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EAST MEETS WEST: MULTICULTURAL CONCEPTS IN
CONTEMPORARY BRITAIN VIEWED BY SEVERAL IMMIGRANT
AUTHORS

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ANOTACE

Cílem práce je pohled na klíčová témata současné západní multikulturní společnosti a jejich odraz v několika literárních dílech britských autorů východního původu. Velká Británie, stejně jako ostatní státy západní Evropy, se potýká s velkým počtem přistěhovalců z jihoasijských zemí. Východní přistěhovalci se musejí vypořádat s řadou těžkostí, které na ně v neznámé kultuře čekají. Práce je rozdělena do pěti hlavních částí, které se zabývají termínem multikulturalismus, uvedením autorů a jejich knih, představením klíčových témat a jejich následnou analýzou ve vybraných knihách.

ABSTRACT

The aim of the thesis is to focus on the key concepts of the contemporary multicultural Western society and their reflection in several literary works published by British authors of Eastern origin. Great Britain, just as other states in Western Europe, deals with a great number of immigrants from South Asian countries. Eastern immigrants have to overcome a range of difficulties which are waiting for them in an unknown culture. The work is divided into five main parts: they discuss the term multiculturalism, introduce the selected authors and their books, and finally, present and analyze their main themes.

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1. Introduction

The thesis discusses the multicultural aspects of contemporary British society, particularly the position of South Asian immigrants in Great Britain, their way of life and their beliefs compared with other generations of immigrants and with the British population. The thesis then analyses the concepts of multiculturalism seen in several literary works of the British authors Monica Ali, Zadie Smith and Salman Rushdie.

The work is divided into five sections to clearly present some key concepts of multiculturalism, the authors discussed and an analysis of their novels concerned with the immigrants' lives and the challenges they face.

The first part of the thesis presents a general overview of the term multiculturalism and its dilemma in British society.

The second and the third sections present three British authors and their novels for the analysis. The novel *Brick Lane* set in London describes the lives of a Bangladeshi family by Monica Ali, Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* narrates the life stories of several immigrant families in London and *The Moor's Last Sigh* by Salman Rushdie set in India tracks several generations of a wealthy family.

The key concepts concerning multiculturalism and the life of immigrants are the subject matter of the fourth part of the thesis. The first is the concept of the cohabitation of immigrants and the British, the matter of mutual acceptance and how they look at each other. The second one focuses on the importance of religion for immigrants and their children. The third section examines the complex relationships in immigrants' families and the importance of the family unit. The last concept deals with differences one can see in diverse generations of immigrants.

The last part of the thesis analyzes concepts of multiculturalism in the selected novels. There are several families in these books whose life stories and confessions bring the observer closer to the immigrants' background and offer him a direct look at their issues and obstacles in an unknown society.

2. Multiculturalism

2.1 Concept of multiculturalism

Multiculturalism is a condition of a blending and coexistence of diverse cultures in one particular region. It is the attempt for an equal position and opportunities for all social groups, ethnicities and nationalities in the society (Kraus 539).

The term ‘multiculturalism’ has been a much discussed topic since 1970s in the Western society. It emerged after the cultural and sexual revolution in 1960s, so to a demand for the equal position of women or homosexuals was added the equal appreciation of the non-European cultures and religions (Barša 41). Many politicians and governments have introduced new policies towards better conditions for the immigrants accompanied by various actions concerning this topic such as the term anti-discrimination, immigration legislation, ‘affirmative-action’ programmes in employment, education and cultural funding, ethnic and indigenous restitution and the issues of social justice and cultural survival. Nowadays these terms and the whole concept of multiculturalism are reconsidered by the political and social spectrum (Bennet 1). Bennet in his *Multicultural states* mentions that during the past decades in various domains, in which the term was discussed, ‘multiculturalism’ has been used differently as a term for “assimilation and cultural separatism; campus marxism and ethnic nationalism; transnational corporate marketing strategies and minority competition for state recourses; radical democracy and cosmetic adjustments to the liberal-democratic status quo” (Bennet 1-2).

“Just as ‘feminism’ and ‘postmodernism’ were pluralised in the 1980s, as the obligation to take up positions on or within them multiplied the sites in which their meanings have been debated, so ‘multiculturalism’ has been pluralised the 1990s” (Bennet 1). Bennet makes an observation on the fact that ‘multiculturalism’ indicates a crisis in the definition of the word ‘nation’, and is in many ways a sign of globalisation (Bennet 2). The Western multiculturalism and universalism has mainly been criticized for its falseness. “In the globalised economy of *fin-de-siècle* cultural consumerism, ‘culture’ is deemed a matter of choice as much as of inheritance, and thus as a potentially less oppressive, and hence less ‘politicising’, category of identification than colour or ethnicity, class or gender” (Bennet 4).

Salman Rushdie also mentions and criticizes multiculturalism and its development in his book of essays *Imaginary Homelands*. He mainly talks about the position of Afro-

Americans in the society, but we could apply his opinion to all immigrants, including the immigrants coming from Asia and Eastern Europe:

At first, we were told, the goal was ‘integration’. Now this word rapidly came to mean ‘assimilation’: a black man could only become integrated when he started behaving like a white one. After ‘integration’ came the concept of ‘racial harmony’. Now once again, this sounded virtuous and desirable, but what it meant in practice was the blacks should be persuaded to live peaceably with whites, in spite of all the injustices done to them every day. The call for ‘racial harmony’ was simply an invitation to shut up and smile while nothing was done about our grievances. And now there’s a new catchword: ‘multiculturalism’. In our schools, this means little more than teaching the kids a few bongo rhythms, how to tie a sari and so forth. In the police training programme, it means telling cadets that black people are so ‘culturally different’ that they can’t help making trouble. Multiculturalism is the latest token gesture towards blacks, and it ought to be exposed, like ‘integration’ and ‘racial harmony’, for the sham it is. (Rushdie, “Imaginary Homelands” 137)

Rushdie then accuses the society or government of talking about the immigrants as a problem:

You talk about the Race Problem, the Immigration Problem, all sorts of problems. If you are liberal, you say that black people have problems. If you aren’t, you say they are the problem. But the members of the new colony have only one real problem, and the problem is white people. British racism, of course, is not our problem. It’s yours. We simply suffer from the effects of your problem. (Rushdie, “Imaginary Homelands” 138)

Nowadays multiculturalism is often criticized and deconstructed for having failed. The leading representatives (former or present) of the three powerful countries David Cameron, Angela Merkel and Nikolas Sarkozy agree that the cultural integration of immigrant groups hasn’t been successful because Europe hasn’t developed its own culture and identity. Europe has only occupied with the protection of different identities. David Cameron said that these different cultures and identities lived their own lives

separated from the others because there was missing a society which they could join or to which they could belong (Hauser 49). We can observe that the integration of the immigrants in the society is unstable and partial. There are communities ripped off their original environment arising in the background to which they are not integrated and which is foreign to them.

2.2 Multiculturalism in Western Europe and in Great Britain in particular

This bachelor's thesis will be discussing the topic of the encounter of different cultures, religions, ethnic groups and languages in Great Britain. Because of the growing number of immigrants coming to Great Britain, we are dealing more and more with the term 'multiculturalism'. Great Britain is one of the countries where we can observe a large number of diverse minority groups. New incomers of various ethnicities have been welcomed in Great Britain for centuries and so today the nation of Great Britain is very diverse. There are over 63 million people of diverse ethnic origin in Great Britain. White incomers have the largest share of this amount, 55 million. Over two million people are of Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin, almost two million are of African or Caribbean origin. The rest of the amount is of other ethnic groups (Census).

Immigrants arrive to Great Britain with great expectations for a better life. Usually, they are not satisfied with the life in poor conditions and with no job opportunities in their original countries. So they decide to move to Western Europe where they expect well-paid jobs and housing in good conditions for the whole family:

The reason why people from developing countries want to live here [in Great Britain] is obvious: life is better here than in the impoverished countries from which they came. But that is true of all the developed economies of Europe. All are much better places in which to live than the nations of Africa, for instance, or the Indian subcontinent. (Palmer)

Usually their expectations are fulfilled – their salaries are higher so they can send a part of their money back home to support the rest of their families and they can support their children in education. But the fact is, they have to work hard to provide their families good lives because living in Great Britain is much more expensive: “It is easier to get a job here – less restrictive employment legislation means it is easier to fire

people, so employers are more willing to hire migrants they can pay less in the first place. British employers are less suspicious of foreigners than their counterparts in countries such as Italy or France” (Palmer). Nevertheless, it is more advantageous for immigrants to go to Great Britain as they are provided an accommodation and other social services: “[I]t is easier for immigrants who arrive here to claim benefits, get council housing and access health and education services for themselves and their children and it becomes clear why Britain is a target for migrants” (Palmer).

David James in his *Contemporary British Fiction and the Artistry of Space* explains how the position of Great Britain has developed during the last few centuries. He says that Great Britain in the eighteenth century was at first a nation proud of its island isolation and discreteness. But it was kind of a paradox because its isolation was only geographical and the island was connected with other nations through commerce and culture. During the nineteenth century, international trade linked Britain with other more distant nations which were considered distant, bizarre or even uncivilized. This created migration paths and Great Britain was no more an isolated country (James 133). “The political privileging of insular nativism¹ highlights the complex histories that have shaped Britain’s ethnic multiplicity” (James 132). James then mentions that:

Great Britain has of course been diversely repopulated in ways that fundamentally redefine our understandings of nationhood, settlement and belonging. For postwar urban communities ... would famously revitalize that picture of Britain as an island with porous bounds, an island today in which meanings of *isle*, *landscape* and *home* are vigorously contested rather than conflated in our global, post-national era. (James 132)

James then talks about contemporary British authors who are of course affected by the changes in society. He claims that in order to respond to these changes and to have a fresh way of responding to this topic, the postcolonial novel has been turned into “the generic category defined by impermanence and transition”. These writers are novelists who publish in Great Britain, coming from postwar immigrant families whose

¹ “Nativism” is a policy which favours native inhabitants as opposed to immigrant inhabitants (Merriam-Webster).

work traces the multicultural evidence but also the British cultural habits in society (James 133). James mentions the immigrant novelists and their position in Britain:

Coinciding with the displacement of nationhood as a disposition, postwar Black and Asian novelists have thus appealed by analogy to the very geophysical flux of islands. For as they move from chronicling enforced migration to scrutinizing the sustainability of multicultural communities, postcolonial writers have capitalized on the sense in which Britain's cultural landscape can no longer be thought of as pre-existent, timeless or foundational, but as continually remade in imperialism's wake. (James 133)

He affirms that according to our increased awareness of multiculturalism, the contemporary writers show that Britain now cannot avoid the ethnical and geopolitical impacts of its foreign politics (James 134).

3. Presentation of the authors

3.1 Monica Ali

Monica Ali is a British author born in Bangladesh in 1967 to British and Bangladeshi parents. Ali was three years old when the family moved to Great Britain. She studied Philosophy, Politics and Economics at Oxford University. Ali became famous for her first novel *Brick Lane* (2003) for which she won several literary awards such as *British Book Awards Literary Fiction Award* (2003) or *Guardian First Book Award* (2003). In *Brick Lane* Monica Ali “has evoked London’s social, ethnic and demographic constitution” (James 71). Ali’s *Brick Lane* was accepted by the publisher after he had seen only five chapters of her draft. In 2003 *Granta* magazine named her among the ‘Best of Young British Novelists’ after reading just the manuscript (British Council Ali). She was well viewed by critics as “a writer who seemed to have found, right at the beginning of her career and with absolute confidence, her own voice” (qtd. in British Council Ali). “Since this popular and critical success, Ali has shown an admirable willingness to wrong-foot and surprise her readers, with novels that have often ranged far beyond the limiting canvas of the ‘British multicultural novel’ template that she helped to establish” (qtd. in British Council Ali). Ali became a ‘chronicler of contemporary multicultural Britain’, as she captures diverse settings, cultures, religions, human and national identities. After the critical success of her novels, she reached popularity also in a wide audience. She wasn’t forgotten after her first success of *Brick Lane* and was even able to surprise the reader with the second novel *Alentejo Blue* (2006) which focuses on the limits of happiness and shows dramatically, ironically and humorously misinterpretations of other characters’ behavior and also themselves. In her next novel *In the Kitchen* (2009) Ali returned to the British immigrant environment and focused on themes of family’s relationships, national identity and the question of belonging. Ali’s last novel *Untold Story* (2011) takes the reader to a small town in the US discussing the topics of fame and media spotlight. Ali’s great success has definitely been in her talent to attract the attention of a critical, but also a popular audience by the topics of multiculturalism, religion and relationships between people. She is certainly a writer who could even surprise the reader with linking geography and national identity (British Council Ali).

3.2 Zadie Smith

Zadie Smith is a British author born in 1975 in north-west London to British and Jamaican parents. She studied English literature at Cambridge University. Her first novel *White Teeth* (2000) about diverse cultures, ethnicities and religions written in a satiric tone became popular right after its publication. The novel won several literary awards including EMMA (BT Ethnic and Multicultural Media Award) for Best Book/Novel (2000), Guardian First Book Award (2000), Whitbread First Novel Award (2000) or Commonwealth Writers Prize (Overall Winner, Best First Book) (2001). Smith wrote *White Teeth* when she was only 21 years old while still studying at Cambridge University. Her novel was so attractive that it was accepted by the publisher before it was even completed and it brought her an enormous critical, but also popular success both nationally and internationally. *White Teeth* covers a wide range of topics such as the feeling of identity, history, multiculturalism, uncertainty about the future and even the topic of science. Smith's other novel *The Autograph Man* (2002) focuses mainly on human worries and desires, yet there is still some kind of humour. *On Beauty* (2005), a novel which is set in the university background and it is partially autobiographic, refers to Smith's studies at Cambridge and Harvard Universities. "As with her previous two novels, the politics of race and gender are underlying concerns and humour is deployed once more to explode the pretensions of those who fail to examine their own perspectives" (British Council Smith). In her last novel *NW* (2012) Smith uses a unique form blending diverse tenses, textual structure and free alternative typing. "[T]his discontinuous and fluid novel describes with considerable success the chaotic and contingent, heard and felt, tasted and smelt experience of living in and crucially moving around the contemporary capital" (British Council Smith). In her novels Smith writes about "the brute implications of racial assimilation and reconstitution" (James 72).

Nowhere more insistent are these dilemmas of observation and alienation than for writers of metropolitan immigration, racial difference and settlement. Black and Asian novelists as ... Zadie Smith ... have not simply engaged thematically with issues of identification and incorporation, but have also raised the formal question ... about writing an adequate response to a city that both fosters ethnic diversity while perpetuating conditions of displacement. (James 74)

Smith has also written collections of short stories *Piece of Flash* (2001), *The Book of Other People* (2007) and the collection of ‘occasional essays’ *Changing My Mind* (2009). In 2010 Smith became a professor of fiction at New York University and so she travels between New York and London (British Council Zadie Smith).

3.3 Salman Rushdie

Salman Rushdie is a British writer born in India in 1947 into a Muslim² family. He studied at Cathedral School in Bombay and then at Rugby School in Warwickshire and King’s College in Cambridge. After several years living with his family in Pakistan, he moved to England, where he worked as a copywriter for an advertising company (Norton Anthology 2852). “He holds honorary doctorates and fellowships at six European and six American universities, is an Honorary Professor in the Humanities at M.I.T, and University Distinguished Professor at Emory University” (Rushdie Home page). He is well known for his novels dealing with the themes of religion, ethnicity, human relationships and historical events. Rushdie is considered to be “the most influential novelist to have come from South Asia in the last fifty years” (Norton Anthology 2852). He was noticed and became celebrated by critics and audience throughout the literary world after his second novel *Midnight’s Children* (1981) where he deals with the controversial historical event of the transition of India to an independent state. Another novel for which he was discussed throughout the world is the provocative novel *Satanic Verses* (1988). With this novel Rushdie caused a conflict with the Muslim world by a disrespectful depiction of the prophet Muhammad. Several riots, protests and book-burnings by British-based Muslims were followed by death threats from the government of Iran (Bradford 195; British Council Salman Rushdie). Another of his famous novels is *The Moor’s Last Sigh* (1995) again gives a detailed account of Indian history. Rushdie has influenced and mentored other young Indian or Indo-Anglican writers and received many awards for his works including the Booker Prize for Fiction for the novel *Midnight’s Children* (1981), Whitbread Novel Award for the novel *Satanic Verses* (1988), British Book Awards Author of the Year for the novel *The Moor’s Last Sigh* (1995) or Aristeion Literary Prize (1996).

² “Muslim” is a person or a group of people whose religion is Islam (Merriam-Webster).

4. Presentation of the books for the analysis

4.1 Brick Lane

The novel *Brick Lane* by Monica Ali was published in 2003. The narrative shows London and British society and culture from the 1980s to 2001 from the perspective of a Bangladeshi woman. Nazneen is a Bangladeshi girl of 18, till that time living in a village in poor conditions with her family, who goes to London to get married with a forty-year old man Chanu. She isn't happy about it, but she is mostly a quiet girl who is used to behaving as she is told to, so she accepts this arranged marriage. When she arrives to London she can't speak a word of English and has to deal with a completely different environment. She has to deal with the loss of her first child Mohammed Raqib who is only a few months old and she also needs to adjust to the life in a marriage with an older man. Every day she is only at home taking care of their daughters, cleaning and cooking as it is expected from a Muslim woman. But after some years Nazneen can speak English as she picked it up only by listening to her daughters, the husband and people around. She musters slowly her courage to start to say what she really thinks. "It is precisely the tempered, unobtrusive style in which [Ali] conveys her heroine's thoughts in open space that allows the reader to witness through an intimate lens the consequences of Nazneen's racial self-consciousness" (James 75). In the meantime, she has to cope with a difficult situation of an affair with Karim, a young man who brings Nazneen clothes which needs to be sewed. She works at home on the sewing machine to help the family financially. Karim is also a member of militant Muslims professing Islam, which Nazneen attends several times without having told her husband. Chanu is much older than his wife, which is not that unusual for a couple of the Islamic³ religion. What is interesting, is Chanu's passion for Bangladeshi history and literature, but also a respect for British culture. Ali depicts the character of Chanu in a comic way. He considers himself to be too intelligent for his job, complains about it and still says that he will get a better position when eventually he gets fired and starts to work as a taxi driver. But he still is full of dreams about some better job or business, which would be successful, such as a mobile library he made up. On the contrary, he is a kind person and even though he seems to enforce his right of a man in the family, the reader actually starts to like him. At first, he respects and knows a lot about British culture but eventually, when his daughters start to accept more of the British culture

³ "Islam" is the religion of Muslims "including belief in Allah as the sole deity and in Muhammad as his prophet" (Merriem-Webster).

and habits than of the culture in which their parents grew up, he suddenly thinks only of their way back to Bangladesh. Finally, he goes only by himself, because Nazneen becomes a stronger woman with her own thoughts and decides to stay in Britain with the children. Throughout the whole novel Nazneen is in a correspondence with her sister Hasina, who still lives in Bangladesh. Through her letters the reader can spot a diametrical difference in their lives. Hasina chooses her own husband but has to leave him, because he becomes violent and then she tries to make some money and survive on her own by working in a factory, as a prostitute or as a nanny and maid in a rich Bangladeshi family. The novel well describes the intersection of diverse religions and cultures and the reader can get a glimpse of the Bangladeshi community in London.

4.2 White Teeth

The novel *White Teeth* by Zadie Smith was published in 2000. The narrative follows the lives of families of different origins, ethnicities and social backgrounds which are connected in some way. The story is built on the friendship of Samad Iqbal, a Bengali Muslim, and Archie Jones, a working-class Englishman, who become friends during their service in World War II in Europe. It seems they become friends only because of common personal traits, such as being silly and thick. They meet again in London in the 1970s as adult men with their own lives. The novel begins when Archie, now in his forties, gets divorced from an Italian wife whom he met during the war. He is so frustrated and disappointed with his life that he decides to commit suicide, but a Halal butcher, who is nearby, prevents him from doing it (Bradford 2006). After that he feels awakened and wants to start a completely new life. He gets married to a much younger Jamaican girl Clara, whom he has known for only a few weeks. The narrative then observes the lives of Archie's new wife, mainly her previous life, and later their teenage daughter Irie who grows up into a clever girl but with a lack of self-confidence. Samad works as a waiter in an Indian restaurant and is also married to the young wife Alsana and is a father of twin brothers Mallat and Magid. He thinks that his job isn't adequate for a man of his education and knowledge. Samad is convinced that British social, educational and cultural background isn't good enough for his children to be educated into intelligent men aware of their cultural origin. The only thing he can think of is to earn enough money to send at least one of his sons back to Bangladesh to be well raised by his parents. Irie and Samad's twin sons give the reader a picture of

immigrant families and their position in the society through the children's and later adolescent point of view. When they get in touch with the Chalfens, a rich Jewish scientifically orientated family, one can observe differences not only in the attitude of parents to their children, but also in the religious aspect in which they were raised. Zadie Smith narrates the story in a unique and satirical way. She doesn't handle only the theme of immigration and multiculturalism, but also shows common human relationships, such as young love, finding friends, fights between married couples or between parents and their children. So the reader realizes these relationships are the same regardless of the culture or religion.

4.3 The Moor's Last Sigh

The novel *The Moor's Last Sigh* was written by Salman Rushdie in 1995. It is a 100 years history of an Indian wealthy Zogoiby family narrated by its youngest member Moraes Zogoiby, or as he is called, "Moor" Zogoiby. Rushdie writes the story about four generations of a large family in a very detailed way and he also integrates the history of India, as a British colony and later as an independent state, with all of the political affairs, cultural events and difficult relationships between the government and Bombay's gangland. Moor starts narrating the life of the maternal part of the family which is apparently a descendent of the Portuguese explorer Vasco de Gama, and slowly describes complex histories and relationships of the members of the family. He tells about his wealthy family, great grandmother Epifania, great grandfather Francisco, their son Camoens and his wife, Moor's grandmother, Belle and other relatives. They are all living in Cochin and trade in spice. He describes the difficult life of his mother Aurora, who didn't have an easy childhood since her mother died when she was a little girl and her father jumped into the sea. But she grows up into a strong woman, takes advantage of her talent for painting and gets married very young with an older Jewish manager of the Gama Company, Abraham Zogoiby. She falls in love with him and he leaves his Jewish background for her. They have three daughters each talented in a different way, Ina, Minnie and Mynah, and the youngest child, Moor. Moor narrates on his life with an unfortunate physical handicap, an atrophied arm, and a special condition because of which he gets older twice as fast as it is normal. So, when he starts to tell the story he is at the age of 36 but looks and feels in his 70s. We are moved by his life story of an unlucky love with a mentally disordered

Uma Sarasvati who is lying to and manipulating everyone, a story of a love for his mother who eventually forces her only son away, a story of a difficult life of a man who is getting old too fast and who wants to find his place in his family and in the society. The very complex story ends in Spain where Moor is the last one, who survived from their large family, and hopes that he will find peace after death. The whole novel is interwoven with many other characters, such as a painter Vasco Miranda, a doorkeeper Lambajan, a teacher Dilly Hormuz, a mafia boss Raman Fielding, and with many historical events.

5. Aspects of multiculturalism in Great Britain

5.1 How immigrants look at the British and vice versa

Immigrants move to Great Britain for better living conditions, better job opportunities, to make more money and to be able to provide better lives for their family members. The reality is that most of immigrants live in small apartments in terrible conditions within the communities of people coming from their countries. Very often, it is difficult for them to find an apartment with their name in foreign language, they encounter many negative reactions. In most of the cases, immigrants don't make any effort to get in touch with British people because they don't even need it. As a rule, women are at home, or in the area of their community neighbourhood, taking care of their children and cleaning and cooking at home. They don't need to speak English to live their lives. Men seem to be much more in touch with the British and their culture. Many of them, of course, own their own business such as grocery shops or restaurants, where they usually interact only with people of their origin. But a lot of men work in British societies or in a public service so they need to speak English and to know a bit about British culture. Even though they work with British people or in a British environment which is very different from the one they came from, still, they don't make many liaisons with them. The work place is only work for them.

From the countries they come from, immigrants bring notions about the world, ways of life, the list of values which they acquired in their families and their linguistic and cultural environment. But these values don't need to fit in the new, strange environment. Sometimes parents don't want their children to participate in school trips, or classes of sexual education. On the other hand, there are cases when immigrants wanted teachers to add the instruction about foreign religions and feasts to the classes or to school curriculums (Freise 167).

On the contrary, children from immigrant families have a totally different perspective on immigrant life. Usually they are already born in Great Britain, so they have a bigger chance to integrate into British society. They go to British schools from an early age, they learn to speak English and eventually they use it more than their mother tongue, because the only place where they use it is at home with their parents. Some of them still have friends within their immigrant communities, but many of them make friends at school with the British. So this easy integration is something completely new and also incomprehensible for the older generation of their parents.

Integration into a multicultural society also requires changes in the behaviour of local inhabitants and institutions. Only after common increase of personal and professional relationships the immigrants can be integrated (Freise 174). We could say that the immigrants are not that well integrated as they should be after many years of living in Great Britain and the fact is that immigrants actually don't want to be integrated in some cases and the British are not so willing to help them.

5.2 Religion

Immigrants who come to Great Britain are often of various religious beliefs, but we could say a majority of them are Muslims. Despite the medial commonplace that problems with integration are based on differences between eastern (mainly Islam) and western religions, these problems are actually mostly social. However, it is certain that some ways of behavior western society can't handle or doesn't want to handle have religious motives such as veiling of women, dietary rules halal or daily prayers. Mainly after the terrorist attack on 11th September 2001, European society has become more cautious regarding the incomers entering Europe. Media and politicians claim that the main problem is that Islam isn't compatible with the democratic system on which European institutions are based (Barša 31 – 32).

Religion is one of the most important things for immigrant families. For a majority of immigrants religion and its rules and regulations represent their way of life, or how they understand life. It is not only the thing of belief, it tells them how men should treat women, what they can or can't eat or when and how they should pray. Of course, not all of the Muslim immigrants strictly follow the rules, but it is common. It is interesting to look at the differences between generations of immigrants regarding the religion. The first generation of immigrants sees the religious classification only as one of the aspects of their ethnic culture. These immigrants coming from Muslim countries were till the 90s of the 20th century understood as members of ethnic or national groups such as Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, Turks or Moroccans (Barša 38). However, at the beginning of the new century for many of their children religious identification becomes the determinative aspect of their social identity or of their potential political demands. This change could be understood in two ways – as a process of invasion of ethnicity into religion or vice versa: “The first conception shows that for some descendants of immigrants Islam has become the new minority identity,

the second one makes us consider the question why it was religion which started to play this role” (Barša 39).

The presence of diverse religions and cultures is also visible in schools. Some immigrant parents call for more attention to be put on their national and religious feasts, not only on the feasts of the Western society. These parents have lived in Western Europe for more than two decades or more and some of them think that if their children can learn European history and traditions, they can be taught some of the immigrants’ traditions too. Since many of immigrant parents don’t want their children to participate at some school events, because of their cultural traditions and religious beliefs, it must be more and more difficult for their children to be able to completely integrate into the society.

We can say, the way Europe see immigrants and the ways the immigrants see their identity in Western countries, has certainly changed during the last decades. Diverse religions and their image in Western Europe has become a discussed topic and people are now more aware of their impact on the Western society and culture.

5.3 Importance of the family and the relationships in it

Immigrants come to Great Britain from countries all around the world. For many of them, it is a larger number of job opportunities promising them the ability to ensure their families better living standard. Sometimes, first a man comes to find a job and create a home and his family follows him later, sometimes only a man comes there to work and sends money to the family at home. But it is always a family and better living what makes them come to Great Britain, or to Western Europe in general.

In Muslim families, which take a big part of immigrants, living in Western Europe, the family is one of the most valuable figures of their lives. We can say the majority of Muslim immigrants profess Islam. According to the Haeri’s *The Elements of Islam*, on the basis of the Koran, a Muslim woman is equal to a man. In fact, she has the same dignity as a man, but they are not equal. She is valued as a mother, taking care of the children and as a person who makes home important. However, when we look at the current form of relationships between Muslim men and women from today’s perspective, they are not equal at all. A woman must always obey the man in her life – first, it is her father and then her husband. According to

the Sharia⁴ physical punishment is allowed, but it is used only by a small amount of Muslim countries.

Usually, the woman is at home taking care of their private life and the public life is the man's domain. It is understood as not defending women to take part in a public life, but as a protection of them, because they are weaker than men. As men are more dominant than women, they also take much more responsibility for their acts. The man is the main authority in the family and only his decisions are taken into consideration. All of this doesn't mean that the position of a woman in the Muslim world and in the family is hopeless, but the position of a man can be easily exploited, when he doesn't treat a woman according to the Koran (Haeri 177 - 179). Muslim women don't interact with British women directly very often. When they go out, they mostly go shopping in their neighbourhood, so they hardly get in touch with them. But when they do, they can see the differences between them – in their clothing and in the way of behaviour. Generally, British women seem to be more confident, individual and ambitious. On the one hand, this Western position of a woman is something exotic and full of opportunities for them. On the other hand, Muslim women have usually a safe place at home under the protection of their husbands. From the perspective of Western Europe, we could see it as something incomprehensible but for the Muslim society this kind of relationship between men and women is normal. The children's perspective is more or less the same. They should obey their parents and maintain their family's heritage (Haeri 178 – 179). In many cases the marriages are arranged so the parents could choose a good husband for their daughter. However, as the children grow up in a Western country and they learn there is another possible way of life, they often continue in their studies and their parents don't obstruct the opportunity of being educated and make their lives better with that. Unfortunately, there are many cases of children who squander their lives in closed communities doing nothing.

There are also many mixed marriages among immigrants. As some immigrants come to Great Britain at a young age, they go to British schools and make friends among people of diverse origins, differences in color of skin or in religions disappear for them. It is also possible for a Muslim man to get married to a non-Muslim woman

⁴ “Sharia” is understood by Western countries as a “law”, but it means more the “path” a person should follow during his life. It shows religious and ethical principles, simply, how should people behave to one another (Skoblík).

and she doesn't even have to convert to Islam because the man is the authority of the family and he is the one who will determine their religious identity (Skoblík).

In general, relationships in immigrant families are good, but of course, there are many cases where parents are pushing their children into something they don't want to, or in something already culturally incomprehensible to them.

5.4 Differences between diverse generations

As mentioned above, immigrants come to Great Britain mainly because of a better job and a secured family. So it is only natural that there is another generation growing up in Great Britain when the first one settles down. Of course, there is a difference in perspective of people who came to Great Britain searching for something they were missing in their original country, and of their children who are already born there. There is a difference in understanding their religion, culture and simply their attitude to life. The first generation of immigrants has to face the pressure of the British to assimilate but also the pressure of their own to not forget their language, culture, traditions and religion. In most cases, it is very difficult for the first generation to assimilate, to get used to a totally different way of life. Many of the immigrants come from countries such as India, Bangladesh, Pakistan and many others, where the way of looking at a family and ways of working are completely different from the ways which are common in Western Europe. So it is much more difficult from many perspectives for the first generation to come to Great Britain to start a new job, to become assimilated to the strange environment and culture and to find some friends.

On the other hand, the generation of their children has an advantage of already growing up in Great Britain, so they assimilate more easily. They go to schools learning English, they interact with British children and make many friends beyond the community of people coming from their country of origin. This generation assimilates not only mentally, but also in a matter of a physical appearance. They prefer Western form of clothing or hair styles. The generation of immigrants' children thinks of Great Britain as the place where they can live safely, where they can study and it doesn't depend on the gender, religion or their origin. Of course, it is still matter of the particular family how they raise their children but in most of the cases they are free to make use of the life their parents gave them by moving to a Western country.

However, the important thing they lose is that they usually forget their family roots. Very often, they don't find traditions of their original culture and religion attractive, because they have never had first-hand experience of it. Parents could tell stories about their country and everything about it, but these children don't understand it as they grow up in a different society and culture which they consider their home.

On the contrary, the first generation of immigrants (now we talk mainly about Muslim immigrants) took the religion as one of the aspects of their culture they wanted to preserve. However, there is a part of Muslims of a second or third generation who take religion as the most important aspect of their immigrant lives and heritage (Barša 34). After terrorist attacks and the pressure from the Western world on Islamic religion and its problems, they seem to become more defensive and proud of their beliefs. So we can say, there is a difference between generations of immigrants who came to Great Britain and the generation of their children, but there are also differences among the immigrants of the second generation. However, a part of them becomes prouder of their heritage than their parents ever were.

6. Aspects of multiculturalism in the selected novels

6.1 How the immigrants look at the British and vice versa

Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* captures the lives of a Bangladeshi family in London. They live in a separated Bangladeshi community, so they don't interact with the British very much. They live in a small apartment which stays the same for decades – in a very bad condition. Bangladeshi women are confined to the home for most of their lives, cleaning, cooking, or working. Some of them can speak English, but it is mainly a matter of their own effort, not of necessity. They like to stay with their family or friends from the Bangladeshi community with whom they speak Bengali. Nazneen, the main character of *Brick Lane*, learns English only from her daughters and doesn't take any course of the English language, only because her husband thinks it is not necessary. When Nazneen arrives in London, her day routine is just cleaning and cooking. Only after some time, she becomes more courageous and goes for walks into the city, or in her neighbourhood on her own, i.e., without her husband. She mainly gets into contact with British women, their way of clothing and the whole way of life which is so alien from the life of Bangladeshi women, mainly as regards its liberty. Through her thoughts we can observe that even though she grew up in a society where women have to obey their husbands, she would secretly like to try to live like the British women: to be free in opinions, clothing and in the whole way of life. Chanu, Nazneen's husband, talks mainly about the British with whom he gets in touch at his job. He thinks that they don't appreciate his intelligence enough and knowledge at work and he also thinks that as a person coming from a different country, he must work harder than anyone else. He always dreams and talks about the promotion which never comes. He has studied at several universities but he is more of a talkative person and he doesn't like working. Two of Nazneen's and Chanu's daughters Shahana and Bibi interact with the British much more than their parents. They learn the English language, British history and British culture every day at school so they have a completely different point of view on the lives of the immigrants. They make friends at school, not only in their Bengali community, and they also see their lives more from the British perspective. They see British children as more free and their parents as more benevolent. Shahana as a teenage girl likes more the Western way of clothing than the Bangladeshi one her father pushes her into: "Shahana lifted her head. She was wearing her new jeans. Chanu had stopped objecting to the tightness of her old jeans. The new ones were baggier than

a pair of rice sacks, and she had cut the ends off and worked on them so that they frayed in exactly the right way“ (Ali Ch. 16).

It is very difficult for the children to be in the middle of two diverse cultures and have to decide which one they would prefer – the one which is connected with their family’s history, but with the history they don’t feel to have much in common with, or the history of the country they actually live in.

How the British see the Bangladeshi community, or the Muslims, is visible in the scenes, where the British leave political leaflets about cultural and religious interference of immigrants, in families’ letterboxes. Leaflets about different cultures, religions and feasts which interfere into the British culture:

HANDS OFF OUR BREASTS!

The Islamification of our neighbourhood has gone too far. A Page 3 calendar and poster have been removed from the walls of our community hall. How long before the extremists are putting veils on our women and insulting our daughters for wearing short skirts? Do not tolerate it! Write to the council! This is England! (Ali Ch. 12).

These short messages show that even though the immigrants don’t integrate into the society the British people are aware of the different culture and some of them seem not to like that this is interfering with their lives and mainly with the lives of their children in the schools. However, this is the only way through which the reader can see or imagine what the British think about the growing number of immigrants and their expanding culture in the book.

The novel *White Teeth* by Zadie Smith captures the lives of two families living in London. A family of Iqbals, originally from Bangladesh, and a family of Joneses – a mixed marriage of an Englishman and a Jamaican woman. The story of these two families intertwines with a British Jewish-Catholic family of Chalfens which gives the reader yet another perspective of the British society – in this case, seen from the point of view of the white family.

Samad Iqbal is a man living in his forties in an arranged marriage with a young Bengali woman Alsana. He works in an Indian restaurant as a waiter for a low salary and so he has problems to support the family with the money he earns. Samad gets in

touch with the British because in the restaurant he needs to interact with people of other origins. This mainly concerns his only friend Archie – an Englishman whom he met during World War II. Even though Samad interacts with the British a lot, he is obsessed with the history of Bangladesh and is not happy about the impact British culture has on his children. His conviction arises to that point that he decides to send at least one of his sons Magid, because for the lack of money he can't send both of them back to Bangladesh to get to know the family history, to get better education and to be raised in his own culture. Through this the reader can observe paradoxes in immigrants' thinking – they move to Great Britain to provide themselves better lives, but still, they think that social services and education isn't good enough for their children and they, of course, don't want their children to accept the British way of life as their own. The position of Samad's wife Alsana is more or less the same as the one of Nazneen's from *Brick Lane*. The only difference is that Alsana has more impact on her husband Samad, she is way more independent in her own decisions. Unfortunately, there isn't any part in the novel narrated by her to see her direct thoughts and observations on the British. However, Alsana doesn't forget about her family in Bangladesh, but she realizes more than her husband that their sons have better lives and opportunities in England. Iqbal's twin sons Magid and Millat are a perfect example of the next generation of immigrants. They go to school with British children and they completely adopt the British culture, language or the way of clothing. Especially Millat because he is the son who is not sent to Bangladesh. Millat, who is in his teenage years, dates white British girls, which is of course incomprehensible to his parents. It is common in their culture that people get married only with their parents' approval and with the person of the same religion and roots. Now, the parents have to face the fact that their children don't see any difference between the cultures anymore.

The reader gets a completely different perspective from the Jones family. Archie Jones is married to a young Jamaican girl Clara, they are happy in their mixed marriage, so the reader can observe here a problem-free cohabitation of two people of diverse countries and cultures. Archie actually doesn't even see any difference in being with a girl of a different origin, maybe because Clara was raised in the Christian religion so in that way Archie and her aren't that different. Their daughter Irie has a complicated life to face – she is a child coming from a mixed marriage and she has to struggle with different parts of her soul. She has to deal with a special appearance which for her, as a teenage girl, is very difficult. In fact, she tries to change as she wants Millat to like her

and to look the same as British girls. She goes to a hairdresser and straightens her curly hair:

Jackie wrinkled her nose. “Usually de udder way roun’. How curly is it? Lemme se what’s under dere — “She made a grab for Irie’s headscarf. Irie, horrified at the possibility of being laid bare in a room full of people, got there before her and held on tight. ...

“What is it you want?”

“Straight,” said Irie firmly, thinking of Nikki Tyler. “Straight and dark red.”
(Smith Ch. 11)

It of course ends up badly as the hairdresser burns all of her hair and has to wear fake hair. Her change into a British-looking girl doesn’t end the way she has wished for.

The Chalfen family appears on the scene when Millat and Irie get into trouble at school and the director decides they need to get another perspective on life – the perspective of a British family. The Chalfens are a family of educated scientists and they are supposed to teach these “problematic” children what they have missed in their classes of biology. They are a rich family with smart children and a different way of life, more benevolent and open-minded. They consider themselves to be superior and mainly to be someone better to provide parental advice to Millat and Irie. The Chalfens think that these immigrant children are raised in poor conditions without parental love and money. They feel they need to help them mentally and also financially, which, of course, Alsana and Clara neither like, nor understand. But even though they seem to be a “perfect” family, they have their internal problems. They forget about their own children and their worries at the expense of these children from totally different families.

On the contrary, the novel *The Moor’s Last Sigh* is situated in India, not in Great Britain so it is more difficult to analyze the behavior between the British and people of a different origin. But the reader can follow these patterns from the perspective when India was colonized by Great Britain.

The novel follows several generations of a wealthy Indian family with Portuguese and Jewish roots. This family isn’t definitely what one would imagine when talking about an Indian family. Most importantly, there is the way of their life –

art, business, free way of life without generally accepted conventions. During the generations, the family deals with homosexuality, love affairs or illnesses, but they more or less accept it with understanding and a free mind. The story takes place first in Cochin in southern India, than in Bombay and finally in Spain.

The novel is mainly about strong, clever and open minded women. Epifania da Gama, the great grandmother of the main character Moor, is a tough woman with her own opinions. Belle da Gama, Moor's grandmother, is a strong independent woman who for many years takes care of the family when her husband is in jail. She keeps running a family business in spices and is in many ways a strong woman. Her behaviour and way of clothing remind us more of a British woman. She is tough enough to be able to command the house personnel, to be present on plantations and to take care of the books. However, this complete employment prevents her from being more often with her daughter Aurora and to give her more of the parental love. Aurora Zogoiby, Moor's mother, also reflects more the British way of life of the first half of the 20th century than the Indian one as the reader can imagine. She, as a known and respected artist, is in contact with the higher society of Cochin and later of Bombay and organizes parties full of drinking. She is a very strong character with a tart tongue which she uses any time about anything. Her husband Abraham Zogoiby comes from an orthodox Jewish family, but he abandons his religion and the community for a better life with the young Aurora. He takes care of Aurora's family business and within few years, after their departure from Cochin to Bombay, he becomes, under the surface, a famous crime lord.

The major difference between this novel and the others mentioned above is that India was once part of the British Empire. They have a common language and we could say Indian people adopted some principals of the British way of life and its culture. Some of the people for example adopted Christianity as their own religion. But even though India was colonized by the British and they tried to create a sense of Englishness by British lawns, cricket, golf or tea parties, it was only an illusion. Behind that illusion there were always Indian things, scents and habits that could not be interchangeable or hidden (Rushdie, "The Moor's Last Sigh" 21-22). There were of course Indians who supported the British Empire and there were those who were happy when Great Britain left their country. The first, such as Epifania, felt saved by the British Empire, they felt they would be nothing without their help. The British gave them civilization, established law and order and were generous enough to buy their products which

provided them some income. The latter, such as Francisco, Epifania's husband, felt robbed by the British. They took away the richness of their nation – wheat, rice, saltpeter, manganese and many other products that should stay there to feed the Indian nation. They also forced the local businessmen to sell their products below cost (Rushdie, "The Moor's Last Sigh" 5). It was a struggle between the British, old-fashioned way of life, God, a peaceful life and between Indian passionate vigour and energy. In this novel, the relationships between the British and the Indians and the differences in their way of life are not that important. The major theme is the cohabitation between the Indians and the people who loved England and adopted everything that made them British.

6.2 Religion

In the novel *Brick Lane*, the presence of religion and its aspects in immigrants' lives is strongly visible. The Bangladeshi family professes Islam as the majority of immigrants coming from this country. Nazneen and Chanu treat each other according to the Muslim traditions and deep-rooted principles coming from their culture. Nazneen is a seemingly calm wife who doesn't openly express her opinions, her husband Chanu is the one who has the last word and must be obeyed. Only at the end of the novel, this stereotype changes a little when Nazneen becomes more courageous in dialogues with her husband. When the couple is on the street, Nazneen always walks a few steps behind Chanu and always wears a headscarf. Chanu doesn't like her best friend Razia because she is very independent, open in her opinions and he thinks she has a bad influence on Nazneen. Razia's husband passed away during an accident at work and since then she has been taking care of her children on her own. She works a lot to make enough money to provide her children better lives and the possibility to study at university. She likes being a citizen of Great Britain and she doesn't even wear clothes which Bangladeshi women are supposed to wear. Nazneen likes Razia for her frankness and the friendship with her is actually the only thing in which she doesn't blindly obey Chanu.

Nazneen doesn't abandon her belief and traditions connected with it after her arrival in London. She, unlike her husband Chanu, prays everyday according to the Islamic rules and also frequently reads some parts from the Koran. He obviously does it because she was raised in a religious environment, and also because it reminds

her of her former home in Bangladesh and of her family. As she comes to London at a young age and is not used to the British way of life, she is very surprised that her husband barely reads from the Koran or prays. The novel reveals many interesting facts about the Islamic religion. One of the most important storylines of the novel is the affair Nazneen has with a young revolutionary man Karim. She struggles with her religious side and with her inner self longing to experience love and passion she has never known:

He was the first man to see her naked. It made her sick with shame. It made her sick with desire. They committed a crime. It was a crime and the sentence was death. In between the sheets, in between his arms, she took her pleasure desperately, as if the executioner waited behind the door. Beyond death was the eternal fire of hell and from every touch of flesh on flesh she wrought the strength to endure it. (Ali Ch. 14)

She sees it, according to the Islamic religion, as a terrible offence for which she will end up in hell. She ends it when she realizes her family is much more important.

Chanu seems to be more interested in the history and literature of his original country than in the religion. Maybe it is because he had lived in London for about twenty years when his wife arrived. Till that time he was living alone with his books, mainly by British authors because he admires British writers. Also, he was interacting with the British at work, so it is possible he almost forgot the importance of his religion, because at that time there was no one to remind him of it. Only after the radical riots of 2001 and the terrorist attacks on 11th September in 2001, Chanu for the first time starts to think about his beliefs and considers going back to Bangladesh. Because the situation in the streets changes, The British are getting more intolerant towards Muslims and they start to hate Islam. Chanu's and Nazneen's daughters don't show any signs of religious interest, even though their mother seems to maintain religious traditions. Of course, their father pushes them to know by heart some verses from the Koran or to recite poems by famous Bangladeshi poets, but they do all of it only because they have to. They are the youngest generation of immigrants who actually feel happy in the British society and who are able to integrate into the society.

The reader can also be present at meetings of the revolutionary group of Muslims "Bengali Tigers". They want to persuade the local Muslim community to abandon their

lives of secularism and get back to the religious traditions. We can observe the wild discussions between the group members, when some of them want to deal with the problems of the local community and the others want to fight for Muslim people, especially children throughout the world. There are also girls covered in headscarves, but their comments are not much heard from the other members. The reader can see that this is the next generation of Muslims who are inspiring the older generation of their parents from which many of the people got used to the everyday life in their community and who were happy with their position in British society. The younger generation becomes prouder of who they are and where they come from. Ali well depicts ethnically motivated rebellions and protests in the streets (in the area of Brick Lane) and also the Oldham riots⁵ which caused ethnic tensions throughout the country.

In Smith's *White Teeth*, one can see some similar signs in religious traditions as in *Brick Lane*. It is understandable, because the reader follows narrations of the Bangladeshi family the Iqbals, so the origins of these families are the same. In this case, it is the father of the family Samad who wants his children to keep their history, traditions and religious beliefs. However, even at a young age his son Magid becomes obsessed with British culture and history, so it is more and more difficult for his parents to be able to keep traditional habits at home when their children are exposed to British pressure at school and with their friends and when they actually don't seem to want to keep their traditions. At parents' meetings Samad frequently demands for a bigger part of representation of Muslim religious feasts at school. He isn't happy with the fact his sons are learning only about British history and only follow British feasts such as Halloween and Christmas and so he suggests other alternatives:

“It is very simple. The Christian calendar has thirty-seven religious events. *Thirty-seven*. The Muslim calendar has *nine*. Only nine. And they are squeezed out by this incredible rash of Christian festivals. Now my motion is simple. If we removed all the pagan festivals from the Christian calendar, there would be an average of” — Samad paused to look at his clipboard — “of twenty days freed up in which the children could celebrate Lailat-ul-Qadr in December, Eid-ul-Fitr in

⁵ “Oldham riots” were ethnic violent protests in Oldham, later in other parts of England, in 2001.

January and Eid-ul-Adha in April, for example. And the first festival that must go, in my opinion, is this Harvest Festival business.” (Smith Ch. 6)

And on the contrary, some people distribute leaflets which express the displeasure of some British with the fact that their children learn Muslim traditions at school, such as preparing their traditional meals or learning the history of some Asian or African countries. The reader can see there are both, the willingness of the British to accept some of the Muslim’s traditions and to learn about their habits, but also their feeling of losing their own country in favour of the immigrants.

The Jones family doesn’t profess any religion. Archie Jones is an Englishman without any religious beliefs, however, his wife Clara was raised by a fanatic mother belonging to the Jehovah’s Witnesses. Clara was pushed from an early age by her mother to circumnavigate her neighbourhood, to ask people if they wanted to join the Jehovah’s Witnesses and to distribute leaflets. Her mother was very strict and she didn’t approve of any pleasures, so the reader sympathizes with teenage Clara when she leaves this life and gets into the community of “free” people, where she later on meets her future husband Archie, who gets in there accidentally.

Even though the Chalfen family is Jewish, there are not any signs of religious behaviour in the novel. It is interesting to compare families of the Iqbals and the Chalfens. Iqbals profess the Islam and they fight for their traditions and try to lead their children to keep them. On the other hand, the Chalfens don’t make any efforts to preserve their Jewish traditions. They seem to forget all of this side of their lives and they focus mainly on science. The reader ruminates on the fact that the longer people of different origin or religious beliefs live in a foreign place, the more possible it is that they forget their traditions and beliefs. The reader asks a question if the Iqbals will look like the Chalfens and also forget their roots after several years, or during the next generation.

The novel *The Moor’s Last Sigh* depicts more of the family traditions than just the religion. Even though the narration takes place in India, where there is a mixture of diverse religions, such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, or Islam, the family doesn’t show any signs of religious belief. Maybe it is because the family belongs to the higher society and has artistic roots, they maintain another perspective of the world around them.

The only member of the family, who seems to be religious, is Epifania, Moor's great-grandmother. She is a defender of the British Empire and is happy that India is a part of it. She professes Christianity, a religion much closer to Western Europe than to Asian countries. She is very pious and has a private chapel at home, but none of her children and grandchildren has a close relationship to the religion. It is interesting, because when we compare Rushdie's novel with the others in the analysis, the reader can see that almost everyone coming from countries such as Bangladesh, India, Pakistan have deep religious roots and maintain their traditions. This family seems to be different and it could be because of this inherited preference for Western culture.

The parental side of Moor's family is Jewish. His father Abraham Zogoiby grew up in Cochin and lived in a Jewish quarter with his mother Flory. Flory, of course, wants his son to marry a Jewish woman to maintain the family heritage. However, Abraham falls in love with the young Aurora, Moor's mother, for whose family company Abraham works as a manager. Flory doesn't agree with this kind of relationships, because Aurora is not a Jew and is not willing to accept Judaism. Flory wants to persuade her son to stay and she reminds him of their family's Jewish heritage, but Abraham, abandons his mother and religion easily without looking back. Because, neither the Cochin's bishop, nor the head of Cochin's Jews, wanted to wed the couple, they didn't get married, Aurora only accepted Abraham's name:

No victory is ever complete. The Bishop of Cochin refused to countenance the idea of Abraham's conversion, and Moshe Cohen the leader of the Cochin Jews declared that under no circumstances could any Jewish marriage be performed. This is why – I now reveal for the first time – my parents were so keen to speak of the event in the Corbusier chalet as their wedding night. When they went to Bombay, they would call themselves Mr and Mrs, and Aurora took the name Zogoiby and made it famous; but, ladies and gents, there were no wedding bells. I salute their unmarried defiance; and note that Fate so arranged matters that neither of them – irreligious as they were – needed to break confessional links with the past, after all. I, however, was raised neither as Catholic nor as Jew. I was both, and nothing: a jewholic-anonymous, a cathjew nut, a stewpot, a mongrel cur. (Rushdie, "The Moor's Last Sigh" 23)

6.3 Importance of the family and the relationships in it

The novel *Brick Lane* shows the reader several kinds of relationships in immigrant families. Nazneen is married to a much older man by her father. The fact that she grew up in a small village in Bangladesh, lost her mother and was sent to London as a teenage girl, are reasons why she is so shy and afraid of arguing with her husband. On the surface, the relationship between her and Chanu is peaceful, but she is fighting inside, afraid what would happen if she said anything against him. She has been married for fifteen years and the first time she expresses her own opinion is at the end of the novel. She realizes the life in London is her real home and she is also intensively pushed to say what she really wants by her older daughter. Nazneen finally tells him she doesn't want to come with him back to Bangladesh: "You're coming with me, then? You'll come?" "No," she breathed. She lifted his head and looked into his face. It was dented and swollen, almost out of recognition. "I can't go with you," she said. (Ali Ch. 21)

Even though Chanu seems to be the "head of the family", Nazneen is the one who, by little moves and signs, directs some of Chanu's decisions. But he needs to think he is the most important part of this family providing money and education. Nazneen helps him to secure the family with working at home on the sewing machine when he loses his job. On the one hand, it is kind of selfish of him, because he loses the job only because he thinks he is much cleverer than the others and that he has a great talent they didn't find, so it is only the thing of pride. On the other hand, it is somehow understandable that he feels discriminated and undervalued as a man with qualifications from several universities. However, when he unwisely borrows money from a usurer, an old wily Bangladeshi woman who makes trouble by threatening them, it is Nazneen who deals with it and makes Chanu think it was his merit what persuaded the lady to leave. It is an affair Nazneen has with a younger man who, on the one hand shows her a different kind of love she always wanted to experience, but on the other hand she realizes her husband is a good man only showing his feelings in a different way. Nazneen's affair isn't in accordance with Islam religion, when a husband finds out an affair of his wife, it could end very badly for the woman. The reader can see that Chanu isn't stupid and has a suspicion that something is going on. However, he never says it out loud and later, it is Nazneen who ends the affair by herself when she considers which values are important. The reader feels that the author wanted to show that love and respect for one another may have several faces.

Nazneen's and Chanu's daughters Shahana and Bibi seem to be more on their mother's side than on their father's. Chanu forces them to learn many poems by heart and to recite them for his amusement. When they say a word against him, he becomes mad, so they are afraid of him almost all the time. He is trying to provide them a good education and to like everything about it so much without any amusement that obviously, neither side is satisfied. Girls, as they were born and grow up in Great Britain, go to British school and have also some British friends, want to have the same life as their classmates have. Chanu threatens them with returning back home to Bangladesh and at the end he really realizes it. He always speaks about how great and safe life in Bangladesh is and how people are nice there. But his daughters never know anything else than London, so it is comprehensible they are afraid of going somewhere they don't know it.

Nazneen's friend Razia has two teenage children. She is alone to support their family because her husband died and before that he was sending all of the money back to Bangladesh to support his family there. As the reader follows the lives of these families, it seems Razia has very good relationship with her children. Razia also makes a living by sewing clothes and she gives the majority of the money to her children's studies. As time passes, her son Tariq begs her more and more for some money to buy books to school. Only after some time Razia finds out he is addicted to drugs and puts all the money his mother gave him on that. The author reveals yet another perspective of looking at Muslim immigrants. We can see that even though Razia is a Muslim woman, she is able to make her own living and take care of the family on her own. Then the reader can see that immigrant children are not only good children sitting at home studying and reading verses from the Koran. There are gangs arising in Muslim communities which are full of teenagers stealing or getting addicted to drugs.

Immigrant families in the novel are more or less the same as the families of Western cultures – they are as diverse as any people are. It only seems that according to their religious beliefs, they stick together more than many families in Western Europe, even though they don't keep their tradition so strongly.

In the novel *White Teeth*, the reader follows lives of diverse families of diverse cultural origins, so their family's relationships are different according to their religious and cultural traditions. The Iqbal family is also a Muslim family professing Islam. Samad is the "head of the family" and he must be obeyed. However, his wife

Alsana isn't a calm and quiet wife as Nazneen is. Even though she is much younger than Samad, which would make a person think that she respects and obeys her husband in any way, she is arguing about everything and sometimes she gets what she wants. Actually, the reader can feel there isn't much respect in this couple, mainly after a very rash decision of Samad about sending one of his sons back to Bangladesh. After many years living in Great Britain he realizes he wants something better for his children, better education and especially living in their traditional social environment:

“But I am just trying to make you understand my situation. Then, as now, the question is always: *What kind of a world do I want my children to grow up in?* You took action on that matter once. And now it is my turn.” ...

“Because there is rebellion in them, Archie. I can see it — it is small now but it is growing. I tell you, I don't know what is happening to our children in this country. Everywhere you look, it is the same. Last week, Zinat's son was found smoking marijuana. Like a Jamaican!” ...

“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. Corruption!” (Smith Ch. 8)

But he hasn't got enough money to send both of his sons to his family in Bangladesh, so he decides he will send only one of them. When the time comes, he takes his children out of their beds during the night and doesn't decide who will leave until they are in the car and he chooses his son Magid. But the most interesting and outrageous thing about it is that he plans this without telling Alsana. It is because he knows that she, of course, wouldn't let him do it, but it perfectly shows that a Muslim man can do what he wants and can easily take advantage of his position of a man in the family. He doesn't care about what it will do to his wife, how she will feel after losing one of her sons for an unknown period of time. After this incident Alsana decides to punish Samad by answering only in puzzles any time he asks about something. So the Iqbals deal for many years only with one of their sons Millat.

Millat's relationship with his parents isn't as close as one would imagine when they have only one son left. However, Millat doesn't really obey his parents and he does

what he wants. He is very popular as he is communicative and independent, so he has got many friends of diverse origins at school and in their neighbourhood. Later in the novel, when he and Irie start to visit the Chalfens, it seems he has a better relationship with Joyce, Mrs. Chalfen. However, Millat discusses with Joyce only his problems and asks more and more often for money. He also dates girls of diverse origins which, of course, his parents don't like because they feel he is losing his religious roots. It is interesting to see that Millat and Magid are twin brothers but they don't keep in touch. One would imagine that they would be sad being separated and living their lives differently, but they are not. When the Iqbal family reunites after about ten years, when Magid returns home, there is a big hole in their relationships which can't be reformed.

In the Jones family, the relationship between husband and wife seems to be more equal and harmonic than in the Iqbal family. Even though Clara is younger than Archie he takes her as an equal – in the way he treats her and lets her make her own decisions. As they are a couple in a mixed marriage, one would think they will have more problems dealing with diverse origins, cultural habits and traditions. But it seems none of them realizes they could be somehow different. Clara doesn't take advantage of the fact she is young, she doesn't argue with Archie that much and she is faithful even though she could be with someone closer to her age. But she chooses to marry Archie to have a safe and secured life. Their daughter Irie has a complicated childhood being the only child of this mixed marriage and feeling so strange and uncomfortable in her own body in this society. She isn't confident enough to handle this kind of difference and tries to look like the others at all costs. She seems to have a nice relationship with her parents, but after her visits at the Chalfens' house and her work for Mr. Chalfen, her attitude changes a little and she becomes more ambitious. She comes to her mother's bed to tell her that she would like to go to a dental school, but before that she would like to become a volunteer in Africa. Accidentally, she knocks down the glass with her mother's false teeth, she has had since her teenage years after an accident on a scooter. Irie gets mad and accuses her parents of not respecting her enough, because for all of her life, her parents didn't tell her about it. That is when she escapes from home and goes to her grandmother's house. For the first time, she comes to know a different life, a life of a Jehovah's Witness. She doesn't want to be one of them, but she actually likes it there.

The Chalfen family isn't depicted so elaborately. However, the relationships in it aren't as good as they seem to be at the first sight. At first the reader could see a perfect family of scientists having a pleasant atmosphere at home, parents who understand their children and want to help some others who need it. But as time passes, we can observe there are also some problems. Obviously, Joyce is mostly a bored mother who thinks she could help anyone and that her advice is the best. She doesn't realize that with this interference in the problems of Millat and Irie, she hurts their parents, especially their mothers. She is the kind of person who thinks that money makes people better that it ensures better upbringing of children and stable family roots. As Joyce becomes more interested in other children, mainly Millat, she somehow forgets her own. Joshua, the oldest son thanks to whom Millat and Irie started to visit their family, also needs his mother's attention, love and advice, instead she deals with someone else. Unfortunately, Joyce and Joshua's father Marcus seem to not realize this problem, so Joshua decides to go against Marcus's scientific project.

We can see there aren't actually any differences between relationships in immigrant and British families. There is always some problem, either from the perspective of the parents or from the perspective of the children.

The novel *The Moor's Last Sigh* is mainly about the relationships and intrigues in a family during several generations. The relationship between Aurora Zogoiby and her husband Abraham is very interesting. They meet in Aurora's parents company, where Abraham works and she seduces him in spite of her young age. From this moment on, it seems that Aurora is more dominant in their marriage. She tells the children what to do, even though she is actually the kind of mother who lets her children do more or less what they want. When she and Abraham get married, he abandons his Jewish quarter with its religion and traditions, and Aurora lets him to run their family company since her parents are both dead and her uncle isn't really a business person. She only wants to take care of her art, so she leaves all of the business to Abraham. He seems to be more of a quiet person who understands and does his job well. However, as we find out later in the novel, he isn't as saintly as we thought. He secretly runs an illegal business with human trafficking and becomes a very highly regarded person in Cochin's and later in Bombay's gangland. The reader also finds out that Aurora suspected that he is doing something else other than the family business with spice, but she didn't question about it to have a peace for

painting and dealing with artists. Even though their marriage is rather calm, they have also a lot of passionate arguments and as we find at the very end of the novel, Abraham is the one who actually kills Aurora.

Aurora's relationship with her close relatives, such as her grandmother Epifania, or her uncles, isn't very good. She actually hates Epifania and when she has a heart attack, Aurora doesn't help her and calmly observes her until she dies. Aurora loved her parents, but she lost both of them at a young age and that is what made her such a strong and sometimes merciless woman. Her relationship with her daughters isn't as warm as anyone would guess for a mother, but she has a special relationship with her only son Moor. He is born with a special disease and with a crippled hand, so that is why she is very sensitive about him. He is the only child she breast-fed and the only child she wants to paint and is able to talk to as to an equal. Their relationship is ruined when Moor's insane girlfriend, after some other disagreements she has with his family, gives Aurora a tape with Moor's cursing about his mother, which he did in a fit. Aurora and Abraham disinherit Moor for this act and she dies without ever speaking to him again.

Abraham's relationship with his children isn't that clear. He cares about them, but he cares more about the business he has. Only after Aurora's death he reconnects with Moor and spends a lot of time with him. Their three daughters all die by accidents during the years and Moor is the only child left. We could say their relationship is very good, at the end Abraham opens his heart to Moor and tells him lots of things he had been hiding from their family for a long time. Nevertheless, he lies to him in one major thing and that is Aurora's death. Moor goes all the way to Spain to find Aurora's stolen paintings and there he finds out it was his own father and Aurora's husband who killed her.

Since the times of Moor's grandparents, the family has been marked by lies, intrigues and fights for a greater fortune. They are even able to kill themselves to achieve their goals. The only true loving relationship Moor has is with his mother, but they ruin it by their pride.

6.4 Differences between diverse generations

The novel *Brick Lane* is a perfect example of a collision between two generations of immigrants. The reader follows the lives of several families, mainly the Ahmed family, who all have children, so we can see the thinking and behaviour of diverse generations. Chanu is the father of the family so his goal is to support them as best as he can. He comes to London as an educated man with qualifications from diverse universities so it should be easy to find a job for such a qualified person. Chanu is proud of his education and intelligence, so he thinks he should get a promotion. However, it is finally his British colleague who gets the promotion and he feels undervalued and discriminated. On the grounds of this disappointment, in his eyes seen as an injustice, Chanu hands in his notice and after a few weeks of unemployment he finds a job as a taxi driver. There is a pressure put on him because he is the one who has to secure his family. Even though he has been living in London for two or three decades, he is not assimilated into British society. He still doesn't know what to do better and the only solution he can see is to move back to Bangladesh. Although he knows a lot about British history and literature, it seems he doesn't understand British society with its rules and strong-mindedness. At the end of the novel, after many years spent in Great Britain he wants to get back to his original country which he now sees as a hope of better living. It is interesting to observe his attitudes and opinions because he doesn't keep any of the religious or cultural traditions of his original country, only the tradition of the man's position in the family and the society, and yet he thinks it would be better to go back. He seems to forget the poverty and the conditions in which people live there and so it seems to be only a desperate act with an unreal vision of a dream life. Chanu's wife Nazneen keeps more religious and cultural traditions than Chanu, but it's her who finally better assimilates and considers London her real home. There is a similarity between Nazneen and her friend Razia as they both realize, one sooner than the other, that life in Great Britain gives them many more opportunities for better living. This kind of thinking is closer to the younger generation of their children. But unlike Nazneen's daughters, she prays every day and always thinks about her original country and her family. Nazneen is an interesting character because even though she finally assimilates, gets used to life in London and likes it after all, she doesn't forget her beliefs and traditions she was brought up into. Even though she dreams of a more free life of British women, she is satisfied with her life and frees only her mind instead of the clothing and behaviour.

There is a visible difference between Chanu's and Nazneen's generation and the generation of their daughters Shahana and Bibi. They were given Muslim education and traditions by their parents, but the fact they were born in England makes it more difficult for them. They go to British schools where they study in British and they learn British history and cultural traditions, so it is understandable that their Bangladeshi origin becomes a minor part of their lives. Even though one could say they can keep the traditions of their parents easily because they live in a Bangladeshi community, their friends are from the same generation of children who can only think of their country of origin from the perspective their parents gave them. It is obvious why Shahana doesn't want to move back to Bangladesh. Her home is in England and she also sees the situation in Bangladesh more clearly than her father.

Razia and her children are the example of a family which assimilates into the British society without a problem. When they lose the father of the family, Razia has to work hard to secure her children. She doesn't dress in a chaste way like other Bangladeshi women, she wears trousers and sweatshirts and it perfectly reflects the way she sees Great Britain and her attitude towards it. She considers it the country which gives her the opportunity to live freely according to her own decisions and rules.

The reader can see that it is mostly the younger generation already born in Great Britain which assimilates and integrates better into the British society and adopts its culture and traditions. There aren't many representatives of the older generation who feel the same way, i.e., that they are completely assimilated. It is because they still consider their country of origin their real home.

In the novel *White Teeth*, the reader follows the lives of two immigrant generations living in London. The reader observes the attitudes and opinions of life in Great Britain of both generations.

Samad Iqbal comes from Bangladesh with his wife Alsana to provide their family a better and secured living. On the one hand, he sees Great Britain as a country full of opportunities, on the other hand, he doesn't like and understand that his sons adopt more of the British culture and almost forget what their origin is. Samad works as a waiter in an Indian restaurant, which doesn't support his family financially the way he wishes. Several times he has to ask his boss, who is his cousin, for more money. He asks for it mainly because he wants to send at least one of his sons back to Bangladesh, as it is mentioned above. It is somehow strange that he moved to England to provide

better life to his family and then he decides to send his son back to this poor country where the living isn't secure. Samad decides to send his son Magid because he, already in his young age, comes to like the British way of life and clothing. Samad is horrified when he finds out Magid becomes a typical British intellectual and that the life in Bangladesh doesn't change his attitude to life.

Samad's wife Alsana seems to be much more aware of the fact that the situation in Bangladesh isn't safe. She is happy to live in England however she is really worried about the part of her family which is still living there every time she listens to the news on the radio. She tries to explain this to Samad, but he doesn't understand:

“I am crying for my *friends*. There will be blood on the streets back home because of this, India *and* Bangladesh. There will be riots — knives, guns. Public death, I have seen it. It will be like Mahshar, Judgement Day — people will die in the streets, Samad. You know and I know. And Delhi will be the worst of it, is always the worst of it. I have some family in Delhi, I have friends, *old lovers*—“
(Smith Ch. 8)

When she finds out that Samad has sent one of their sons to Bangladesh, the reader can clearly imagine her feelings related to it. It must be terrible for her to realize she is going to lose her beloved child for many years and also to know that he is sent to the place she ran away from. These are the things her husband doesn't realize. He acts only according to his own decisions and doesn't take Alsana's or anyone else's opinion into consideration. Their children see Great Britain from a different perspective. As Alsana sees it as a safe place where she and her family can easily live, her sons see it much more simply because, for at least one of them, it is the only place of living they have known. When Magid is away he doesn't seem to change his opinions and stays the same in favouring England to Bangladesh. His brother Millat who lives with his parents in London is a perfect example of an assimilated immigrant. He doesn't care about his Bangladeshi origin and traditions and he feels to be the same as any other of his British friends. Samad's and Alsana's marriage was arranged as it is common in Bangladesh, but for Millat it is something strange as he grows up in a different society. He doesn't live in a Bangladeshi community, the only Bangladeshi people he interacts with are members of his family. He makes friends among children of diverse cultures and origins and so it is not important for him if he dates a British girl or a girl of

a immigrant origin. This is something his parents can't understand because they were raised in a different society keeping its traditions.

The Jones family is something completely different. Archie is an Englishman who married a young Jamaican woman Clara. But she doesn't actually behave like Alsana for example. She is not one of the immigrants who come to Great Britain to settle down, she was born there to her Jamaican parents. So she is already the next generation of immigrants who has integrated into the British society and has adopted its culture and traditions. Their daughter Irie has different problems to deal with. The only "immigrant" issue she struggles with is her exotic appearance, not any traditions or behaviour her parents would push her into. There isn't much difference between her and her parents' attitudes to life. There are of course some differences in their opinions as she is younger and she wants to achieve different goals than her parents. She becomes more confident, but attitudes to questions of religious and cultural traditions are more or less the same.

The reader can assess that the way immigrants' children look at religious and cultural aspects of life usually depends on their parents' upbringing. In most of the cases, children don't seem to be interested in their history and family roots by themselves, making their own effort. Certainly, there are children who awake interest in family traditions in themselves, but according to these novels one can see there are not many of them.

The novel *The Moor's Last Sigh*, as mentioned above, follows the lives of several generations of an Indian family. The whole family lives in India, so we can't observe any differences in immigrants' thinking as in other analyzed novels. But what the reader can see are different opinions of life in general. As we can see at the beginning of the novel, everyone listens and obeys what the older member of the family says. For example, when Epifania wishes something, everyone tries to do what she wants. So at the beginning there is shown more respect towards the older generation. As the novel goes on, the characters are more free in expressing their opinions and they can do almost whatever they want. It is maybe because the da Gama family and later the Zogoiby family is very independent in some aspects of life. Aurora lets her children follow their dreams whatever they are and she doesn't obstruct them in their decisions. However, the behaviour towards her son Moor is different. Publically, he is free to do

whatever he wants but under the surface Aurora truly cares about him and tries to protect him from people who would hurt him, such as his girlfriend Uma.

Moor is not a child of immigrants, but due to his physical imperfection, he also wants to assimilate into the society somehow:

By the age of seven-and-a-half I had entered adolescence, developing face-fuzz, an adam's apple, a deep bass voice and fully-fledged male sexual organs and appetites; at ten, I was a child trapped in the six-foot-six body of a twenty-year-old giant, and possessed, from these early moments of self-consciousness, by a terror of running out of time. Cursed with speed, I put on slowness the way the Lone Ranger wore a mask. ...

What was harder still was the feeling of being ugly; malformed, wrong, the knowledge that life had dealt me a bad hand, and a freak of nature was obliging me to play it out too fast. What was hardest of all was the sense of being an embarrassment, a shame. (Rushdie, "The Moor's Last Sigh" 33)

He is raised by his artistic mother, who is very independent and unconventional and by the father who is much of his time taking care of the family business. He doesn't even go to school and so he has a private teacher and he studies at home for all of his childhood. The reader can see here, that this is in a way similar to, but also totally different from the situation of immigrant children in the novels analyzed above. Ahmed's or Iqbal's children, from *Brick Lane* and *White Teeth*, feel to be different both culturally and physically. They want to assimilate into the society which sometimes looks at them with displeasure and with a lack of understanding. However, Moor for his whole life wants to be accepted into the society which is his own. So, it is in a way much more difficult to cope with the incomprehension from people who grew up in the same culture as he did.

We can say that the opinions of life and its obstacles differ from one generation to another. At the beginning of the novel, once there was more respect towards parents or grandparents, but as the time goes on, it seems that the parents' point of view is not that important. But one can say we could apply this general truth to everyone's life because as a child grows up into an adult, he thinks his decisions and opinions are the best ones and then later in his life he realizes there was something true about the advice his parents gave him.

7. Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to present and analyze the key concepts of the British multicultural society and their subsequent reflection in the selected novels by the British immigrant authors Monica Ali, Zadie Smith and Salman Rushdie.

According to this work, it can be said that multiculturalism has been a relevant and important topic in Great Britain. The intersection of diverse cultures and beliefs and difficulties connected with it are still current. It is evident that the immigrant authors feel the need to show the co-existence of diverse cultures and its issues. They describe the reality of different lives, religions and also the immigrants' attempt to assimilate while keeping their own culture, history and beliefs.

In consideration of the analysis, it can be stated that the cohabitation between the British and immigrants is more or less trouble-free because the majority of immigrants don't even make an effort to integrate into the British society. They live in closed communities and seem to be satisfied with such lives. Additionally, the British are more or less tolerant, or even indifferent in the matter of immigrants' lives in Great Britain. However, there are also some groups of the British who show they don't like the immigrants' integration into the British society.

There is a slight difference between the lives of the younger generation of immigrants and the older one. According to the analysis it can be said that the younger generation better assimilate into the society as they live in Great Britain all their lives. They care about their culture and religion, but they are not as connected with their history and cultural heritage as their parents. However, there are also some representatives of the younger generation who are fighting for their beliefs to make them more visible in the eyes of the British society.

Religion is another important aspect of immigrants' lives in a different society. According to this work, majority of immigrants coming from South Asian countries is strongly connected with their religious beliefs and convictions. Their understanding of the family unit and its relationships is rooted in their education bound to the religion and cultural traditions.

On the grounds of the thesis it can be said that the attempt of several different cultures to live together is still vivid. Both, the British and immigrants try to live next to each other in peace, to find the way which would meet the requirements of a majority. It can also be said that the most pressing concept of multiculturalism are the integration and assimilation themselves. There will always be difficulties for immigrants

and the British to coexist in harmony, but we can see both sides are trying to make the cohabitation bearable. We can expect that there will be created more literary works concerning the topic of multiculturalism because it is still a discussed issue. The reader will always be interested in discovering diverse cultures and ways of lives through the immigrant literature.

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