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**Racism and New Dimensions of Projecting the Multicultural Experience
in Contemporary British Drama**

DIPLOMOVÁ PRÁCE

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Permission

Souhlasím se zapůjčením diplomová práce ke studijním účelům.

I have no objections to the MA thesis being borrowed and used to study purposes.

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Table of Contents

<u>Declaration</u>	ii
<u>Permission</u>	iii
<u>Acknowledgements</u>	iv
<u>Table of Contents</u>	6
<u>Chapter 1 - Introduction</u>	7
1.1 Aims of the study	7
1.2 Multiculturalism: Definition and Debate	10
1.3 The Revival of Black Theatre in the Twenty-First Century	14
1.4 Structure of the Study	17
<u>Chapter 2 – Roy Williams</u>	19
<u>2.1</u> <i>Sing Yer Hearts Out for the Lads</i>	19
<u>2.2</u> <i>Sucker Punch</i>	25
<u>2.3</u> <i>The No Boys Cricket Club</i>	30
<u>Chapter 3 – Tanika Gupta</u>	34
<u>3.1</u> <i>White Boy</i>	23
3.2 <i>Suger Mummies</i>	38
<u>Chapter 4 – debbie tucker green</u>	44
<u>4.1</u> <i>random</i>	35
4.2 <i>stoning mary</i>	49
<u>Chapter 5 – Conclusion</u>	55
<u>Bibliography</u>	58
<u>Summary</u>	61
<u>Key Words</u>	63
<u>Resumé</u>	64
<u>Klíčová slova</u>	66

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Aims of the study

The aim of this thesis is to understand multiculturalism in contemporary Britain and to question its discursive boundaries through the works of some black and Asian contemporary playwrights such as Roy Williams, Debbie Tucker Green [sic] and Tanika Gupta. Multiculturalism has become a response to the ‘demographic diversity’ in Britain: “[it] invokes these demographic changes, the intersecting political, legal and theoretical debates over how to respond to them, and governmental attempts to accommodate and even promote cultural diversity.”¹ Multiculturalism is the outcome of multiplicity in Britain. It implies the inclusive political, cultural and theoretical responses to diversity and its impact on all levels. It reinforces interaction and beneficial exchanges between cultures. This is characterized through the support of the revival of theatres and new writing which has led to the flourishing of black theatre and a greater visibility of black and Asian playwrights in mainstream theatres. The Jamaican origins of the black British playwrights Williams and Green enriches their works and enhances the cultural experience. Their works, along with the British Asian, Tanika Gupta, are representative of the revival of the British theatre in the issues they deal with, and how they tackle race and racism on stage. They capture the essence of the intercultural encounters and conflicts of people from different ethnicities to portray an authentic image of Britain in the twenty-first century. Crossing the boundaries of the conventional presentations

¹ Richard T. Ashcroft & Mark Bevir, “Multiculturalism in Contemporary Britain: Policy, Law and Theory,” *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 21. 1 (2017): 1.

of the issues of race and racism they present them in their new disguises where being black is no longer the essence of the dilemma.

Tanika Gupta generates her representations and views to present an inclusive image of contemporary Britain. Her plays do not portray the Asian or the black experience as separate from the 'native- British one'. She addresses in her plays, *White Boy* (2008) and *Sugar Mummies* (2006), a wide range of audiences from different cultures, colours and ages. Originally from Bengal, Gupta, refuses the "labels of black or Asian"² playwrights as she considers herself a British writer,

...I'm not an Asian writer, I'm a writer. You wouldn't call Tom Stoppard a Czech writer or a white writer or an English writer, would you, so why should I be labelled? ... Of course, I'm still proud of being Asian, but the major factor remains that it shouldn't determine your writing because in a sense it denigrated you as a writer I don't know, it 'corners you'.³

Gupta is proud of her Asian origins that inspired her writings. However, she does not want to limit herself.

Gupta's words apply to her co-playwrights, Williams and green. Lynnette Goddard describes Williams as:

highly commended as one of the most valued and articulate new writers in contemporary British theatre. His emergence in the mid-1990s coincided with a surge in new writing and 'in yer face' theatre by white playwrights.⁴

His prominence in the theatrical scene and widespread success he has enjoyed, has inspired his fellow playwrights and led to the emergence of new wave of black playwrights in the 2000s. Some of Williams's major works are: *Fallout* (2003), *Days of Significance* (2007) and *Baby Girl* (2007), in addition to his plays, *Sing Yer Heart Out For the Lads* (2002), *Sucker Punch* (2010) and *No Boys Cricket Club* (1996), that will be discussed in the second chapter.

² Peter Billingham, *At the Sharp End. Uncovering the Works of Five Contemporary Dramatists* (London: Methuen Drama, 2007) 206.

³ Billingham 207.

⁴ Lynnette Goddard, *Contemporary Black British Playwrights: Margins to Mainstream* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015) 21.

debbie green is one of the active voices as well. She “infuses a womanist in-yer-face anger with an experimental form that is influenced by black music and poetry”⁵:

her plays have regularly been produced at London’s main theatre venues ... tucker green has also received extensive international recognition that is rare for black British playwrights with productions of *dirty butterfly*, *born bad* and *stoning mary* in Europe, the USA and Australia.⁶

She has gained national and international success and plays an essential role in the evolving British theatre scene. Both green and Williams deal with local and global themes that emerge from the daily lives of young and working-class people from different ethnic backgrounds. Their themes range from racism and Britishness to violence and the devastating sequences of knife-crime and genocide on families and young people. Williams, Gupta and green articulate the urgent concerns of black people as a means of raising more awareness about the black experience with its elevations and depressions. They deal with the urgent issues to gain more recognition and acceptance from the part of majority. Roy Williams questions how contemporary playwrights can exceed the typical social issues to focus more on the multicultural aspects of Britain today to create a more tolerant society, as he wonders:

‘how’ we can use these plays in the quest for multicultural equality, how these plays can be used to tackle issues of discrimination and prejudice, particularly for the third generation of young black people who are portrayed in many of these plays.⁷

Williams argues that black playwrights’ contemporary plays should become a vehicle to understand the multicultural contexts rather than a ground for discussing the stereotypical subjects, to gain equality and combat racism. Lynette Goddard goes further to urge analyzing the plays from different perspectives: “[black playwrights] plays can be used in different contexts away from the mainstream theatres in a bid to discover a positive purpose for these plays in the fight against racism and discrimination.”⁸ Goddard urges readers to cross the boundaries of the conventional analysis of black playwrights’ plays. She believes that contemporary black British drama portrays new projections of race and racism in the twenty-

⁵ Goddard 208.

⁶ Goddard 69.

⁷ Goddard 214.

⁸ Goddard 215.

first century. The portrayal of these themes on the stage raises awareness and understanding of contemporary cultural issues and how to handle them differently. According to Pitcher:

the inefficiencies of older kinds of racial order may now be overcome by practices that are able to operate differently and differentially – by making use of ideas of race and culture in a more flexible and productive manner – this has entailed not the obsolescence but the transformation of racism. By recognizing that it has accordingly become necessary to think about the politics of race and racism within a new framework.⁹

Racism in the new millennium is embodied in new shapes and forms like the sex trade, violence and knife crime. It is tackled in the works of Williams, Green and Gupta in a variety of ways on stage, through family conflicts, sexual anxiety, knife crime and violence. Thus, this chapter explores the interactions between debates in policy and theory regarding multiculturalism in contemporary British black drama and it investigates the political and cultural controversies through a theoretical lens, applying dramatic arguments to highlight the significance of the black British drama in the revival of black theatre. Hence, it is essential for this thesis to comprehend the meaning of multiculturalism and to acknowledge its vital role as a policy in Britain.

1.2 Multiculturalism: Definitions and Debates

Multiculturalism has become a crucial means and a discursive apparatus to handle diversity in Britain. Multiculturalism in general is understood as “the recognition of group differences within the public sphere of laws, policies, democratic discourses and the terms of a shared citizenship and national identity.”¹⁰ This indicates that cultural differences and the plurality of ethnic communities should be acknowledged through multicultural policies. People from different backgrounds have the right to maintain their identities and cultures in addition to the national one. Multiculturalism has become implicated in a wide range of contemporary

⁹ Pitcher 6.

¹⁰ Bhabha Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism: Cultural Diversity and Political Theory* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000a) 6.

debates and policies. It constructs a new liberated form of doctrines concerning the issues of racism, race relations and national identity:

Multiculturalism, then, can be thought of as the conceptual framework within which the contemporary politics of race finds expression. It has largely come to replace older frameworks that conceived of racial politics as presenting straightforward problems of or conflicts between 'us' versus 'them', and readily accepts an answer that ranges between or across such exclusive categories of identity and belonging.¹¹

These revised multicultural policies superseded the older racial ones which were based on prejudices and biases. The new conceptions of multiculturalism empower the government to manage diversity and to avoid cultural consternations. However, according to Stuart Hall:

multiculturalism is not a single doctrine, does not characterize one political strategy, and does not represent an already achieved state of affairs... it describes a variety of political strategies and processes which are everywhere incomplete.¹²

Hall argues that multiculturalism is constituted of a variety of fragmented doctrines and policies, which rises a potentiality for failure. Some of the policies fail to maintain heterogeneity and to achieve valuable cultural exchanges. In some cases, crossing the border between 'us' and 'them' becomes a mere fantasy, as Ben Pitcher points out: "[m]ulticulturalism describes a political reality where the abolition of such distinctions has increasingly come to seem like a modernist fantasy (of whatever political persuasion).¹³ It is hard to ignore that multiculturalism encapsulates the potentiality to simultaneously generate harmony as well as division and conflict. Racist attitudes continue to be practiced whether on the individual, political or cultural levels. Hence, the clue for understanding the contemporary politics of race and racism is to focus on cultural differences, and to have a comprehensive knowledge of the history of these issues and how the government managed to deal with them the past. Ben Pitcher describes how:

it is first necessary to note the historical importance of the state in shaping the politics of race and racism, and indeed that the very idea of race can be thought of as a product of state

¹¹ Ben Pitcher, *The Politics of Multiculturalism Race and Racism in Contemporary Britain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009) 20.

¹² Hall Stuart, *The Multicultural Question*, Pavis Papers in Social and Cultural Research, no. 4. (Milton Keynes: The Open University, 2001) 210.

¹³ Pitcher 21.

practices: the modern European nation-state was founded on nationalism, and race provided its organic ideology.¹⁴

The long colonial history of Britain was marked by its racial ideologies. The way the policies of multiculturalism were developed and manifested vary considerably, since ‘forced assimilation’ that was followed by a conditioned integration, remained the driving force behind the government’s decisions and strategies. British multiculturalism developed its distinctive doctrines and approaches from the aftermath of the Second World War and beyond. Some critics argue that the “influx of immigration” that Britain witnessed after the Second World War “has radically altered its nature.”¹⁵ Britain became an alternative home for different races and ethnicities from all over the world. This diversity led to the creation of a new form of doctrines like the British Nationality Act in 1948. The BNC “granted a majority of individuals in the Empire and Commonwealth the right to immigrate to the UK.”¹⁶ However, due to the increased number of non-white immigrants and ‘race riots’ in 1958, the 1960s witnessed a ‘racialized tightening’ only on non-white immigrants from the New Commonwealth. These binary and racialized policies influenced the concepts of the British multiculturalism that:

is consequently often described as ‘Janus-faced’, with tough restrictions on outsiders cast primarily in racial terms, but substantial protections for internal cultural pluralism... The unsuccessful attempt to secure the post-imperial Commonwealth vision immediately after the Second World War therefore created a political and legal legacy that intertwined race, citizenship and immigration with the search for ‘Britishness’ after decolonization. Part of this legacy was a distinctive bifurcated and bipartisan ‘regime’ of British multiculturalism.¹⁷

The policies of multiculturalism were described as ambivalent, they limited immigration but encouraged integration. These binary strategies and the failure to create a homogenous state for Britain as a ‘mother land’ for the various ethnicities created a tension concerning the new status of Britishness. These ambivalent standards continued to dominate the multicultural policies of the Thatcherite government in the 1980s and 1990s. However, during this period

¹⁴ Pitcher 23.

¹⁵ Ashcroft & Bevir 1.

¹⁶ Ashcroft & Bevir 5.

¹⁷ Ashcroft & Bevir 5-6.

the multicultural debate took a new turn, concerning race relations and other policies that constituted the policies of multiculturalism. This turn was the result of Labour party's engagement in "an ever more activist anti-racism and valorization of difference through local control of most education and housing provision, which helped offset any attacks from central government."¹⁸ This means that the multicultural policies took new dimensions that raised awareness to cultural pluralism. They became the dominant thread in official approaches to diversity and differences in Britain. When New Labour entered office in the late 1990s, the Party's policies emphasized the plurality of British society. Labour included the issue of race in this inclusive vision in a way that celebrated multiplicity and cultural differences through a commitment to address the established forms of racism and discrimination,

The politics of multiculturalism can accordingly be said to signal an incipient realism in state practice, a recognition that the 'multicultural' is not a transitory phase or optional component of twenty first-century society, but an integral and defining feature of life in Britain today.¹⁹ These novel strategies acknowledge the significance of multiculturalism as a constant policy and embrace cultural diversity as a strand of realism and modernization. The new approaches enhance an explicit and codified respect for cultural differences:

multiculturalism relates to what we might call the facticity of difference ... the sense in which the existence of cultural difference – whether understood in terms of race, ethnicity, or religion – has become fully acknowledged as a constituent part of the societies within which we live today.²⁰

Multicultural adoption of diversity reinforces the public consideration of the value of minority cultures and permeates the artistic and cultural institutions, in particular, theatres. The adoption of multiculturalism into these cultures paved the way for the black theatres and the emergence of entirely new opportunities and a new form of 'Black visibility'²¹ in London's main theatres and beyond. This new visibility comes into existence through the production of black British drama in the mainstream theatres, content which was restricted during the 1970s and 1980 merely to black theatre companies.

¹⁸Ashcroft & Bevir 6.

¹⁹ Pitcher 164.

²⁰ Pitcher 2.

²¹ Goddard 5.

1.3 The Revival of Black Theatre in the Twenty-First Century

There is evidence of the embrace of the black experience and the involving of black and Asian British playwrights into the ‘mainstream’. However, this recognition followed a long era of recession where many black theatre companies were closed during the 1990s due to Arts Council funding cuts and racial policies. This led to a “steady decline of dedicated black theatres.” However, these closures, Lynette Goddard notes:

coincided with the Arts Council of England’s development of cultural diversity initiatives that aimed to foster greater inclusion of black practitioners in mainstream theatre venues...Black British theatre thrived during the first decade of the twenty-first century, which can be accounted to the impact of cultural diversity initiatives throughout the 1990s and into the new millennium.²²

The “Arts Council cultural diversity initiatives” expounded on the essentiality of validating the cultural diversity of playwrights on the theatrical scene despite their racial or cultural backgrounds and distributing a wider awareness to institutional racism. Naseem Khan argues that:

Arts Council cultural diversity initiatives were important for looking at the very infrastructure of British theatre, and ‘for the first time identified the causes of inequality as not just inequalities of funding but also organizational culture, tradition and privilege that restricted entry.’²³

These initiatives played a vital role in investigating the roots of racial practices and attitudes in the theatre space. One of these valuable initiatives is the Eclipse Conference in 2001, and its subsequent report, published in 2002,²⁴ which aimed to:

discuss and devise strategies to combat racism in British theatre [and...] explore ways of developing our understanding and knowledge of African Caribbean and Asian theatre’ (ACE, 4) ...increase cultural diversity in established theatres throughout Britain. The conference was aimed primarily at regional theatres, but its twenty-one recommendations can be linked to the flourishing of black plays on the mainstream in the early twenty-first century.²⁵

The Eclipse Conference commitments call for the urgent need to face racism in the theatrical arena. Providing new and equal opportunities for black and Asian voices in all the theatres in

²² Goddard 15.

²³ Arts Council of England, *Race Equality Scheme 2004-7* (London: ACE, 2005) 23.

²⁴ Goddard 3.

²⁵ Goddard 3.

Britain. However, racism and corruption were rooted in many institutional policies and approaches. Like other scholars, Lynette Goddard notes that another significant ‘catalyst’ in the process of fighting racism was the Stephen Lawrence murder case,

Arguably, the biggest impact on black British playwrights’ presence and the content of black plays in the new millennium was the racist murder of teenager Stephen Lawrence on 22 April 1993. The ramifications of this notorious murder and the subsequent high-profile public inquiry into the blundered police investigation had a momentous impact on race relations and race policy throughout the 1990s and into the early twenty-first century.²⁶

The murder of Stephen Lawrence had a profound impact on the change of the government’s policies. Many critics placed the effects of this murder “alongside Enoch Powell’s famous “rivers of blood” speech”, “the Brixton Riots and the consequent Scarman Report.”²⁷ The murder and its consequences altered the political and cultural landscape of the entire nation and accelerated the move towards an acceptance of cultural diversity. Lynette Goddard believes that there are other factors which stand behind this revival,

Social, political, and material contexts are an important backdrop for assessing developments in black theatre in Britain and evaluating the stories of black experience that prevail at certain moments.²⁸

This flourish of black theatre was the outcome of the interaction of various political and cultural features. At the political level, New Labour policies in the late 1990s tended to support the revival of theatres and cultural institutions not only in London, but all over the nation:

Following a landslide victory in the election of May 1997, New Labour confidently proclaimed the arrival of New Britain... Clearly, the resulting decade of devolution had an impact on theatre outside London...New Labour generosity meant that all cultural institutions, including theatres, had to deliver on social policies: their mission was to deliver to create wider audience access, greater ethnic diversity and more innovative productions.²⁹

New Labour’s political and financial support for the multicultural revival, especially regarding the renewal of the theatres, revitalized the production of new writing by native, black and Asian British playwrights. Intensifying by that the scale of the audience to include different ages, classes and ethnicities:

²⁶ Goddard 7.

²⁷ Goddard 7.

²⁸ Goddard 15.

²⁹ Aleks Sierz, *Rewriting the Nation British Theatre Today* (London: Methuen, 2011) 1.

Due to the bloom that new writing experienced during the 2000s, with increased funds and increased local interest, the map of new writing in Britain today reveals an immense landscape. Its most outstanding features are the Royal National Theatre and Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC).³⁰

Due to substantial financial and cultural support, new writing witnessed unprecedented growth. The directors of the National theatre and RSC encouraged the productions of new writing following the steps of the National Theatre ex-director Trevor Nunn who,

had begun the process when his valedictory season, *Transformations*, involved the staging of eight new plays- by playwrights such as, Roy Williams, Tanika Gupta... when Hytner arrived, he stated that ‘as a nation we think we know who we were, but we need to find out what we’re becoming[...] I want the National to find out what national means.’³¹

British theatre flourished and became full of diversity and cultural pluralism. This unprecedented presence of Williams and Gupta’s plays on the National Theatre was evidence of the “renaissance” of the black British playwriting. Nicolas Hytner became the director of the National Theatre in 2003, the year which foregrounded the starting point towards the bloom in black theatre. He supported the production of new writing and offered more opportunities for black and Asian writers: “[t]he increase in the number of black plays in the new millennium coincides with general trends in the production of contemporary British new writing.”³² Eleven new works by black British playwrights were produced by mainstream theatres in 2003, including tucker green’s *Dirty Butterfly* in the Soho Theatre and Roy Williams’s *Fallout* in the Royal Court.³³ Aleks Sierz identifies that:

This was also the moment when it became clear that much of the energy in British new writing was now coming from black writers whose point of view was critical of both established society and the black subcultures within it.³⁴

The achievements of black theatre in 2003, the potential of producing black drama become more significant due the innovative ways black playwrights criticize the ‘established’ societal and cultural doctrines of both ‘native and non-native’ British communities. The widespread success of these plays attracted the interest of larger audiences across several British theatres.

³⁰ Sierz 32.

³¹ Sierz 32.

³² Goddard 216.

³³ Goddard 4.

³⁴ Sierz ix.

Moving most of the “black playwrights into the major theatres”³⁵ like the National Theatre and Garrick Theatre was evidence of the “cultural renaissance.” All of which has changed the face of British theatre from a conventional canon to a more vivid and innovative space. However, many critics and playwrights were skeptical about this sudden bloom of the black theatre in 2003. ‘Three prominent black practitioners: Paulette Randall, Kwame Kwei-Armah and Steven Luckie’ discussed during a debate in 2004 whether the bloom in black theatre was a temporary state due to the impact of Art Council initiatives and the change in the racial policies. The three of them confirmed that it was still too early to judge.³⁶ Although the surge in interest in black theatre faced some obstacles, it continues to flourish due to greater cultural support:

in the late 2000s the Arts Council had replaced the diversity agenda with a ‘strategic framework for excellence in the arts’, where the impact of black theatre practice will undoubtedly manifest in the future.³⁷

Several cultural and political factors are set to drive the black theatre into the mainstream. The plays of black and Asian black playwrights continue to occupy the main theatres in the second decade of the twenty-first century. Many prominent plays like Williams’s *Sucker Punch* (2010) and tucker green’s *truth and reconciliation* (2011) were staged in the Royal Court, proof of the prosperity and the compelling appeal of the black theatre.

1.4 Structure of the Study

Roy Williams, debbie tucker green and Tanika Gupta present new approaches on the multicultural Britain concerning the issues of race and racism, shedding light on the cruelly racial world from the ‘white and black’ perspectives. Rethinking the questions of identity, Britishness, social agency and national affiliation from new proportions. The following

³⁵ Goddard 5.

³⁶ Goddard 8.

³⁷ Goddard 7.

chapter will focus on Roy Williams's *Sing Yer Heart Out for the Lads* (2002), *Sucker Punch* (2010) and *No Boys Cricket Club* (1996). Williams stages sport in all its complexity as a rich ground for contemplating the issues of racism, belonging, nationalism and identity. He portrays an image of the conflict among the ethnic communities in a multicultural space, highlighting that conflict in its larger context. The third chapter will discuss Tanika Gupta's *White Boy* (2008) and *Sugar Mummies* (2006), both of which reflect the disappearance of a stable, homogenous English identity in a multiracial space. Gupta focuses on the tension between 'black' and 'white' in its larger context to explore racism from a completely different angle. The centre of being accepted in one of the selected communities is not white, but black. The fourth chapter will centre on the issue of violence, in particular knife crime, which is a consequence of racism. tucker green's plays *stoning mary* (2005) and *random* (2008) articulate the shattered hopes and anxieties of the victims' families concerning the issues of racism and belonging from a profound different perspective.

Chapter Two - Roy Williams

2.1 *Sing Yer Hearts Out for the Lads* (2002)

Sing Yer Hearts Out for the Lads first premiered at the Royal National Theatre in 2002, and the production was revived in the Cottesloe in 2004.³⁸ The play portrays the relationships and conflicts between a group of white football white fans and two black brothers, Mark and Barry, in a pub. Barry's delusions of his Britishness and belonging are shattered by the murder of his brother at the hands of Glen, a white teenager. The politics of race and racism in Britain have had a great impact on the form of the national concepts of identity, belonging and Britishness. Despite the adoption of multicultural strategies to maintain cultural diversity, the terrain of multiculturalism remains a rich ground for racial practices. Roy Williams contemplates identity formation in the play, and deals with the cruel realities of racism and nationalism in a world where blackness, as Frantz Fanon confirmed, is still a sign of inferiority. Fanon writes:

The Negro is an animal, the Negro is bad, the Negro is mean, the Negro is ugly; look, a nigger... All round me the white man, above the sky tears at its navel, the earth rasps under my feet, and there is a white song, a white song. All this whiteness that burns me...³⁹

Fanon captures the essence of the black dilemma. Blackness is a symbol of humiliation and inferiority due to the white's dominance and supremacy. The play highlights the black experience in which black people are forced into a state of inferiority and estrangement, something which has devastating long-term effects on the formation of identity. Williams creates in *Sing Yer Hearts Out for the Lads* (2002) different representatives of black and white generations who have their own perspectives of what it means to be black, white and British. Mark and Barry are two black brothers who share the passion for football with the

³⁸ Goddard 97.

³⁹ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (London: Pluto Press, 1986) 113-114.

other white fans. Alan is the voice of the whites, or rather, the voice of reality in the ‘ethnic’ Britain, who reflects that racism is a trait inscribed deep inside them,

All white people are racists. I heard this black geezer saying it once... we are racists, we are white, he says. Our history, our culture ... it’s not by coincidence, it’s by design. Being white is the norm. it always has been. We are the norm.⁴⁰

As the representative of the whites, Alan articulates his superiority. Williams makes him intentionally echo Enoch Powell’s famous “rivers of blood” speech, to prove the sovereignty and dominance of white people. Whiteness is a privilege and a reflection of the norm in the multicultural Britain. Alan’s perspective is a transparent look through the layers of history where blackness remains the sign of inferiority. However, Williams transcends this binary tendency of thinking about who is to be considered ‘black’ or ‘white’, and who is inside or outside the realm of British identity by further exploring the outcomes of multicultural interaction on the white and black characters. This indicates that multiculturalism is an ambivalent concept that accommodates conflicting voices, which Williams presents through the confrontation between Mark and Alan:

MARK I want to be who I want.

ALAN But it us white people that’s pulling all the strings, Mark. We’ll decide how many chances you get. We’re never going to change, so stop wishing ... All this multiculturalism. Eating a mango once a year at Notting Hill carnival is still a long way from letting your kids go to a school that is overrun with Pakis and blacks.⁴¹

Alan confirms the dominance of the whites and the status of minorities who will remain marginalized socially and culturally. The whites hold the power and navigate the policies in a way that serve their interests. Racial politics and racist practices are legitimized and continued to be practiced under the facade of multiculturalism in Britain. To mimic the values and traditions of the minorities as a means of cultural hegemony is another means of practicing racism as it blurs reality. Through Alan’s words, Williams highlights the constant state of racism that is imposed on the black people despite their desperate efforts to assimilate within the British culture. Mark and Barry do not seem to suffer an identity crisis for being black.

⁴⁰ Roy Williams, *Sing Yer Hearts Out for the Lads* (London: Methuen Drama, 2006) 261.

⁴¹ Williams 291-292.

Williams merely dramatizes the changes in their characters which are caused by the racial prejudice around them. Alan manipulates the people around him in order to provoke their inherent racism. He orates provocative speeches to stir anger out of Barry's consciousness.

Moreover, he tries to make Barry aware of his difference and enforce blackness upon him:

ALAN It's good to hear that, it gives hopes to us all. You are a black person who everyone sees as a person first, not their colour.

BARRY I am a person.

ALAN That what I said. Never mind the ones who only see you as a black person. Have you ever run into those people son?... the ones who think being white is the norm.

BARRY I said no. ⁴²

Barry is not given the chance to create an image of himself and his English identity. Instead, he is subjected to pre-determined stereotypical and racial images and ideas while his brother Mark's disillusioned perspective and his identity status derive from a culturally-imposed sense of difference and non-belonging. Unlike Barry, Mark was able to spot the signs of racism, his illusions after meeting the white gaze are soon shattered. He realizes his differences from the collective white society around him. His acceptance of his inferiority confirms that 'race' is a matter of cultural perception rather than a matter of ethnic inheritance. This experience is mirrored in Frantz Fanon's writing, where he remarks on a complementary kind of gaze:

I move slowly in the world, accustomed now to seek no longer for upheaval. I progress by crawling. And already I am being dissected under white eyes, the only real eyes. I am fixed. Having adjusted their microtomes, they objectively cut away slices of my reality. I am laid bare. I feel, I see in those white faces that it is not a new man who has come in, but a new kind of man, a new genus.⁴³

Frantz Fanon explores the complications of 'blackness' and race in *The Fact of Blackness* where he shows that 'blackness' is not a self-constructed identity, but one that is imposed on black people. The blacks in Britain consider themselves British, as they share the land and the culture. Williams chooses a sport club as the spatial dimension which seems to be a miniature of the nation at large. He discusses and interrogates the meaning of Britishness in this

⁴² Williams 278-279.

⁴³ Fanon 114.

symbolic space. The club apparently seems to unite people from different classes, ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Their initial common feature emerges from a sense of Britishness and belonging as they support the national football team. According to Aleks Sierz,

sport is central to our acting out of national identity, and football for example is a powerful arena for patriotic sentiment. It is also an area when national pride can degenerate into xenophobia...Roy Williams's *Sing Yer Heart Out for the Lads* encapsulates contradictions of race and offer a way of broadening the appeal of Englishness.⁴⁴

Williams sets the play in a multicultural space which turns out to be a rich ground for nationalist and racist attitudes. The football fans express through their biased and prejudiced comments an inconsistent view of Britishness. Paul Gilroy writes that despite the fact that the moniker- "British" proclaims containing myriad identities of different nations, it revolves constantly around the concept of 'Englishness'. Hence, the term 'Britishness' becomes a challenging and a controversial notion. As Gilroy expresses in his worries, this in turn makes the "tasks of creating a more pluralistic sense of national identity and a new conception of national culture"⁴⁵ much more difficult. This is apparent in the case of Barry who, having in his opinion all the qualifications and merits to be British, tries hard to be acknowledged and accepted by the other whites. He even goes so far as to inscribe his body with symbols of the English nationalism,

BARRY Thass British, thass us! Don't laugh at me. It's us ...
You were gonna wear it with pride, you said. You didn't care who see you red, white and blue, or who laughs, coz you ain't ending up like some black cunt. We are British, we are here! We kick arse with the best of them. God save the Queen, you told me that.⁴⁶

Barry's representation suggests a frantic challenge to the concept of 'Britishness' and 'belonging'. He seeks approval and tries desperately to revolt against the stereotypical concept of being British or English. Barry paints on his face a red cross as a sign of Britishness which reflects his entire desire of being English. Ironically enough, the red cross symbolizes the right-wing party and its racial doctrines which exclude 'blacks' from

⁴⁴ Sierz 230-231.

⁴⁵ Mary Luckhurst ed. *A Companion to British and Irish Drama* (US: Blackwell, 2006) 531.

⁴⁶ Williams 284.

Britishness. Williams exposes the long-term devastating effects of this inequality and racism on the traumatized identities represented by Mark and Barry. He emphasizes that the migrants are also part of Britishness, joining his voice to the voices of minorities who never have the opportunity to be heard,

MARK I'm English.

ALAN No, you are not...

MARK How English are you? Where do you draw the lines as to who's English. I was born in this country ... your culture comes from Northern Europe ... your people moved from there thousands of years ago, long before the Celtic people ... You think coz I'm black, I don't read books. Where do you draw the line?

ALAN ... You have given nothing to Britain, and you have never served any purpose in the British history.⁴⁷

Mark sees himself and his ancestors as participants in the establishment of the nation's history. They held cultural markers and traits that marked the British history. However, Englishness remains a supremacy trait which is based on nationalism. Ben Pitcher gives an 'oxymoronic concept of multicultural nationalism' and considers race as a supranational phenomenon. He further argues that:

nationalism as a state practice remains a key site for determining the local, national, and transnational structures of racial difference... multiculturalism has perversely been used to provide a retrospective justification of that history [Britain's history of slavery and colonialism]. Multicultural nationalism, I suggested, is an ideology that describes a tolerant and plural nation, but which uses these very ideas to prescribe a racialized limit to national belonging.⁴⁸

Pitcher suggests the term of 'multicultural Nationalism' to describe the contemporary multicultural policies which are still based on racial approaches. This term justifies the negative approaches of multiculturalism as it influenced instinctively by nationalism. Multiculturalism works within a national framework with specific boundaries that cannot be crossed. However, the Englishness which both Mark and Barry seek subsumes an attachment and a sense of belonging to the place where they live and were born. Their dilemma lies in the fact that they are bound to a homeland, a culture, and a nation that attempts to exclude them. Barry considers England his nation as the English culture is embedded in him. He strives

⁴⁷ Williams 291-292.

⁴⁸ Pitcher 167.

desperately to negotiate an identity and to seek a refuge in the new homeland, but he fails. He wipes away the painting of the red cross of St. George when his brother is stabbed by a white young child. It is the moment which deprives him of his self-delusion. It is the end of his journey in discovering his identity, that all his dreams and hopes are shattered. This piteous picture is also captured by Frantz Fanon when he describes his arrival at the same realization:

What? While I was forgetting, forgiving, and wanting only to love, my message was flung back in my face like a slap. The white world, the only honorable one, barred me from all participation... I shouted a greeting to the world and the world slashed away my joy. I was told to stay within bounds, to go back where I belonged.⁴⁹

Barry's psychological collapse reflects the dilemma of young generations who daily encounter such multifaceted policies and racist attitudes. Mark and Barry's traumatized experiences symbolize the fading dream in creating harmony among different cultures. It confirms that multiculturalism is no more than "a distant ideal."⁵⁰ According to Sierz, Roy Williams's work is an example of what Keith Peacock calls "the mixing of cultural identities to create not black-British (multi-culturalism) but an altogether complex identity."⁵¹ This complex identity catches the essence of the constant suffering of sequential black generations while trying to transcend the established boundaries. It is the product of internal turmoil and external clashes between different cultures. The multicultural miniature which Williams creates is not a hegemonic one, but a space where all the people, no matter how young or old, black or white, are in a constant conflict despite adopting each other's cultural values. Howe Kritzer says, in commenting on William's play, that "at the end, all nuances of individual identity dissolve in the division between black and white. The play offers little hope for progress in race relations."⁵² D. Keith Peacock argues against Kritzer, confirming that the "awareness" of the complexity of racial relations "may be a first step in transforming Britain

⁴⁹ Fanon 114.

⁵⁰ Pitcher 573.

⁵¹ Sierz 229.

⁵² Sierz 152.

from a multiracial to a multicultural society.”⁵³ It is hard to ignore that *Sing Yer Heart Out for the Lads* (2002) represents a negative projection of multiculturalism. However, the hope remains in constructing new approaches which celebrate cultural diversity and a more open tolerant English identities, in a cultural sense.

2.2 *Sucker Punch* (2010)

Roy Williams uses sport in *Sucker Punch* (2010) to shed a light on the racist practices and racial discrimination that stirred up the riots in 1980s. The importance of the play emerges from the setting rather than the topic of boxing. *Sucker Punch* premiered at London’s Royal Court Theatre in 2010.⁵⁴ The play revolves around the ambition, disappointment and the conflicts of two young black teenagers, Leon, a boxer, and his close friend and future boxer foe, Troy. They struggle for acceptance in a sporting culture that is biased, where being black remains a significant issue. Charlie, Leon’s white trainer, discovers, by accident, Leon’s potential to be a successful boxer. Charlie starts taking advantage of Leon in order to reach his own dreams of being a trainer of a world champion and gaining a lot of money. However, Leon does not realize Charlie’s intentions, he abandons his love, Becky, and leaves his best friend, Troy, to struggle his fights alone for the sake of gaining Charlie’s approval and support. Leon’s and Troy’s experiences are representative of the black dilemma in the 1980s, Goddard notes that:

Williams’ characterization of Leon and Troy closely echoes ... real-life boxers. Leon’s joking and fighting brings together the personality traits of two of the most famous black British men of 1980s sport and popular culture, Frank Bruno and Lenny Henry, who were both embraced by British culture as equally unthreatening perceptions of gentle giant and buffoon.⁵⁵

Williams represents an authentic image that portrays the black experience of two real famous boxers in the 1980s to show the extreme extent of racism and discrimination practiced at that

⁵³ Sierz 152.

⁵⁴ Roy Williams, *Sucker Punch* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015) 2.

⁵⁵ Goddard 117.

period. Leon's and Troy's stories are projected against the Thatcherite political background and the escalating racial tensions of that era. In his introduction to the play, Harry Derbyshire comments:

The central aspect of the 1980s highlighted in the play is the distinct experience of black British people during that decade. The play shows audiences 'the casual racism of that time, which was everywhere, not just in the world of boxing', as Williams notes. Widespread feeling within London's black community that the Metropolitan police routinely discriminated against black people [...] sparked riots in Brixton, a predominantly black London district, in 1981.⁵⁶

The play gives a transparent look into the accumulated layers of racism practiced against the black community. "These racist attitudes have been central in the white community and in government policies since the 1980s. The police discrimination and racist policies against black people stir up rage and racial hatred among the black community. This sparked off widespread turmoil in Brixton and across London, leading the police to quell the riot by force and violence:

TOMMY Watched some of your boys going mad again last night.
TROY Oh, hear him now.
TOMMY Tearing up Brixton they were, what's that about?
TROY Batty bwoi police throwing their weight about again, that's what.
TOMMY What have they been putting in your water, eh?⁵⁷

Tommy, a white boxer, throws out his racist comments constantly, accusing the black boys of the chaotic situation in Brixton. Confirming the repetitive narrative of black's responsibility of any kind of uproar and violence that occurs in the streets all over England. Troy condemns the police harassment and prejudiced attitudes saying: "They ca feel anyone's collar, so long as they are black?"⁵⁸ Black people are the only ones to be blamed for the riots and are unfairly chased by the British police. Williams highlights this particular era in the British history as it was politically and culturally underestimated. There was a lack in the presentation of the reasons behind the spark and expansion of the crisis in the 1980s, which reflected its shadows on the upcoming riots in London 2011 and 2013. According to Williams:

⁵⁶ Williams 10.

⁵⁷ Williams 34.

⁵⁸ Williams 52.

Those riots came from a sense of real anger – a whole generation who felt they were being shat on by the establishment and were made to feel they don't belong here. Their parents, our parents, the Windrush generation, they had to put up with a lot of racism, a lot of, you know, 'go back where you've come from, you don't belong here'... But growing up it was still the same, as bad as it had been for our parents, so there was a raw anger. It was like 'You're not gonna get away with this, you're not gonna attack us, you're not gonna hurt us the way you hurt our mums and dads, we're gonna fight back'.⁵⁹

The riots were out of anger and as a response against the long provocative history of racism and humiliation. This history is repeating itself; neither the first generation, nor the second escape discrimination and racist attitudes. Williams's gladiator ring becomes a projection of these racial events, where boxing and fighting become symbols of the conflict between two worlds, the whites and the blacks. Kasia Boddy argues in *Boxing: A Cultural History*:

More than anything, the boxing match has served as a metaphor for opposition– the struggle between two bodies before an audience, usually for money, representing struggles between opposing qualities, ideas and values.⁶⁰

Boxing is a symbol of the struggle between two cultures, values and beliefs to find a place for the minorities in the multicultural England. Leon and Troy entail a long journey in search for belonging and a stable identity. However, discrimination, harassment and exploitation deprive them from any sense of belonging. Both of them, as black boxers, are prone to being discriminated against by white players and the racist boxing hooligans as well:

LEON Oh yes, this is bandit country, without a shadow. All these crowds, all white, pale faces, It's spot the darkie. They're cheering Tommy on, telling him to bury me. That's what they want, ever since the Brixton riots, Broadwater Farm, they wanna see a fucking wog buried, put in his place. I'm the main course and they are serving me up!
TOMMY (off) No way am I losing to a black man!⁶¹

Leon is not just fighting Tommy but a whole crowd of white "bandit" fans who look forward to his humiliating defeat at the hands of Tommy-the white boxer. Tommy's and the fan's prejudiced comments work as a driven force towards Leon's victory. Leon condemns this existing state of bigotry and hatred and becomes determined to win. Ironically enough, Leon struggles hard to seek the acceptance of both cultures, white and black. This is the reason

⁵⁹ Williams 11.

⁶⁰ Kasia Boddy, *Boxing: A Cultural History* (London: Reaktion, 2008) 7.

⁶¹ Williams 70.

behind considering Leon and Troy as representatives of different symbolic figures in the black culture. Goddard argues on this issue saying:

Leon and Troy fit Mike Marqusee's contention that black boxers are historically contrasted as one of 'two equally tragic role models: the "bad N [*****]" and the "Uncle Tom"... respectively aggressive and uncontrollable hoodlums, or humble, subservient and compliant with white authority.⁶²

Troy accuses Leon of being an "Uncle Tom" as he becomes excessively obedient to Charlie. Leon sacrifices his friendship with Troy and abandons his girlfriend, Charlie's daughter, Becky for the sake of sport and fame. Leon's ambition causes a radical change in his character, betraying his own cultural and social allegiance to gain Charlie's acceptance. His subservience to Charlie destroys Troy's trust in particular and the black community's in general. Leon's attitude develops a further unexpected escalation of prejudice within the black culture itself. It starts in a form of hatred emails and comments to end up with a fight between Troy and Leon. This fight is an attempt to destroy the unity of black community. As Squid, Leon's father, warns him against the fight saying:

SQUID You don't understand, you can't win, neither of you. Why you think all them white people are gonna be there watching you tomorrow night? Ca they love you?...
...Ca they love nuttin better than see two black men beat up on each other. They too afraid to do it themselves, so they get you to do it. Love you? Deh the same people who wanted Tommy to kill you that time. He was their white hope, yer jackarse.
... once you done playing the fool for them, once they done wid you, you'll realise same as me this is deh country. You'll be just another wurtless black man like me.⁶³

Squid, being from the first black generation, realizes that this fight is a systematic racist policy aims to divide the black community and undermines their unity. The white's purpose of this fight is to spread hatred and violence among the black people. Troy and Leon's fight represents a contest, as Harry Derbyshire describes it: "between two distinct versions of black identity."⁶⁴The fight ends up with Troy's victory whose aggressivity at the beginning of the play makes him the "bad N [*****]", who fights the white supremacy. He participates in the riots and demonstrates against the police racist practices against the blacks. Troy refuses to

⁶² Goddard 117.

⁶³ Williams 97-98.

⁶⁴ Williams 18.

work under Charlie's mercy and moved to the United States seeking a better future and more recognition for his fighting skills:

Troy rejects Leon's integrationist approach and identification with white working-class culture and moves to the USA in pursuit of the idea that he could develop a stronger sense of black identity there based on the unity forged by separatist racial politics.⁶⁵

Troy rebels against the white superiority and flees to the U.S. with the hope of strengthening his sense of belonging. However, Troy was mistaken, racial attitudes and exploitation of black people are world spread:

Williams highlights the naivety of Troy's belief that black men fare better in the USA when he is equally exploited by his black promoter Ray who asserts an owner's control over his protégé when he states.⁶⁶

Seeking recognition for young black people in the 1980s was a difficult task. Troy illusions of a better independent future shattered away, as he experiences the same kind of exploitation as Leon's. However, Troy was exploited by his fellow black trainer, Ray, who yells at Troy saying:

RAY I found you. I made you [...] I own your ticket in case you forget. You and I are in bed, so you speak when I tell you. You fight who I tell you. You are mine. Now for the last time, get in the fucking car, bitch.⁶⁷

Troy is objectified and humiliated by his black trainer, despite his rebellion at the beginning of the play against any kind subservience. He becomes another "uncle Tom" in his submission to Ray's orders. Ray dominance destroys Troy's life and his dreams in seeking any sense of autonomy and belonging. Harry Derbyshire argues that Williams plays:

repeatedly suggest that just because it is no longer socially acceptable to explicitly articulate racist views in the way that Charlie and Tommy do in the play ('I know they all look the same in the dark, son.' 'I can't tell them apart in the day'...), we should not assume complacently that longstanding prejudices do not remain in play.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Goddard 118.

⁶⁶ Goddard 118.

⁶⁷ Williams 104.

⁶⁸ Williams 11.

Williams's plays confirm that despite the sophisticated standards and frameworks to undermine racism, racist attitudes, exploitation and discrimination are still practiced on a wide level in Britain.

2.3 *The No Boys Cricket Club* (1996)

The No Boys Cricket Club (1996) is one of Roy Williams's Jamaican trilogy which is characterized by a setting in both the Jamaican Kingston Town in 1958 and London in 1996. The play was first performed at London's Theatre Royal in 1996.⁶⁹ Williams projects a comprehensive image of the immigrant experience of the first Caribbean generation to discuss the questions of identity and belonging in their wider contexts in the multicultural Britain. In the process, Williams eloquently delineates the various forms of change that occur in the characters' identities due to culture clashes. Abigail, a fifty-four-year old-widow with two children, is left alone by circumstances to fight her battles in a hostile multicultural space: "Widowed, alone, raising two ungrateful pikne? One beats you, your own child... ." ⁷⁰ Abi was described by her childhood Jamaican friend and co- cricket player Masie. The essence of Abi's dilemma and estrangement lies in her relation to her own two children, Michael and Danni, who turn out to be unappreciative and irresponsible. Critic Michael Pearce points out that "the representation of the children who do not share their mother's values suggests that their British birthplace and upbringing is the source of their undisciplined behavior."⁷¹ Michael is a drug dealer who abandons his own son while Danni is a troublemaker who does not know anything about her mother's past. The mother and her children belong to two different cultures and traditions. The disagreement between them is evidence of the widening gap between the first and the second generations of Caribbean immigrants. The gap and

⁶⁹ Roy Williams, *The No Boys Cricket Club* (London: Bloomsbury, 2002) 90.

⁷⁰ Williams 145.

⁷¹ Michael Pearce, *Black British Drama: A Transnational Story* (London: Routledge, 2017) 116.

'silent status' continue to widen between people, generations and cultures, due to the lingering effects of displacement and estrangement. The curse of immigration tracks the immigrated people wherever they move, forbidding them from freeing themselves from the past. Their physical existence becomes part of the English culture, while they remain internally and emotionally tied to the Caribbean identity. Trinh T. Minh.ha confirms the complexities of this journey on the self, writing:

Every voyage can be said to involve a re-siting of boundaries. The travelling self is here both the self that moves physically from one place to another, following 'public routes and beaten tracks' within a mapped movement, and the self that embarks on an undetermined journeying practice, having constantly to negotiate between home and abroad, native culture and adopted culture, or more creatively speaking, between a here, a there, and an elsewhere.⁷²

The self is torn between two worlds, here and there, the beloved home and the unknown future. This "voyage", both the physical and the retrospective one, ultimately divides Abi's identity and compounds her fragmented self. She is perceived to be not only an immigrant but also as an outsider because of her inability to integrate within the English mainstream and the cultural norms. She becomes a stranger even to her own children. Williams highlights Abi's inner conflicts in order to present the pernicious effects caused by the inability of immigrants to overcome the cultural gap originating in the host-land:

the play provides a representation of the Caribbean within Britain. By collapsing time and space in such a way, the play gives form to the working of memory. It reveals the homeland as a site of potential power, a memorized archive from which to draw on in a bid to reinvigorate the self in the host-land.⁷³

The play gives a glimpse into the past of the Caribbean representatives, Abi and Masie's past, which provides them with the strength and hope to cope. Leaving the door ajar for the past memories provides Abi with the strength to fight her despair and cope with current situation.

Both Abi and her childhood friend Masie experience not only a physical journey, but an imagined journey to the forgotten past. Abi and Masie were successful cricket players with thriving future back in their homeland. Cricket is the national sport in Jamaica, and an

⁷² Trinh T. Minh.ha, *Other Than Myself/ My Other Self* (US: Indian University Press, 1989) 9.

⁷³ Pearce 117.

essential part of home and culture. By moving to England, Abi and Masie actively block their memories to be able to deal with homesickness. Both of them move to the 'beyond,' seeking a healing cure for their fragmented identities and a more understanding for their current situation.

Homi K. Bhabha argues that:

It is the trope of our times to locate the question of culture in the realm of the beyond...The 'beyond' is neither a new horizon, nor a leaving behind of the past... Beginnings and endings may be the sustaining myths of the middle years; but in the fin de siècle, we find ourselves in the moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion. For there is a sense of disorientation, a disturbance of direction, in the 'beyond': an exploratory, restless movement caught so well in the French rendition of the words au-delà - here and there, on all sides, fort/da, hither and thither, back and forth.⁷⁴

The 'beyond,' according to Bhabha, is the staircase space between the past and the present that becomes a refuge for disorientated people. It produces a complex kind of identities which are unable to cope. Abi and Masie live on this threshold between the past and the present, here and there. Their dreams are completely shattered and vanished in a culture that they do not belong to. Masie lost her son at the hands of racist white teenagers:

MASIE You know when I held him in my arms for the first time, it was the only real time I believed I could bury what I left behind, I remember whispering to his ear, I will protect you forever my sweet...⁷⁵

Masie's son was a new hope, a substitution for the missed home. Unfortunately, she failed in protecting him against the racist killing. He was the victim of hatred and racism in a culture that still prejudices against the ethnic minorities. At his funeral, the past calls and comforts her. She finds in it the refuge that she was seeking from her agonies and grieving. Williams manifests the idea of return to the past as an attempted recuperation of Masie and Abi fragmented identities. Their decision to return is not just a mere geographical relocation, but an urgent need and eagerness to escape the despair and estrangement of the present. They indulge in a world of memories to escape the frustration of the present. Pearce notes that:

⁷⁴ Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994) 1.

⁷⁵ Williams 137.

“Abi’s interference with her past becomes a revitalizing experience, equipping her with the wherewithal to face up to the challenges in her present.”⁷⁶ By this projection of the idea of return, Abi and Masie reconnect themselves to a submerged part of their inner selves. Abi’s past becomes a mediation between her Young Abi and the Abi she has become. Her past revives the life inside her, it reminds her of the person she was and the one she wished to be. As Abi expresses her joy saying: “Oh, sweet Jamaica. (Puts her arms around herself, giving herself a cuddle.) Masie was right. I feel, reunited wid my soul. (Laughs.) ‘Hello soul, hello Abi. Long time no hear girl!’ Long time.”⁷⁷ The moment she becomes in terms with herself, it empowers and reconciles her with her inner self and finds the purpose of her entire life. She realizes that she is no more “a walking, talking curse,”⁷⁸ but a mother who must save her children from drowning in the maze of gangs, drugs and self-destruction:

DANNI He won’t go Mum. He won’t change.

ABI I have.

DANNI What, you going to go through this every day?

ABI If I have to.

DANNI You’ll give up. You always do.

ABI You really think so? (Abi takes the box off her and tips it over.)

DANNI Alright, so what now?

ABI (laughs out loud.)

What?

ABI How about a game of cricket?⁷⁹

It is the moment of Abi’s awakening and self-reconciliation with the past, present and the future. She puts an end to her son’s irresponsible behaviours. Either to reunite with his son and follow a recent life or to leave home. She decides to challenge the current situation and resumes the ‘game of cricket’ which she did not have the opportunity to finish in the past.

⁷⁶ Pearce 116.

⁷⁷ Williams 143.

⁷⁸ Williams 141.

⁷⁹ Williams 159.

Chapter Three- Tanika Gupta in the Contemporary British Scene

3.1 *White Boy* (2008)

Violence and especially knife crime are part of the ongoing crisis that shakes the stability of the British multicultural space. Both are on the rise despite the current multicultural policies to manage discrimination and racism. In *White Boy* (2008) Tanika Gupta depicts the increased concerns of white and black communities about the escalations of violence and conflicts among British young generation. One critic highlights the power of the play with respect to the contemporary problems, writing:

It was hard not to be moved by the ending of Tanika Gupta's *White Boy*, which put on stage a shrine to a teenage victim of knife crime. Every week, during the play's first run, and again during its revival in January 2008, the news was full of similar stories and similar tributes.⁸⁰

Gupta's themes emerge from the heart and agonies of the British people. She focuses on the problems that arise among young generation at school like drugs, bullying and aggression which are the main reasons behind violence and knife crime. *White Boy* (2008) was first performed at the Soho Theatre in a National Youth Theatre production in 2007 and was revived at the same space in 2008.⁸¹ The play revolves around the relations and conflicts among teenagers who belong to different ethnicities and backgrounds. The school, which is a prison-like, in Gupta's play represents a symbolic arena to discuss the various racial and cultural tensions in Britain. The school reflects, as Sierz notes, "the rainbow nation familiar to an inner-city dweller."⁸² It is a miniature of Britain today where people from different cultures and ethnicities interact or clash with each other. There are the Asians: Shaz and Kabir, the black: Zara and Victor, the African: Sorted and the British white: Flips and Ricky. What these students do have in common is youth problems, drugs and the potentiality for violence as a

⁸⁰ Sierz 45.

⁸¹ Tanika Gupta, *White Boy* (London: Oberon Books, 2008) 8.

⁸² Aleks Sierz, Introduction. *Tanika Gupta Political Plays*. By Tanika Gupta (London: Oberon, 2012) 13.

way of protecting themselves in a racial multicultural environment. Gupta depicts both the white and black experience from completely different perspectives. She mainly highlights the anxieties of the white student Ricky and the Sudanese black refugee Sorted, who are representatives of binary opposition in this multicultural space. Ricky's unusual dilemma emerges from being a white British student in Britain today. Where the standards are changed: being 'black' or from a different culture and origin becomes a merit and the center of attention and strength:

RICKY: Look around you man- so many kids in our class got history, countries, stories and different languages. Baxter says we got twenty- three different languages spoken in our year.

VICTOR: So.

RICKY: So, mek me feel ...dunno... I only speak English...

VICTOR: Don't go all heavy on me Ricky. You got history. Your dad, football, this place.

RICKY: This place! That's it! Grandparents came from round here. Never been anywhere else. Not even got any European blood in me.

RICKY: Mi yards is mi yard. Know what I mean? But sometimes, it's fucking dull. Ain't cool to be white no more. Read somewhere that in about two hundred years, the average human being will be coffee colored and six foot six.⁸³

Gupta dwells upon the disappearance of a stable English identity among not just coloured students but also other young white ones. Ricky's identity suffers instability. The privilege of being white does not function anymore in a school with ethnic majority. He wants to be a cool "bredda" to his black and Asian fellows even at the expense of losing his identity and language. The Artistic Director of NYT Paul Roseby argues that "what struck me was just how profound and current Tanika's idea of *White Boy* could potentially be. Her knowledge of adolescent antics and their changing language amidst a multi- cultural urban environment was impressive."⁸⁴

Gupta depicts an authentic image of young generation and grasps the essence of their dilemma. Ricky is overcome by his need to have a new identity. He tries to mimic his black friend Victor's Caribbean accent. Thinking that by eating their food and speaking the language he will belong to their culture: "VICTOR: You white? / RICKY: More black than

⁸³ Gupta 25.

⁸⁴ Gupta 5.

you'll ever be."⁸⁵ Ricky seeks a cultural visibility and an acceptance in a crowded multicultural sphere which currently changed its priorities. He needs to boost his self-esteem and confidence as he realizes that even at football, he is not as good as Victor. He searches for a role model to support his sense of the fragmented identity, alighting on Victor as a possible model for imitation, since he has a greater visibility in his culture. However, in a confrontation among the two, Victor tries to wake him from this state of delusion:

VICTOR: My folk work hard to get their nice lickle back yard with flowers and ting. Mam work as a cleaner when I was a pickney- tek me to all the houses with her. Watch her being treated like a shit by them white people she work for... I don't take nuthin' for granted and nuthin' was handed to them on a plate. Got it?

RICKY: Listen Bredda...

VICTOR: Don't Bredda me. You got no respect. just 'cos you learn the lingo, don't mean you're one of us.⁸⁶

Victor asks Ricky to stop calling him a brother and says that mimicking the accent does not mean that he belongs to their culture community. Ricky's perspective of the black experience is profoundly different from Victor's. Being 'black' was a rough experience for the first and second generations of black immigrants. The Racism and racial hierarchy that was practiced against Victor's mother is unforgettable to him. The same marks Sorted's black experience. Gupta's depiction of Sorted, whose collapsing identity bears the scars of the civil war back in his native country, reflects the amount of bullying and discrimination against coloured minorities. As an unemployed orphan refugee, Sorted struggles desperately to find his own way in the cruel adult world. Sorted tries to justify his crime, stabbing his abuser Flips, claiming that back where he belongs, "killing" is a normal thing. He says " I'm not bad. I'm not bad. My country kill my family. Your country kill my hope."⁸⁷ He fled the genocide back in Sudan in search for safety and a better future. However, his dreams were destroyed because of Flips's racial and abusing attitudes. Sorted's experience symbolizes the killing of hope and

⁸⁵ Gupta 24.

⁸⁶ Gupta 50.

⁸⁷ Gupta 62.

harmony in a cruel racial country under the mask of multiculturalism. Flips's characters includes another symbolic reference as well:

Under the New Labour governments of the 2000s, there was a widespread feeling among people against the white working-class in the by multicultural policies ... Historically, the British National Party has attempted to exploit these feelings of disenfranchisement by blaming immigrants and, in Gupta's play, Flips symbolizes these kinds of attitudes. He also is guilty of anti-Muslim prejudice and casual racism.⁸⁸

Gupta criticizes through Flips the government's suspicious policies which stir up hatred, conflicts and aggression. Her implicit criticism of these multicultural policies under the New Labour against the white working-class does not mean that the multicultural doctrines fail in achieving harmony and homogeneity in Britain. But such provocative policies must not be ignored, as Sierz argues:

[Gupta's] deception of the tension between characters that are either idealists or pragmatists or a mixture of both, combine to create a picture as a vibrant multicultural society beset with severe problems, not all which have simple political solutions.⁸⁹

Gupta reflects in her characters an authentic image of Britain today. She criticizes and raises awareness to current racial and cultural issues, basically knife crime and violence which cannot be avoided or neglected in the hope of achieving the required change. Sierz states that "the play was, and remains, an incitement to make change happen."⁹⁰ Sierz refers here to Gupta's political plays in general and *White Boy* (2008) and *Sugar Mummies* (2006) in particular: "if *White Boy* was a response to a number of highly publicized knife crime, *Sugar Mummies* ... look[s] at a subject that lurks in the dark corners of taboo: sex tourism by women in the Caribbean."⁹¹

⁸⁸ Sierz 13.

⁸⁹ Sierz, Introduction 13.

⁹⁰ Sierz, Introduction 14.

⁹¹ Sierz, Introduction 14.

3.2 *Sugar Mummies* (2006)

Sugar Mummies (2006) was first performed at the Royal Court Jerwood Theatre Downstairs in 2006.⁹² The play revolves around the issues of race and racism in two distinct cultures and binary worlds: the civilized world of tourists' women from the world of different ethnicities and cultural backgrounds, represented by Maggie, Kitty, Yolanda and Naomi. The tourists are superior racially and financially from the other world of the Jamaican black men, Reefie, sly, Antonio and Andrea. What connects the two worlds together is the sex business, a racial industry that flourishes in the Caribbean's islands in the twenty-first century. All the characters involve in this circle of 'exploitation' with the exception of Naomi, Andrea and his old wise mother Angel who are in search of certain quests in their way towards a better future. Aleks Sierz notes that "Tanika Gupta's *Sugar Mummies* (2006), [is] a play set in the West Indies which implied that today's sex tourism is imperial oppression in a different guise." Racism in the new millennium takes on new disguises, with sex tourism as one of these forms. Due to the long-term consequences of colonization, some British colonies are still struggling against poverty and economic unrest, which led most of young generation into the sex industry:

NAOMI: But this isn't the real Jamaica is it?

ANGEL: Real Jamaica no different from anywhere else. Everyone sufferin'- lookin' for the next dollar... You see dem fourteen year old girls up in Bourbon Beach selling their bodies to old white men.⁹³

Gupta chooses Jamaica as a space to discuss and generate the new racial attitudes which are established upon racial hierarchy. She dwells in her *Sugar Mummies* (2006) upon the issue of sex tourism that conceals under the umbrella of racism in Britain and its late colonies in the twenty-first century. As Aleks Sierz notes:

⁹² Tanika Gupta, *Sugar Mummies* (London: Oberon, 2006) 7.

⁹³ Gupta 86.

one ignored aspect of the world market was sex tourism. Tanika Gupta's *Sugar Mummies* explores female sex tourism, showing how white women such as thirty-eight-year old teacher Kitty and fifty-something Maggi buy the services of young black men in Jamaica.⁹⁴

Gupta and Debbie Green are pioneers in dealing with sex tourism in their plays, and the gross ramifications of the industry which are still ignored by the multicultural policies. Though Gupta and Green represent the issue from different perspectives, they succeed in articulating the anxieties around this cultural issue.

Gupta's play was the outcome of her own experience on the Negril beach, portraying by that a realistic scene of Jamaica today. The play opens with a conversation, between Kitty a thirty-eight and Maggie middle-aged British tourists' ladies, which is full of expectations from the exotic view:

MAGGI: Great views all around.

KITTY: ... Watch all those men diving off the cliff?...

Watch them and you kind of...

KITTY: Men here certainly know how to treat a lady. They love us...

MAGGIE: And really black...

KITTY: Real men.

Maggie: Much bigger than white men. The Big Bamboo.

KITTY: Jamaican Steal.⁹⁵

The two women exchange a conversation which reflect 'exaggerated' racial and fetish beliefs. Gupta highlights throughout the play, and in this scene in particular, the sense of 'objecthood'. The Jamaican men, to use Frantz Fanon words, are "sealed into that crushing objecthood."⁹⁶ Kitty and Maggie objectify the black Jamaican men on the famous white Negril beach and perceive them as part of the overall exotic view. They are fanatical with their presumption of the stereotypical super sexual abilities of the young black men. The women's racial attitudes can be interpreted according to Derek Hook's analysis of Homi Bhabha's concept of the

'paradox of otherness' as exemplified in the racial stereotype. The paradox in question operates at the levels of discourse and identification alike. As a mode of discourse the stereotype

⁹⁴ Sierz 119.

⁹⁵ Gupta 24-25.

⁹⁶ Fanon 119.

functions to exaggerate difference of the other, whilst nevertheless attempting to produce them as a stable, fully knowable object.⁹⁷

There is a distinct racial hierarchy between the two cultures. The women perceive the men as an ‘objectified otherness’. They embellish their difference which is based on the color and the stereotypical sexual legend of black men’s abilities. Gupta confirms that sex tourism and these racial practices are new forms of ‘colonial exploitation’ and that the play might be discussed as:

white people colonizing and objectifying black sexuality. It’s almost like a return to the slave days, with white women checking out the men’s teeth, limbs and dicks before they buy.⁹⁸

Gupta argues that the roots of this kind of exploitation go back to colonial and slavery era.

Sierz supports Gupta’s perspective and points out that the play criticizes sex tourism:

[Gupta] takes very seriously the issue of the exploitation of black men. Although Gupta never moralizes, the play implicitly condemns the tourist industry which ships women across the world for cheap sex ...⁹⁹

The structure of racism in *Sugar Mummies* (2006) is based on the superiority of one race upon the other due to the claimed beliefs of the advantages of specific ethnical roots and skin color. These fetish beliefs are based on fantasy. As critic Toby Lichtig says, “[a] particular Western malaise is under scrutiny, an emptiness that the characters seek to fill with fantasies of dominance and escape.”¹⁰⁰ The tourist’s women’s expectations of the black beach boys’ sexual performance is woven by fantasy, which is considered as a strand of ‘the dynamics of fetishism’¹⁰¹:

If it is fantasy that conditions what counts as reality for us, then it seems pointless to try and grasp the ‘true real’, for it is always, already an effect of fantasy. This is particularly important in the case of racism. If we accept for the moment that racism, like colonial discourse, is structured by certain fantasies (the superiority of one race, the degeneracy of another) then confrontation with any contrary ‘truth’ (rational evidence that opposes these beliefs) will not result in a global change in belief, in the foregoing of racist attitudes, because one’s access to

⁹⁷ Derek Hook, *The Racial Stereotype, Colonial Discourse, Fetishism, and Racism* (London: LSE Research Online, 2005) 1.

⁹⁸ Lyn Gardner, Interview with Tanika Gupta. *Guardian* 25 July 2006: 4.

⁹⁹ Sierz 14.

¹⁰⁰ Sierz, *Rewriting the Nation British Theatre Today*, 119.

¹⁰¹ Hook 16.

such 'truths' always occurs through the filter of fantasy which conditions any access we have to the real world.¹⁰²

The white women's expectations are built on mere fantasy. The reality is blurred by fetish illusions and dreams. It is the striving for pleasure and self-fulfillment that navigate them in this Caribbean journey. Confrontation with the real world does not cause a change, but unveils a harsh reality which is fraught with prejudice and discrimination:

SLY: And how am I supposed to respect a gyal like you? You tink me a savage, a house slave.

You look at me and you is jealous of my skin, but glad you is white. You tink you is superior.

KETTTY: I am superior because you're nothing more than a prostitute.¹⁰³

This is the moment when Kitty's dreams of settling down and starting a family are shattered. Sly confesses that their relationship is no more than a business trade. Sex and pleasure are exchanged for money. This turmoil of disillusionment on Kitty's part was a turning point in her racial attitudes and prejudice. Even the humiliating way of torture which she refers to goes back to the era of slavery: "I'll bring the manager in and have you whipped. Have you thrown in jail you fucking black bastard. NIGGER!"¹⁰⁴ This is Kitty's brutal way of degradation. When it comes to reality, Sly is no more than 'a nigger prostitute,' as Fanon states, "Negroes are savages, brutes, illiterates"¹⁰⁵. Kitty declares her superiority explicitly due to her white origin, while Sly is inferior because of the 'fact of his blackness'¹⁰⁶:

It [colour prejudice] is nothing more than the unreasoning hatred of one race for another, the contempt of the strongest and richer peoples for those whom they consider inferior to themselves, and the bitter resentment of those who are kept in subjection and are so frequently insulted. As colour is the most obvious outward manifestation of race it has been made the criterion by which men are judged, irrespective of their social or educational attainments.¹⁰⁷

Blackness becomes a means of humiliation and a sign of inferiority. A similar incident happens to Antonio, a seventeen-old-year, who enters the business out of need. When he fails to satisfy Maggie, she takes an excruciatingly racist revenge:

¹⁰² Hook 17.

¹⁰³ Gupta 119.

¹⁰⁴ Gupta 120.

¹⁰⁵ Fanon 117.

¹⁰⁶ Fanon 1.

¹⁰⁷ Fanon 118.

ANTONIO: Hey, hey! Untie me! Untie! You facety to raas gyal!...
Let me go. Who'd wan' fuck an ugly bitch like you? You a raas blood claat... gorgon... bomba
clawt... old duppy hag!¹⁰⁸

Maggie ties him to a tree and whips him like a savage slave and then throws some money at him. Though Antonio was sobbing all the time out of humiliation, he puts the money in his pocket and continues crying as a child. He does this out of need, because his grandma wants a washing machine. Maggie's behavior "confirms that the legacy of slavery, under which the black body was commodified and dehumanized, is not far behind them."¹⁰⁹ Racism is constantly practiced implicitly and explicitly by the white majority without being chastised.

However, Gupta highlights a 'mutual form of exploitation' and abuse practiced by both races: "[it] is equally objectionable and racist the way the men call the women milk bottles... it's a 'mutual exploitation' that is going on."¹¹⁰ The Jamaican men take advantage of the 'milk bottles' out of necessity. They prostitute themselves as source of living. Sierz points out as well that the exploitation is mutual: "[but] Gupta makes clear, the exploitation is mutual: the local men are looking not only for money, but also for a ticket to escape the poverty of the island."¹¹¹ The men use the tourist women as a means to leave the country in search of a better life. However, their racial attitudes do not cross the boundaries of the human ambition. They do not abuse the women or entail any kind of racial arguments or behaviors, unlike the tourist women who travel to the Caribbean for new sexual experiences and pay for the service willingly. Loveridge argues "this may be a disturbing consumerism, reducing men to a meat market and women to shallow exploiters of those in poverty."¹¹² The tourist women remain the exploiters and brutal abusers of the Jamaican young generation as they are still practicing racism and discrimination under another 'guise' in the twenty-first century. Hence, Gupta raises awareness in her *Sugar Mummies* (2006) and *White Boy* (2008), to new racial

¹⁰⁸ Gupta 67.

¹⁰⁹ Julie Bindel, "Meet the middle-aged women who are Britain's female sex tourists," *New Statesman* 26 August 2013: 8.

¹¹⁰ Gardner 4.

¹¹¹ Sierz, *Tanika Gupta. Political Plays*, 14.

¹¹² Lizzie Loveridge, "Sugar Mummies". *A Curtain Up* 12 August: 2006.

discourses that are continued to be practiced by different communities in Britain and its colonies.

4. Chapter Four- debbie tucker green

1.4 *random* (2008)

debbie tucker green's plays have gain unprecedented national and international appeal due to her exclusivity in tackling the issues of racism and knife crime on stage. She challenges the stereotypical presentations of these issues on stage through the use of specific 'dramatic devices' that:

render the topical issue of teenage murder both specific and universal ... she refrains from showing any actual instances of abuse or violence, adding a further layer of complexity that challenges archetypal images of abused characters. This distinguishes her plays from the many new millennial dramas that portray gun crime, stabbings and violence on stage with many ending with black men left on stage dying in full view as the lights fade.¹¹³

green shares the central topic of Gupta's *white boy* (2008) - knife crime and violence. However, through different approaches to the subject matter, green captures the essence of people's moving dilemma and debates it through their perspectives. green's *random* (2008) "share[s] a concern with the phenomenon of inner-city racial violence in contemporary Britain."¹¹⁴ The play was first performed at the Royal Court Jerwood Theatre Downstairs in 2008 and was revived for the Royal Court's Local season at Elephant and Castle Shopping Centre in 2010. green directed a filmed version of the play for Channel 4 in 2011.¹¹⁵ *random* (2008) portrays a typical day in the life of any 'British' family. It has four members, a Father, a Mother, a Sister and a Brother. They are not identified by any specific names; instead they are simply representative of any family in Britain. Goddard notes that: "by focusing on an ordinary family in a domestic environment, highlighting a random murder that could potentially happen to anyone."¹¹⁶ It is a typical day of any family until it is turned upside down by the death of the youngest one of its members. The Brother, an innocent kind boy, is

¹¹³ Goddard 71.

¹¹⁴ Vicky Angelaki, *Contemporary British Theatre: Breaking New Ground* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013) 96.

¹¹⁵ debbie tucker green, *random* (London: Bloomsbury, 2005) 1.

¹¹⁶ Goddard 7.

killed randomly by a gang of young teenagers on his way back home. This murder becomes a turning point in the lives of a family with “brown blood”, as the Sister inquires desperately: “... Since when does a mans bleed brown?”¹¹⁷ It is the blood of her black young Brother. The crime leaves the whole family in a complete breakdown. However, what is typical about the ‘crime’ is that it continues to be typical to the police as the crime was considered a mere “random altercation in a street in London.”¹¹⁸ green condemns through her characters the underestimation and the negligence of the increased number of hatred crimes and aggression that take the lives of many young black and Asian people.

As Vicky Angelaki states, “[h]er play responds to the spate of youth killing in London in 2007 and 2008, where 90 percent of the victims are black and Asian”.¹¹⁹ These two years witnessed an escalation in violence and youth killing among the black and Asian minorities. Such brutal racial attitudes cause strife and widen the gap between different cultures and ethnic minorities.

The Father, in the play, keeps warning his children to avoid contacting with the whites and the police. He is extremely cautious of their brutality, corruption and prejudice. The Sister highlights this issue saying: “Sister Dad always said/ Don’t bring no police back- / Don’t let no police in’/ Same thing he’d said about white/ people.”¹²⁰ The father declares that the ‘whites’ and the ‘police’ are not welcomed home. The father’s words indicate to a distinct barrier between the two worlds. It becomes as an inevitable consequence of discrimination and violence practiced against the black community. Cultural harmony is undermined due to the strife and detestation among different ethnicities which leads consequently to racial segregation.

Mother ... Dark boots an’ heavy shoes/ inna my house/ On my carpet./ Dark boots/ an’ heavy shoes-/ on my clean carpet/ ... Dark boots and heavy shoes-/ beatin down my/ for best carpet/

¹¹⁷ green 33.

¹¹⁸ Goddard 83.

¹¹⁹ Angelaki 96.

¹²⁰ green 29.

without a second thought.../ from them./ Outside shoes ent worn in this house -/ an'/ ' no I don't wan' no cup a tea.'/ An'...¹²¹

The mother's message for the white police officers is clear: 'do not cross the border, there is no place for you in my black world'. The police being at the door is a sign of bad information. The mother senses the omen, but she does not want to believe. She realises that her son has been killed, but even acknowledging this reality now makes no difference:

Sister She sitting as she was/ as she has been/ sat by her now/ who got it right. / With their shoes off. / But/ making no difference/ to the difference we now got. Can't make this difference/ do away.¹²²

The mother's state reflects her fragmented hopes and dreams about her son's future prosperity. Black youth killing leaves mothers, fathers and siblings with traumatised identities. It becomes impossible for them to cope, even though they are surrounded by their own people, 'making no difference', as the Mother says, "to the difference we now got."¹²³

The pain is unbearable, and life is worthless after the death of her son:

random examines the topical social issue of the fatal stabbings of (black) teenage boys as seen through the eyes of a grieving mum and sister and can be understood as a response to the unprecedented rise in the numbers of teenagers being stabbed to death in London...¹²⁴

green represents the issue of 'youth - killing' from the victim's family perspectives to raises public awareness to the fundamental psychological and emotional consequences of knife crime on the victim's families and schoolmates. Claire Allfree notes in her review of *random* (2008) that tucker green "makes no concessions to the liberal conscience eager to understand black teenage violence. Her interest is in giving voice to the people left behind."¹²⁵ Green does not offer any explanations or solutions, she merely projects the agonies of the traumatized identities through providing insights into the inner turmoil of the victim's families: "Sister Death usedta be for the old. / An' still the street shrine/ propah packs/ stacks

¹²¹ green 25-26.

¹²² green 42.

¹²³ green 42.

¹²⁴ Goddard 71.

¹²⁵ Claire Allfree, random review *Metro* 12 March 2008.

up/ with Black on Black love. / Mum won't go. / Point- blank/ won't go."¹²⁶ green captures the essence of the black families' dilemma: 'death used to be just for the old'. However, in today's Britain, 'premature death' is taking the lives of innocent young teenagers who are involved in the racial discrimination circle against their will. It is not the black man's fault, but is instead the consequence of the racist attitudes and hatred spread among the younger generation. Even the government, rather than avoiding retaliations, escalates the tension. As Prime Minister Tony Blair biasedly proclaimed in 2007:

the spate of knife and gun murders in London was not being caused by poverty, but a distinctive black culture [...] the recent violence should not be treated as part of a general crime wave, but as specific to black youth... We won't stop this by pretending it isn't young black kids doing it.¹²⁷

Instead of defusing the tension, Blair accused black youth implicitly of stirring up violence in the streets of London. He blamed them for the increase in crime incidents among young generation. However, green discloses the institutional racism as they are established on corruption and discrimination. They are the ones to be blamed for the escalation in ferocity and conflicts among the different ethnic communities, not the black teenagers. She further agitates against public silence through the Sister soliloquy:

I lissen/ and hear.../ I hear an juss get/(*Silence.*)/ I hear- an juss get- / (*Silence.*)/ Whole heap a witness/ Polices say. / Whole heap a somebodies/ on street/ Saw. / Whole heap a peeps/ on road/ was present. / But I lissen-/ hard-/ an' still I hear ... / (*Silence.*)/ Silence shoutin the loudest. / Cos it seem that/ now no one wanna witness/ what happened / to my Brother.¹²⁸

The sister condemns the public silence and the witnesses' reluctance to help in arresting the suspects and putting an end to the knife crime crisis. green reflects "how silence and inaction amount to complicity in violence, abuse and murder."¹²⁹ It is part of the conspiracy, it is as bad as the crime is. It becomes clear that green foreshadows through family's desperation and sorrow and the crime incidences, such as the brutal murder of Stephen Lawrence in 1993.

Goddard argues that there are:

¹²⁶ green 41.

¹²⁷ Kristy Walker, "Face the Facts on Knife Crime, Blair Tells Black Families" *Daily Mail* 12 April 2007.

¹²⁸ green 44-45.

¹²⁹ Goddard 85.

palpable evocative echoes with the Stephen Lawrence murder fifteen years earlier – the family receiving news from the police, his siblings perhaps experiencing grief through the eyes of their parents, ... and the police officers' delay in acting to follow up the crime.¹³⁰

green hints emblematically to the parallel between the two cases. The details of Lawrence's crime are characterized in the play through the failure of the police in their investigation and their stereotypical and biased assumptions about the brother being member in a gang.

random's symbolic end leaves the reader shocked in a blank space. There is nothing to be said and no words to reveal the amount of grieving and devastation, as the Sister announces, “(Silence.)/ Silence shoutin the loudest.”¹³¹ The dominance of silence throughout the play implies the inability of language to mark the magnitude of the families grieving and devastation. This silence leaks into the Sister's stunted comments, where parentheses formally enact the failure of the very language she describes.¹³² Goddard considers that: “[t]he motif of silence recurs as an indictment of a world in which failure to act amounts to condoning these issues, failing to see, and thus colluding in the silence around them.”¹³³ Silence becomes a symbol for the shattered hopes in facing the roots of violence and eliminating its rapid spread among the youth. However, Goddard is more optimistic in her views when she argues that,

Staging *random* in the main theatre is testament to the recognition of youth violence as a wider issue, not just for the black community, exemplifying how the urgent need to address teenage knife crime transcends race.¹³⁴

Occupying the stages of the main theatres in London is evidence of green's success in conveying her message. Her plays trigger sympathy and emotional support in her audience. Addressing a wide range of audience from different age, class and cultural background, she succeeds in raising awareness to the issues of violence and knife crime:

¹³⁰ Goddard 90-91.

¹³¹ green 45.

¹³² Nicola Abram, “Staging the unsayable: debbie tucker green's political theatre,” *Journal of Contemporary Drama in English* 2. 12 (2014): 11.

¹³³ Goddard 94.

¹³⁴ Goddard 91.

[green's] representations of abuse, violence and murder in... *dirty butterfly* (Soho Theatre, 2003; dir. Rufus Norris), *born bad* (Hampstead Theatre, 2003; dir. Kathy Burke) and *random* (Royal Court, 2008 and National Tour 2010; dir. Sacha Wares) ... examin[e] how she uses a range of dramatic devices and conscious casting instructions to provoke audience consciences about complacency towards violence in our contemporary world.¹³⁵

green does not restrict herself to the topics of violence and murder, expanding on them to discuss other local and universal issues like human rights and racial discrimination, which will be examined in her play *stoning mary* (2005).

4.2 *stoning mary* (2005)

debbie tucker green highlights racism in its global context in *stoning mary* (2005), racism that is still practiced against black people in Africa and the Caribbean by the Western world. It is not a typical form of racism but a global one that deprives the people in the third world from their rights in maintaining a decent life. green condemns the abuse of human rights and racial discrimination which ignores the humanitarian crisis in these distant developing countries.

Goddard argues:

tucker green's plays evoke a strong political commitment to respond to current affairs by exposing human rights abuses while also alluding to the limits of mediatized representations that ignore, side-line or stereotype certain issues and challenging contemporary desensitization to horror. She explores key issues identified by Paul Rae as central to human rights legislation, including racial discrimination, discrimination against women, torture, genocide, and the rights of the child.¹³⁶

green's play discloses the violation of human rights in the third world and calls to propose effective measures to prevent human right infringement. The play was first premiered at the Royal Court Jerwood Theatre Downstairs in 2005. It revolves around the story of mary's and the Child Soldier's families and their terrifying dilemmas. mary's parents are AIDS patients; the father passed the disease to the mother, which widens the gap between them. They were killed by a Child Soldier who was traumatized by the horrors of war. mary takes revenge on the child and awaits her death by stoning. green represents authentic images of abuses that are

¹³⁵ Goddard 70.

¹³⁶ Goddard 123.

still practiced against women, and children who are kidnapped and forced into military recruitment. green raises awareness to these people's dilemma implicitly by transforming the African and the Caribbean suffering into the white culture and setting of the stage:

The dramatic form, casting and productions of tucker green's plays combine to carefully position audiences as witnesses to the emotional impact of violent atrocities on her characters and evoke the idea that Western inaction towards global crises amounts to complicity in human rights abuses. tucker green infers a symbiotic relationship between Britain, Africa and the Caribbean by casting white actors to portray issues associated primarily with Africa in *stoning mary*.¹³⁷

green transcends the borders of the stereotypical presentation of the African crisis by transforming it into the white space. The black experience is performed by a white cast to provoke urgent action in the audience in general and those in power in particular. This is green's way of evoking awareness and shocking the Western consciousness. She seeks to convey an authentic effective message, and to rise wider awareness of the African crisis. Goddard argues that: "the casting of white actors is a way of giving voice to the experiences of black people that are often sidelined or ignored by biased news agendas."¹³⁸ green gives voice to the voiceless agonies and sufferings of the people in need. She questions, on their behalf, the whites' inner humanitarian side: what would your reaction be, if this suffering was on your land? Are you going to break the walls of silence and stop violence, abuse and discrimination? It is no more about Africa, the no- "white" man land, but a humanitarian crisis that is discussed on the British land. Sierz points out that:

Green's uncomfortable idea of having British white people perform acts we usually associate with foreign black people calls into question the idea that our identities are fixed by birth or by skin colour. It also sharply questions our notion of the UK as a liberal safe heaven.¹³⁹

green's innovative representation of the black experience brings into question the notion of fixed identity and the British alleged liberality. green portrays fragmented experiences of different people, with no specific names, colours or identities. This indicates a generalization of the experience each character represents while at the same time emphasizing the fact that

¹³⁷ Goddard 122.

¹³⁸ Goddard 126.

¹³⁹ Sierz 98.

racism, racial discrimination and abuse are still practiced against the minorities all over the world despite the various attempts to stop them.

Racism hides under the cover of three global critical and destructive titles in the play: *The AIDS Genocide*, *The Prescription*, *The Child Soldier*, and *Stoning Mary*. Deirdre Osborne argues that the headings function as “a subliminal reminder of white Western imperial culpability for the tragedies dramatized.”¹⁴⁰ The current tragedies of the Africans and Caribbean people are the gross consequences of a long history of Western prejudiced and racist policies. The long years of the Western exploitation and civil wars left most of the African countries in complete darkness. Instead of spreading civilization and enlightenment, white people spread diseases and destruction. The three outstanding stories in the play revolve around the crisis of human rights in the black continent. green highlight the AIDS tragedy through the story of the AIDS-afflicted parents, mary’s parents, who are in constant fight to gain ‘one’ prescription for life:

WIFE ... That we can afford one, when what we need is two...
That we got – one - when what we need is ... two.
That one prescription for life –’
WIFE EGO for a life
WIFE ‘isn’t enough for ...’¹⁴¹

It is a fight for life, as thousands of Africans cannot afford their daily basic needs. Despite living in the twenty-first century, they still suffer from deadly diseases that take away countless lives every day:

Wife ‘I already got it.’
HUSBAND ‘Got it from you.’
WIFE ‘I got it from you.’...
HUSBAND EGO Eyes on the prescription...
HUSBAND ‘What you scared of? What *you* scared of then?’¹⁴²

¹⁴⁰ Deirdre Osborne, “Debbie Tucker Green and Dona Daley: Two Neo-Millennial Black British Women Playwrights,” *Antares* 4 (2010): 43.

¹⁴¹ debbie tucker green, *stoning mary* (London: Nick Hern Books, 2008) 13.

¹⁴² green 9.

A sense of shame, disappointment and fear of the unknown occupies the conversation between the husband and the wife. The WIFE accuses her husband of passing the disease to her. They are inflicted by these diseases out of poverty, ignorance and constant wars.

green exposes the atrocities and barbarism of wars on the formation of children's identity. War horrors leave hundreds of thousands of children, who are kidnapped and forced into military recruitment, with traumatized identities and psyche. The Child Soldier, in the play, is one of these children who is taken away from his parents. His mother expresses her grief saying: "I never lost him – I didn't I didn't I didn't ... They took him. They took him. They took him. They did."¹⁴³ This forced recruitment of child soldiers turns the children into monsters. The Child Soldier changes into a rude savage to the extent that even his mother is afraid of being alone with him at home: "MUM ... If we're bein honest .../ I can't sleep.../ I can't sleep with him in the house .../ I can't sleep with him back in the house. / He scares me."¹⁴⁴ Even the mother acknowledges her extreme fears of her son's presence. He slaughters the Young Sister- mary's parents brutally, despite their desperate pleadings to spare their lives. mary's revenge on the Child Soldier is an inevitable reaction for such a horrific crime. However, mary's murder of the Child Soldier cannot be justified, and her destiny is doomed to savage cultural laws and practices:

OLDER SISTER butchu killed / a –
YOUNGER SISTER I got a cause
OLDER SISTER you killed a man

...

YOUNGER SISTER And I'm gonna be stoned down for it...
...That *boy* was a soldier...
That *child* killed my parents.
Our parents, *ourn*.¹⁴⁵

mary awaits her death by stoning for killing the child soldier. green responds throughout the play to this specific violation of human rights, questioning the morality of such savage punishment. Goddard highlights this issue writing:

¹⁴³ green 35.

¹⁴⁴ green 52.

¹⁴⁵ green 63.

In *stoning mary*, the eponymous heroine is awaiting execution by public stoning for the retributive killing of the child soldier who slaughtered her AIDS infected parents, raising questions about the impact of cycles of retribution, about the ethics of stoning, and about our responsibility to stop such atrocities.¹⁴⁶

green condemns the current status of the Dark Continent which is still indulged in complete darkness culturally and politically, where the people stick to such primitive practices as stoning as a means of punishment. green attacks these practices and mainly the world's unreasonable silence surrounding this issue. This is depicted in mary's condemnation of the women's passivity towards her own issue and their refusal to sign the petition:

YOUNG SISTER So what happened to the womanist bitches?
... The black bitches
the rootsical bitches
the white the brown bitches
... What happened to the mainstream bitches?
... Bitches that aint but got nuthin better to do
Bitches that gotta conscience
Underclass bitches
Overclass bitches
Political bitches –
... but I'm bitch in need¹⁴⁷

The women, her community, and the idea of cultural solidarity all let her down. mary criticizes the subservience of women as they fall short of expectations. Even her own sister fails to support her by leaving her alone to struggle her cruel fate:

CORR. OFFICER ... You said you would...
OLDER SISTER
CORR. OFFICER You know she asked you to.
I know she asked you to...
... It's your sister. Bein stoned.
OLDER SISTER Have my ticket...
... Take my ticket.
... I – don't wannit.¹⁴⁸

The CORR. OFFICER urges mary's sister to support her at least by her attendance. However, the lack of words reflects the OLDER SISTER's subservience and negligence of her mary's case. It is a symbolic criticism not just for women, but rather a universal one. green condemns the unresponsiveness of the world towards the African and the Caribbean crisis and human

¹⁴⁶ Goddard 123.

¹⁴⁷ green 62- 63.

¹⁴⁸ green 73.

right abuses. green's global plays, as Goddard states, "move beyond the boundaries of the UK to foreground the international human rights concerns of black people living in Africa and the Caribbean."¹⁴⁹ green transcends the local boundaries of the British experience to present the contemporary global affairs concerning the issues of racial discrimination, violence and human rights abuse. She calls in her plays for the promotion of human rights to foster development in the third world.

¹⁴⁹ Goddard 121.

Chapter 5 - Conclusion

The objective of this thesis was to present a transparent look at the contemporary status of multiculturalism in Britain, seeking to comprehend its policies through the analysis of the works of Roy Williams, Debbie Tucker Green and Tanika Gupta. These playwrights have played an essential role in not only the revival of contemporary British drama, but in presenting new dimensions of projecting racism and the multicultural experience. I have argued how multiculturalism has become a response to multiplicity in Britain culturally and politically. It enhances cultural diversity and raises awareness to the importance of cultural pluralism. According to Michelle Wallace:

Multiculturalism is not the promised land ... [However] even at its most cynical and pragmatic, there is something about multiculturalism which continues to be worth pursuing ... we do need to find ways of the publicly manifesting the significance of cultural diversity, [and] of integrating the contribution of colour into the fabric of the society.¹⁵⁰

Despite the controversy surrounding the policies of multiculturalism, it has become an inevitable means of managing cultural diversity and has permeated the cultural and theatrical institutions. This in turn has led to the revival of black theatre and more visibility of black British drama which interacts with the contemporary cultural and political changes.

Williams, Gupta and Green belong to the active voices that delineate the different faces and disguises of British racism, racist exploitation, violence and knife-crime. Each one of them projects these issues from different perspectives. Williams captures the British national obsessions with sport to discuss the questions of Britishness, belonging and national identity, Goddard notes that:

Williams' use of sport as a dramatic metaphor to illuminate his political concerns raises questions about the social impact of black playwriting that interrogates contemporary issues and adds black-informed perspectives to prominent contemporary debates about race and nation.¹⁵¹

¹⁵⁰ Stuart 212.

¹⁵¹ Goddard 96.

Williams uses sport to discuss and criticize bigotry and racist attitudes practiced by both sides of the conflict, the blacks and the whites. Sport becomes a vehicle to reflect the essence of the tense boundary between Englishness and Britishness. Williams highlights the leading role of black and Asian playwrights in articulating new perspectives on discrimination and violence on stage. Aleks Sierz comments on the works of Williams, green and Gupta, and their prominent positions in black British drama saying:

Plays by writers such as Tanika Gupta... explored the influence of Asian heritage on today's identities. If the Other is often imagined as black in Britain, Debbie Tucker Green's *Stoning Mary* challenges this assumption by using white characters to tell an African story. If you consider that such plays such as Williams's *Sing Yer Heart Out for the Lads* ... [was] some of the most exciting of the decade, you can readily agree with Andrew Wyllie when he says that 'the greatest vitality in British theatre in the early 2000s emerge from black writing.'¹⁵²

Williams, green and Gupta's commitments to the issues they present on stage enhance the cultural experience and reinforce beneficial cultural exchanges. green and Gupta, as I clarified in the third and fourth chapters, transcend the national experience to tackle global issues like the humanitarian crisis in the third world, sex trade and global racism. They raise awareness to the frightening consequences of violence and knife-crime on the victims' families, and how the aftermath is extremely confusing and overwhelming for traumatized young people. Although Williams, Gupta and green are cynical about of the upcoming changes, they succeed in articulating the anxieties and agonies of the British people in the new millennium. What unites them, using Goddard terms, is "a commitment to probing beneath mediatized images to raise questions and debates about contemporary black experience."¹⁵³ They have sought throughout their plays a "multicultural equality"¹⁵⁴ through unconventional presentations of black experience and the issues of racism and discrimination on stage. Williams, Gupta and green belong to the English nation, and they have taken the task of presenting the people despite their colour and ethnic backgrounds as a means of bringing the contemporary societal

¹⁵² Sierz, *Rewriting the Nation British Theatre Today*, 230.

¹⁵³ Goddard 7.

¹⁵⁴ Goddard 7.

problems of race, bigotry, violence and multiculturalism, out of the newspapers and onto the stage. They successfully work towards greater awareness, and break down that “fourth wall” of entertainment towards creating a “more tolerant Britain”¹⁵⁵ for all cultures living in Britain.

¹⁵⁵ Goddard 17.

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Summary

The thesis *Racism and New Dimensions of Projecting the Multicultural Experience in Contemporary British Drama* analyzes multiculturalism in contemporary Britain and questions its discursive boundaries through the works of some black and Asian contemporary playwrights such as Roy Williams, Debbie Tucker Green and Tanika Gupta. The works of these playwrights articulate a set of experiences that reflects an image of the contemporary issues of bigotry and violence in Britain.

Williams, Gupta and Green present new approaches on the multicultural Britain concerning the issues of racism, discrimination and knife crime, shedding light on the cruelly racist world from the 'white and black' perspectives. Rethinking the questions of identity, Britishness, social agency and national affiliation from new proportions.

The second chapter Roy Williams's *Sing Yer Heart Out for the Lads* (2002), *Sucker Punch* (2010) and *The No Boys Cricket Club* (1996). Williams stages sport in all its complexity as a rich ground for contemplating the issues of racism, belonging, nationalism and identity. He portrays an image of the conflict among the ethnic communities in a multicultural space, highlighting that conflict in its larger context.

The third chapter discusses Tanika Gupta's *White Boy* (2008) and *Sugar Mummies* (2006). Both of which reflect the disappearance of a stable, homogenous English identity in a multiracial space. Gupta focuses on the tension between 'black' and 'white' in its larger context to explore racism from a completely different angle. The center of being accepted in one of the selected communities is not white, but black.

The fourth chapter centers on the issue of violence, in particular knife crime, which is a consequence of racism. Tucker Green transcends the local themes to discuss global racism and the humanitarian crisis in the third world. Green's plays *Stoning Mary* (2005) and *Random*

(2008) articulate the shattered hopes and anxieties of the victims' families concerning the issues of racism and belonging from a profound different perspective.

Williams, Gupta and Green successfully tackle unconventional presentations of racism and its far-sighted consequences on stage. They have taken the task of presenting the people despite their ethnic backgrounds as a means of bringing the contemporary societal problems of race, bigotry, violence and multiculturalism, out of the newspapers and onto the stage. Raising greater awareness, and breaking down that "fourth wall" of entertainment towards creating a "more tolerant Britain" for all cultures living in Britain.

Key Words

Drama, contemporary British theatre, multiculturalism, race, racism, identity, Britishness, national identity, Roy Williams, debbie tucker green, Tanika Gupta.

Resumé

Práce *Rasismus a Nové Zobrazování Multikulturní Zkušenosti v Současném Britském Dramatu* analyzuje multikulturalismus v dnešní Velké Británii a zkoumá jeho hranice v dílech některých současných černošských a asijských autorů, jako např. Roy Williamse, Debbie Tucker Green a Taniky Gupty. Práce těchto dramatiků artikulují soubor zkušeností, které reflektují obraz dnešních problémů s předsudky a násilím ve Velké Británii.

Williams, Gupta a Green představují nové přístupy k multikulturní Británii, týkající se otázek rasismu, diskriminace, zločinů spáchaných nožem, a vrhají nové světlo na krutý rasistický svět z „bílé a černé“ perspektivy. Znovu tak promýšlí otázky identity, britství, sociální problematiky a mezinárodních vztahů z nových perspektiv.

Druhá kapitola se zabývá knihami *Sing Yer Heart Out for the Lands* (2002), *Sucker Punch* (2010) a *The No Boys Cricket Club* (1996) od Roye Williamse. Williams uvádí na scénu sport v celé jeho komplexnosti jako bohatou půdu pro úvahy týkající se rasismu, etnické příslušnosti, nacionalismu a identity. Vytváří obraz konfliktu mezi etnickými komunitami v multikulturním prostoru a zvyrazňuje tento konflikt v jeho širším kontextu.

Třetí kapitola rozebírá knihy *White Boys* (2008) a *Sugar Mummies* (2006) Taniky Gupty. V obou se reflektuje zmizení stabilní a homogenní anglické identity v multikulturním prostoru. Gupta se zaměřuje na napětí mezi černými a bílými v širším kontextu, aby zkoumala rasismus ze zcela jiného úhlu. Jádrem přijetí do jedné z vybraných komunit je pak nikoli bílá barva, ale právě černá.

Čtvrtá kapitola probírá problematiku násilí, zejména kriminalitu páchanou noži, jako důsledek rasismu. Tucker Green přesahuje lokální témata směrem ke globálnímu rasismu a humanitárním krizím v zemích třetího světa. Hry *stoning mary* (2005) a *random* (2008) od Tucker Green vyslovují ztracené naděje a úzkost rodin, které se staly obětí rasismu kvůli etnické příslušnosti, ze zcela odlišné perspektivy.

Williams, Gupta a Green úspěšně rozebírají nekonvenční pohled na rasismus a jeho dalekosáhlé souvislosti na jevišti. Vzali si za úkol ukazovat lidi bez ohledu na jejich etnický původ pomocí zapojení moderních sociálních problémů rasy, bigotnosti, násilí a multikulturalismu na divadelním jevišti a nikoli na stránkách médií. Tím vedou k lepšímu pochopení problému a k boření „čtvrté zdi“ v zábavě a k vytvoření „tolerantnější Británie“ pro všechny kultury žijící ve Velké Británii.

Klíčová slova

Drama, současné britské divadlo, multikulturalismus, rasa, rasismus, identita, britská identita, národní identita, Roy Williams, debbie tucker green, Tanika Gupta.