

Identitas budaya imigran Bangladesh: kajian novel White Teeth karya Zadie Smith dan Brick Lane Karya Monica Ali

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Abstrak

<i>Most of multicultural literature works explore identity problems. The writer analyzes White Teeth and Brick Lane. Both of them have similarities in terms of situation, setting of place and theme. Both of them explore the theme of diaspora identity undergone by Bangladeshi immigrants. The novels are studied closely on the focus of theme through Stuart Hall's concept of cultural identity by considering character, conflict, setting, tone and point of view.

The leading character of two novels chooses cultural identity in the contrary position. Samad Miah Iqbal, the leading character of White Teeth tries hard to reconstruct his essential identity through residual cultural traits (ethnic and moderate religion). His choice results in his being alienated and exclusive when others follow dominant culture. He is in crisis when failing to find out the identity assumed transcendent and pure, even disillusioned by his twin's taking his own identity quests beyond his hope. Alsana and Neena Begum criticize most of Samad's identity quest.

In Brick Lane, the leading character, Nazneen adapts herself gradually into dominant culture. She had once applied religion for identity quest before she criticized the fundamentalist Islamic group, Bengal Tigers. Ethnic is easier to adapt than religion. Nazneen is in opposite with Chanu who is conservative and defends his cultural identity with ethnicity. Nazneen gives her daughters a chance to find out their own identity. After her proper adaptation into dominant culture, Nazneen finds a convenient position and remains in London with her daughters when Chanu comes back to Bangladesh.

Second Generation of Bangladeshi immigrant following English culture is Magid in White Teeth and Shanana in Brick Lane. Since the very beginning, they have fought to release themselves from ethnical and religious burden in order to identify themselves with English culture. The end of White Teeth shows that Magid is in opposite with Samad and Millat, while Shanana in Brick Lane is finally allowed to lead her own way of identity quest after having been controlled by Chanu for a long time.

Second Generation of Bangladeshi immigrant emphasizing his essential identity through residual culture traits (fundamental religion) is Millat Zulfikar Iqbal and Karim who join ethno-religious group. Millat joined KEVIN and Karim established Bengal Tigers. KEVIN and Bengal Tigers are dedicated for Islam struggle and also for opposing dominant culture. Ethnic is used to support their main goal, i.e. religious struggle. Thus, ethno-religious is used as their collective identity. Their radical attitude causes them to be called Islamic fundamentalist group. This supports Western stereotype that Islam is related with fanaticism, violence and intolerance.

Both of novels prove Stuart Hall's concept that an immigrant identity needs to be positioned in dominant culture because they are in diaspora within a strange land. Referring to residual culture (religion and ethnic) will lead an immigrant into exclusive and alienated life. Identity crisis takes places when one fails to find out the cultural identity assumed pure, fixed, and coherent.

The author of two novels implies the importance of assimilation for immigrant's success in different way. Zadie Smith implies it by showing Samad's identity crisis and failure of finding essential identity. On the other hand, Monica Ali implies it by revealing Nazneen's happiness, as she is willing to adapt herself into dominant culture.</i>