, in the next street,”⁷⁵ which was of the narrator’s. Their class membership is then made clear and put into opposition with the ‘white’ middle-class family of the narrator’s friend Lily Bingham, living on

“29 Exeter Road, [in] a whole house [...] [with] a private garden, a giant jam-jar full of ‘spare change’ and a Swatch watch as big as a human man hanging on a bedroom wall.”⁷⁶

The socio-economic differences between the girls’ multi-raced families and Lily’s own white, probably British family are not presented as a consequence of one’s origin, on the contrary, they are given as uncritically seen by a young girl who just gets to know the other ‘corners’ of society, without prejudice and full of adulation that a child can feel.

⁷³ Sarah Graham, ed., “Introduction,” in *A History of the Bildungsroman* (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 2019), p. 7.

⁷⁴ Zadie Smith, *Swing Time* (London: Penguin Books, 2017), p. 10.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 16-17.

An actuality commented by Squires on the demographic composition in schools of north-west London presented in the *White Teeth* section has been visible in *Swing Time*, too, when the narrator gives insight into schools in Neasden and Willesden:

“[...] in Neasden, [...] almost all the girls were Indian or Pakistani [...]. Mine, in Willesden, was [...] more mixed: half black, a quarter white, a quarter South Asian. Of the black half at least were ‘half-caste,’ a minority nation within a nation, [...]”⁷⁷

A certain symbolical role is given to the Royal Festival Hall according to Daphne Lamothe who speaks about “the hall’s evocation of Western empire and classical (i. e., European) artistic traditions convey[ing] the sentiments of a protagonist who wishes to avoid the conflicts and confusions of society by rising above them.”⁷⁸ This statement Lamothe alludes to the sequence from the book where the narrator attends the hall and a clip from the *Swing Time* movie is rolled. I personally do not share Lamothe’s opinion. What the narrator is addressed by is not the hall itself that delivers her the feelings of transcendence but rather the movie, sending her back to her childhood’s years when she sensed nothing but the dance, not seeing Astaire’s “blackface, [...] the rolling eyes, the white gloves, the Bojangles grin.”⁷⁹ Thus, the building itself has no important role but being the setting of the narrator’s ‘awakening.’

1.2.1. Race and culture as signs of otherness

3.2.2.1. *White Teeth*

Claire Squires argues that “reading *White Teeth* as a postcolonial novel, and Zadie Smith as an ‘ethnically interesting’ author, is to risk turning multiculturalism into an aesthetic commodity.”⁸⁰ She gives as examples the music teacher Poppy Burt-Jones’s admiration for “Indian culture” and the appreciation of Samad as Omar Sharif’s look-a-

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 34.

⁷⁸ Daphne Lamothe, “*Swing Time*: Zadie Smith’s Aesthetic of Active Ambivalence,” in *Reading Contemporary Black British and African American Women Writers: Race, Ethics, Narrative Form*, edited by Jean Wyatt, Sheldon George, eds. (New York-Oxon: Routledge, 2020), n. p., e-book, Google Books.

⁷⁹ Smith, *Swing Time*, p. 4-5.

⁸⁰ Squires, *Zadie Smith’s White Teeth*, p. 41.

like.⁸¹ In addition, I would supplement some more examples of such accounts on other protagonists: once made by the omniscient narrator on Clara's behalf, saying that she was "beautiful in all senses except maybe, by virtue of being black. The classical,"⁸² then made towards Millat, one of Samad's sons, by Joyce Chalfen, struck by his "pulchritude,"⁸³ or even Marcus's very openly sexualized admiration of Irie, Archie's and Clara's daughter, when talking about her "tremendous breasts,"⁸⁴ among others.

Squires's worries are understandable, but also arguable. Smith's characters are highly likeable, partially for their appearance, but I would not go that far and claim that this is what attracts readers the most and makes multiculturalism an "aesthetic commodity." In this novel, humor is mostly 'that thing' that impresses the readers, not even the racial and cultural otherness which I would rather call a common element of today's British society, regarding the long and rich history of immigration, especially in the British capital. At the same time would I emphasize this fact as a remarkable difference between post-colonial literature of the 'real' immigrants and their descendants here, i. e., the fact that modern post-colonial literature of authors to whom Zadie Smith belongs occupies itself with issues related to one's origins just as the earlier post-colonial writing does, but in the time when it is of such relevance no more, albeit some passages in *White Teeth* expressing racism could be seen as contradictory, like, for instance, the passage where the director in Archie's company alludes to Enoch Powell, saying:

"I'd spit on that Enoch Powell...but then again he does have a point, doesn't he? There comes a point, a saturation point, and people begin to feel a bit uncomfortable."⁸⁵

Other examples are self-evident: Millat and his "Crew" heading to Bradford, confronted with the ticket man who calls their language "Paki,"⁸⁶ or Mr. Hamilton narrating Irie and the two sons of Samad Millat and Magid of his war experiences in Africa and of the 'importance' of white teeth at the same time, telling them that "clean

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Smith, *White Teeth*, p. 19.

⁸³ Ibid., p. 264.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 305.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 61.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 192.

white teeth are not always wise, now are they? Par exemplum: when I was in the Congo, the only way I could identify the nigger was by the whiteness of his teeth.”⁸⁷

Those examples are but relatively rare so that Sylvia Hadjetian, too, argues that “some critics regard the novel as too optimistic about race relations as racism is not one of the main themes in the novel. But it takes more insidious forms.”⁸⁸ On that, Squires claims practically the same, taking Smith as a representant of optimistic view on Britain’s multiculturalism, but, in her own words, “she does not do so without also satirizing the liberal platitudes that would inform her own reception.”⁸⁹

I would like to look at the given examples of “aesthetic commodity” again, for the appearance Smith’s Jamaican, Bangladeshi, Bengali and other protagonists have is the one that makes the most obvious first-sight difference among them and the other inhabitants of London. The appearance is one of the features of Samad that Poppy admires the most, however, in his case it is also his culture and customs he tries to impose upon the school.⁹⁰ It is the pride in his culture with which he presents his ideas at the school meeting that awakens neglect in the rest of the personnel along with concerns of him maybe being treated racist.⁹¹

On the other hand, Irie fights her own Jamaican identity caused by the fact she physically protrudes and does not attract Millat. What she thinks of herself is presented followingly: “There was England, a gigantic mirror, and there was Irie, without reflection. A stranger in a stranger land,”⁹² earlier described as

“[...] big. The European’s proportions of Clara’s figure had skipped a generation, and she was landed instead with Hortense’s substantial Jamaican frame, loaded with pineapples, mangoes, guavas; the girl had weight; big tits, big butt, big hips, big teeth.”⁹³

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 144.

⁸⁸ Sylvia Hadjetian, “Racism and Stereotypes in *White Teeth*: Conclusion: Between Optimism and Pessimism,” in *Multiculturalism and Magic Realism in Zadie Smith’s novel White Teeth: Between Fiction and Reality* (Hamburg: Anchor Academic Publishing, 2015), p. 94.

⁸⁹ Squires, *Zadie Smith’s White Teeth*, p. 41.

⁹⁰ Smith, *White Teeth*, p. 108-109.

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 106.

⁹² Ibid., 222.

⁹³ Ibid., p. 221.

Nevertheless, this is a description given by the omniscient narrator, conditioned by the way Irie looks at herself. To which extent her surroundings see the same is delivered only in fragments, with the role of race sidelined.

White teeth became a symbol of the whole novel, of the two ‘other’ families, carrying not just the meaning of growth and self-growth, but as Mr. Hamilton rather politically incorrectly said, they ‘identify,’ and despite this maybe more a prejudice than a pure fact, Smith follows that line and uses this symbol a few times. First during the children’s encounter with Mr. Hamilton who says to them that ‘war’ story and that they should take care of their teeth properly to not have them rotten, which, as I suppose, is a symbol for not forgetting one’s ‘roots,’ his origin. Second, white teeth serve here as a reminder of Samad’s moral sin of cheating on his wife in the form of “his two sons, [with] their teeth biting into two waxy apples, waving, smiling,”⁹⁴ And last, when Irie finds out that Clara’s always perfectly white teeth are not real and her ‘house of cards’ falls down, bringing the end of good relations with her mother,⁹⁵ she leaves for her grandmother Hortense, with which the whole “teeth trouble” began.

3.2.2.2. *NW*

In *NW*, Smith introduces a somewhat different kind of otherness than she does in *White Teeth*. Here, the dissimilitude with the environment lies further from the multicultural concept, yet closer to the personal character of the differences coming out mostly from the personal problems the characters have to face. Therefore, one cannot put *NW* on the same level with *White Teeth* when taking in account race and culture as ‘signs of otherness,’ but still are there some elements to be found and discussed in that field that are contributive to it and that may be disproving to bias directed towards immigrants, turning those dissimilarities based on race and culture upside down.

Fist, the reader encounters Leah, the only said white main protagonist. Lynn Wells holds the view that Leah “occupies the stereotypical position of ambitionless under-achievement often assigned by mainstream British culture to immigrant and non-white Londoners.”⁹⁶ Albeit she is white because of her Irish descent, she has these features

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 152.

⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 313-314.

⁹⁶ Wells, “The Right to a Secret,” p. 100.

that make her rather fall in line than protrude, the laxness that, according to Wells, is typically to be found within 'the others'. There was never such pressure put on her either from herself, either from her surroundings, so that her only ambition is to stay where she finds herself now, forever eighteen in her mind.⁹⁷

She lacks that what propelled Keisha or her Algerian husband Michel to climb up the social ladder, for racial reasons, as Michel explains to her, saying: "Of course, your skin is white, it's different, it's more easy, you've had opportunities I didn't have."⁹⁸

Keisha crosses the borders of what she is, if still developing Wells's opinion on the mainstream culture's expectations, supposed to achieve in life, just like Leah does, though in the opposite direction- despite this she is ambitious in order to escape from Caldwell and her family roots, she obtains a degree in law, during her studies changes her name to Natalie and moves to Kilburn to a Victorian house she shares with her family. However, these all achievements are not enough to set her free from the old Keisha, and so, as Sara Upstone notices, it is "the tragedy of her attempts at realization,"⁹⁹ that leads her into the life of secret sexual encounters.

Felix and Nathan may approximate more to what a picture of a Caldwell's 'charge' and Wells's non-white Londoner could be, at least in case of Felix as his Jamaican identity and his previous generalized life milestones are fully revealed, whereas Nathan remains a 'secret dark point' to the reader, the 'other one,' though not racially as Natalie or Felix do.

The otherness of all four protagonists lies in their difference from the 'typical' white British society, most obviously in the color of their skin which may still produce issues leading to racism, prejudice, partially limited and determined social roles, or to a bad incidents like that one happening to Felix. Mainly in Felix's storyline there are sequences that openly show persistent racism. I would like to use here Sylvia Hadjetian's argument again in which she claims that in *White Teeth*, "[...] racism is not one of the main themes in the novel, but it takes more insidious forms."¹⁰⁰ I would relate it to *NW*, too. Even when looking at Felix's death, racism stands in the background behind the fact that Felix was killed by attackers that were maybe black

⁹⁷ Smith, *NW*, p. 22.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

⁹⁹ Sara Upstone, "Black British Fiction: Black matter," in *The Routledge Companion to Twenty-First Century Literary Fiction*, edited by Daniel O'Gorman, Robert Eaglestone (New York-Oxon: Routledge, 2019), n. p., Kindle.

¹⁰⁰ Hadjetian, *Multiculturalism and Magic Realism*, p. 94.

themselves. Earlier occurrences response to that “insidious form” of racism more, like when he met a well-situated young man Tom:

“‘You’re Felix? Hi! Great! You’re Felix!’ [...] He needed a moment to rearrange his brain, [...] and laughed as a way of covering his surprise. Felix did not know why his own voice so often misled on the phone.”¹⁰¹

And before the fatal incident, too, Felix may have encountered this unintentionally racist behavior when a pregnant woman addressed him as a “friend” of the man sitting opposite, one of the two later attackers, Smith here, nonetheless, does not give any further details so that the reader can only conjecture that this was maybe for his ‘blackness.’

Racism is given less space either in *White Teeth*, either in *NW*, and later I will also attempt to demonstrate the same in *Swing Time*, but as Sara Upstone points out, “while there is less racism in these later novels, there is not less race.”¹⁰² And that race still signifies a difference in a land inside Europe.

3.2.2.3. *Swing Time*

Daphne Lamothe remarks that “in *Swing Time*, Zadie Smith invokes black musical traditions, specifically swing music and jazz, in order to represent blackness phenomenologically,”¹⁰³ that is, through the narrator’s own experience. This experience is slow and gradual, and she attains the full knowledge only when she is sitting in London at Royal Festival Hall while watching the *Swing Time* sequence with Astaire in blackface,¹⁰⁴ finally realizing that “she has always tried to attach herself to the light of other people” instead of having “any light of her own.”¹⁰⁵

Since their common childhood, the two girls had been growing up with dance, Fred Astaire, and Jeni LeGon, later Aimee, developing through it their potential and both national and self-identity, feeling proud whenever seeing a black dancer. The motif of dance is persistent throughout the whole narrative, playing the key role as a connector

¹⁰¹ Smith, *NW*, p. 104.

¹⁰² Upstone, “Black British Fiction: Black matter,” n. p.

¹⁰³ Lamothe, “*Swing Time*,” n. p.

¹⁰⁴ Smith, *Swing Time*, p. 5.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

between the girls, but also as a navigator in life, one leading to a dance career, the other one, the narrator, first to Africa and New York, then back in London to her ‘awakening.’

The dance in this novel represents what has been hidden behind searching for one’s self-acceptance and identity in *White Teeth* and *NW*. In both these novels, acceptance, identity and origin are closely related rather to race than to culture, whereas *Swing Time* manages to aptly connect these both to dance, especially when the girls see Jeni LeGon in *Ali Baba Goes to Town*, a dancer who looks like Tracey, and are amazed of the fact she is ‘black’ like them.¹⁰⁶ For the two little girls, the musicals and music clips with black dancers thus mean a lot, especially when they dance on the “black music,” as Tracy calls it.¹⁰⁷

Although both Tracey and the narrator are of mixed English-Jamaican origin, they do not sense race as an issue as young girls. Only after Tracey gets into stage school, the narrator experiences the societal meaning of being different:

“There were, for a while, a couple of girls in the year above who believed I prided myself on my high color, on my long nose, on my freckles, and they bullied me, [...]”¹⁰⁸

The narrator’s relationship to her origin is not changed by that to be like Irie’s in ‘*White Teeth*,’ and the less Tracey’s, who is in actuality very self-conscious in her body which awakens certain envy in the narrator. Already as a child, she longs for Tracey’s curls.¹⁰⁹ The two girls are very well-aware of the fact they are different, but in no way see they this distinction in negative light, in contrary, it is the race that enables Tracey to possess talent for dance.

Though the narrator lacks this talent, she grows up with a liberal mother always reminding her where she came from and giving her Tracey as an example of bad upbringing, always making light of dancing:

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 189-192.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 24.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 213.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 9.

“You’ve been raised in another way-don’t forget that. That silly dance class is her whole world. It’s not her fault-that’s how she’s been raised. But you’re clever. Doesn’t matter if you’ve got flat feet, doesn’t matter because you’re clever and you know where you came from and where you’re going.”¹¹⁰

However, she would always direct her proud remarks to Africa, keeping a distance from her native Jamaica. “She was not going back to all that.”¹¹¹ Also her disliking of dance was somewhat contradictory to how she would always refer to their roots, emphasizing their race, class and otherness resulting from it:

“The rest of it could be dismissed, by my mother, as ‘typical bourgeois morality,’ but she couldn’t ignore ‘Paki.’ At the time we were ‘Black and Asian,’ [...]. ‘You think you’re one of them? Is that what you think?’”¹¹²

Jenni Ramone recalls the thing she said to the narrator about Sankofa, an African bird: “it looks backwards, at the past, and it learns from what’s gone before.”¹¹³ She relates it to the narrator deciding to be reconciled with Tracey, but also to her “achievement of consciousness.”¹¹⁴ This one sentence, as I suppose, perfectly epitomizes what the mother has always tried to hand over to her daughter, to make her not forget her past, her roots and her identity and learn from them.

Finally, I would like to come back to the last point of previous section, to the issue of racism. Smith’s approach to that in *Swing Time* is rather refusing in a sense of not even practically mentioning it, an exception is for example that excerpt with the narrator being bullied, otherwise is this negative aspect of multiculturalism omitted, and the protagonists themselves express an accepting attitude.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p. 31.

¹¹¹ Ibid., p. 19.

¹¹² Ibid., p. 82.

¹¹³ Ibid., p. 30.

¹¹⁴ Jenni Ramone, “Zadie Smith’s *Swing Time* and Consciousness despite Neoliberalism,” in *Postcolonial Literatures in the Local Literary Marketplace* (Nottingham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), p. 172.

Conclusion

In this thesis, the summarized history of immigration to Britain has been introduced, focusing mainly on the period from the Roman invasion to the massive flow of Commonwealth immigrants in the 20th century. Nevertheless, a look has also been taken at the immigration during the Middle Ages and following periods, concluded by its consequences in the 21st century preceding Brexit.

Finally, there is a literary part at the end of the work, aiming to introduce post-colonial literature and its important representatives, followed by a literary analysis of three books by the British post-colonial author Zadie Smith, bringing an insight into Commonwealth immigrants' lives.

The primary purpose of this thesis is to show how much British culture has been influenced by foreign nations, however, rather than approaching it in the way of enumerating every new aspect implemented into the life of Britain, I decided to capture it more from a historical perspective in the first part, more from the societal perspective in the second part, and mostly literarily and subjectively in the third part of the thesis.

The first part brings a historical overview with the history of immigration to the British Isles presented in a span begun with the Romans, followed by barbaric Germanic tribes of Saxons, Angles, and Jutes, then invaded by sacking Vikings, and defeated by William the Conqueror's Normans, terminating the invasive era.

Before the very 20th century and its biggest migration until then, conflicts between England and France had enabled French Huguenots to immigrate to the religiously relatively tolerant British Isles. In the 18th century, they had been followed by Irish immigrants fleeing before the famine, coming to England in incredible numbers. Not a negligible number of mainly Polish and Russian Jews arrived, as well. In the context of the present literary analysis, also the slave trade bringing in slaves from Africa and the West Indies is worth mentioning.

The second part of this work introduces modern immigration after the Second World War, meaning a new trigger to British society with the new waves of arrivals, accompanied by years of reconstruction and other flows of people. A symbol of this post-war era became the *SS Windrush* put to sea in Jamaica and heading to Britain. From this moment to 1970's, Britain was bringing up the so-called 'Windrush Generation.'

The problematic of modern immigration does not end with the 20th century. Immigration is a long-term and continual situation, and for Britain is still an attractive country, be it for economic or other reasons, it lures many thousands of people annually, and with its societal changes it is visible that this phenomenon has not been fully accepted.

Some of those immigrants experiencing British hostility are today well-known postcolonial authors of first generation coming to Britain mostly during the so-called Commonwealth immigration. Their descendants, often born and fully brought up in Britain, are rated among immigrants of second generation, and this is a category whose part Zadie Smith is, too.

Zadie Smith, an author of Jamaican-English origin, inserts her experience of an immigrant descendant into her books, creating a struggle between the British and the exotic culture and identity of her characters. She sets them to the actual, typically low or middle-class environment in the northwest of London where the author herself spent her childhood. Most of them have the same aim: to find a better life for themselves and their families, whether it is Samad Iqbal or Natalie Blake.

Albeit Britain is now one of the most multicultural states in the world, exceptional in the ability to accept, but still to hold on the old English traditions, cultural and race variety has not stopped yet to produce problems in the society including dissatisfaction with the numbers of immigrants in Britain. Such issues happened, besides others, to be one of the causes for Brexit. Despite that, immigrants are now seen as a regular part of British society.

Resumé

Záměrem této práce je ukázat, jaký vliv na Británii mělo a stále má přistěhovalectví, jak v historickém, tak společenském kontextu. Jak historie i současnost potvrzují, Británie je multikulturním státem již po více než dva tisíce let, což ukazuje historický přehled od vpádu Římanů po rok 1945 v první části práce. Zdrojem informací k představeným dějinám této ranější fáze mi byla zejména díla Panikose Panayiho *An Immigration History of Britain: Multicultural Racism since 1800* nebo *John Bull's Island, Immigration and British Society, 1871-1971* od Colina Holmese.

Jedná se o úsek dějin v britské historii zcela zásadní, kdy se teprve budovaly kultury a hodnoty, které známe dnes, a tento úvod do dějin britské imigrace proto považují za nutný a základní poznatek, který nesmí být vynechán, aby byl přehled vývoje imigrace kompletní.

V druhé části práce je předložen vývoj moderní imigrace probíhající od 20. století až do dnešních dnů, kdy zejména obyvatelé Commonwealthu výraznou měrou přispěli k oné současné bohaté národní diverzifikaci. Zde se již bavíme o podobné imigraci, jakou známe dnes. Výsledkem je, stejně jako v první části, historicko-společenský přehled, ale již s větším důrazem na společenský faktor, konkrétně na nepřátelství, které v obyvatelích dále podporovala vláda a média svou neustálou pozorností a restrikcemi. Jako zdroj informací mi zde posloužily zejména *Ethnicity and Globalization* od Stephena Castla či *Citizenship and Immigration in Post-war Britain, The Institutional Origins of a Multicultural Nation* Randalla Hansena.

V neposlední řadě jsem se zaměřila na tři významná díla od britsko-jamajské autorky žijící v Londýně Zadie Smith, konkrétně na tituly *White Teeth*, *NW* a *Swing Time*, kterým předchází relativně stručný přehled britských či v Británii působících post-koloniálních autorů, mezi něž se Zadie Smith rovněž řadí. Mou snahou bylo přiblížit aspekty, které souvisí právě s imigrací, ať už to je prostředí multikulturního Londýna, nebo samí představitelé románů, kteří jsou svým okolím a původem nějakým způsobem vždy ovlivněni.

Výsledkem této bakalářské práce by měl být stručný přehled dějin imigrace v Británii, jež se zároveň ve své ranější fázi prolínají s běžně známými dějinami tvořenými invazemi Římanů, Germánů, Vikingů a Normanů. Jiná situace nastává u přehledu dějin pozdějších, kde se již plně zaměřuji jen na problematiku imigrace, ve velké míře ovlivněnou hospodářskou situací a politickými změnami v zemi. Ukázat přesný vliv imigrace v této práci bylo nemožné, takže co zde předkládám, je spíše

přehled dle mého názoru nejdůležitějších společenských změn, ke kterým díky těmto migračním vlnám došlo, ať už je to vytvoření nových kultur, či stoupající míra rasismu. Analýza výše zmíněných děl Zadie Smithové pak představuje příklady ze života současných imigrantů a jejich potomků, jejich problémy s existencí a se začleněním se do nové společnosti, ale i s problémy s akceptováním vlastních kořenů a z nich plynoucích odlišností.

Je důležité vidět dějiny imigrace v kontextu, abychom si tak učinili obraz celkový, nejen ten krátkozraký, soustředěný na současné problémy spojené s imigranty z méně rozvinutých zemí. Celé dějiny jsou postaveny na cizích základech, které postupně splývaly a vytvořily tak současnou britskou společnost, tento proces je však kontinuální a trvalý. Na druhé straně jsou již dnes přistěhovalci a jejich potomci z velké části chápáni jako automatická součást moderní britské společnosti, která se tak, například i skrze literaturu, prezentuje jako multikulturní.

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- Surname and name: Vyroubalová Aneta
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- Topic of the thesis: The Influence of Immigration on Great Britain
- Supervisor: Mgr. Pavlína Flajšarová, Ph.D.
- Number of pages: 45
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The purpose of this bachelor thesis is to show what influence the immigration has had on Great Britain with emphasis on the 20th century. The thesis is divided into three main sections dealing with the immigration in the historical context, with modern immigration, and with a literary analysis preceded by an introduction to post-colonial literature. The historical immigration focuses on the period from the expansion of the Roman Empire to Britain to 1945, whereas the second part introduces the period of the 20th century. In the literary analysis, the paper approaches three works by Zadie Smith: *White Teeth*, *NW* and *Swing Time*, all of them attached to the topic of immigrants in Britain.

Anotace:

- Příjmení a jméno: Vyroubalová Aneta
- Katedra: Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky
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Cílem této bakalářské práce je ukázat, jaký vliv mělo a má na Británii přistěhovalectví. Práce je rozdělena do tří větších celků zabývajících se historickou imigrací, moderní imigrací a literární analýzou s předcházejícím přehledem britské post-koloniální literatury. Historická imigrace se zaměřuje zejména na období od expanze římské říše do Británie až po rok 1945, kdežto druhá část seznamuje s příchodem přistěhovalců zejména ve 20. století. V literární analýze se práce soustřeďuje na tři díla spisovatelky Zadie Smith, která úzce souvisí právě s tématem imigrace v Británii. Jedná se o romány *White Teeth*, *NW* a *Swing Time*.