

Univerzita Hradec Králové

Pedagogická fakulta

Katedra anglického jazyka a literatury



## **Postkoloniální prvky a estetika In-Yer-Face divadla v dílech Taniky Gupty**

Bakalářská práce

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Studijní program: 7310 Filologie

Studijní obor: Cizí jazyky pro cestovní ruch – anglický jazyk

Cizí jazyky pro cestovní ruch – německý jazyk

Vedoucí práce: Mgr. Jan Suk

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## **Zadání bakalářské práce**

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### **Cíl, metody, literatura, předpoklady:**

Bakalářská práce si klade za cíl najít ve vybraných dramatických dílech Taniky Gupty prvky Postkoloniální literatury a estetiky In-Yer-Face divadla. K najetí prvků je využita analýza vybraných děl.

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Prohlašuji, že jsem tuto bakalářskou práci vypracovala (pod vedením vedoucího práce) samostatně a uvedla jsem všechny použité prameny a literaturu.

V Hradci Králové dne

## **Poděkování**

Tímto bych chtěla poděkovat vedoucímu mé práce, Mgr. Janu Sukovi, za ochotu, trpělivost a cenné připomínky při vedení mé práce.

Děkuji

Radka Doležalová

## **Anotace**

DOLEŽALOVÁ, Radka. *Postkoloniální prvky a estetika In-Yer-Face divadla v dílech Taniky Gupty*. [Bakalářská práce]. Hradec Králové, 2016

Bakalářská práce se zaměřuje na tři politické hry britské dramatičky bengálského původu Taniky Gupty *Gladiator Games*, *Sugar Mummies* a *White Boy*. Cíle práce jsou nalézt v těchto dílech postkoloniální prvky a elementy typické pro estetiku in-yer-face divadla, které ovládlo jeviště britských divadel 90. let. V první části práce představuje oba směry a vytyčuj jejich hlavní rysy. Tyto vybrané prvky jsou následně ilustrovány na samotných dílech autorky.

Klíčová slova: Tanika Gupta, Postkoloniální literatura, In-yer-face divadlo

### **Annotation**

DOLEŽALOVÁ, Radka. *Postcolonial Elements and In-Yer-Face Aesthetics in Dramatic Works of Tanika Gupta*. [Bachelor Degree Thesis]. Hradec Králové: Faculty of Education, University of Hradec Králové, 2016.

The present bachelor degree thesis focuses on three political plays *Gladiator Games*, *Sugar Mummies* and *White Boy* written by Tanika Gupta, British playwright of Bengali descent. By analysing these works, the thesis aims to locate postcolonial features and elements typical of aesthetics of in-yer-face theatre that dominated the stages of 1990's Britain. In the first part bachelor thesis introduces both movements and points out their dominant features. These allocated features are exemplified on the author's works in the practical part of the thesis.

Key words: Gupta, Postcolonial literature, in-yer-face theatre

**Prohlášení**

Prohlašuji, že bakalářská práce je uložena v souladu s rektorským výnosem č. 1/2013 (Řád pro nakládání se školními a některými jinými autorskými díly na UHK).

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## 1 Introduction

In 1995 Sarah Kane staged her first play *Blasted* at the Royal Court Theatre Upstairs in London and was greeted by critical incomprehension. Kane did not fit in critic's charts, she was young and she was a woman who wrote about shocking things and, above all, presented them in an unprecedented shocking form. Acceptable or not, Kane's plays interrupted the ossified way of writing and gave rise to a new theatre era that was later named as *In-yer-face*. By the end of the 1990's, more than 20 authors were perceived as in-yer-face writers. Kane, however, remained to be the most successful one. The rawness of this theatre anchored on other European stages too. As the name suggests, in-yer-face is an uncompromising confrontation between two persons, not only in sport, where this phrase originated, but also on the stages between actors whose main aim is to go beyond boundaries and violate spectators' personal space. This era basically ended with the decade, but left its traces in a contemporary British drama. In the first chapter, in-yer-face theatre is set in its historical context and the typical features are highlighted. One of the tasks of this thesis is to find aesthetics of in-yer-face theatre in three plays written by Tanika Gupta, a writer coming from a former British colony.

India, where Gupta's ancestors come from, was one of more than 30 states that gained independence from their colonial power as an aftermath of the World War II. Just like in-yer-face extended rich English theatre tradition, Postcolonial theory, became a new branch in the terms of British literature in the 1980's. Largely, Edward Said contributed to the criticism of West and Western views restricting the perception of Orient; this understanding released a whole flow of similar critical works thereby opening door for so-called Postcolonial writers. The history of colonization and its impacts stopped suddenly being justified and were told from the side of those who must have involuntarily live under the Empire and other colonial European powers and were forced to submit and accept new culture while losing connection to their own. Writers like Salman Rushdie or Arundhati Roy give in their works voice to those who could not speak for themselves during the colonial period. They dealt primarily with rewriting history and culture heritage of the original inhabitants.

Similarly to such writers, also Tanika Gupta writes about her family history and difficulties of the colonial times in her early works. She begun her career in the beginning of the 1990's and could have witnessed the origins of in-yer-face theatre. Her first successful play was published roughly at the same time as Sarah Kane's work. Therefore it is interesting to examine some of Gupta's late works to find out if she was somehow influenced by this theatre movement. Born

in England, Gupta has Bengali roots and her early works were characterised by her empathy and compassion for those who once lived under the suppression of the Empire. Thus, the second part of the thesis aims to find any Postcolonial features, in her late plays.

The thesis is based primarily on work of Alex Sierz, who wrote a detailed publication mapping this theatre phenomenon and continues to do so on his website. The thesis also works with internet sources, mainly with newspaper reviews of in-yer-face plays.

The thesis aims to locate Postcolonial features and elements typical of aesthetics of in-yer-face theatre in all three works, each of the plays is analysed, and the main characters are introduced. Located features are accompanied by extracts from the plays.

## 2 In-yer-face theatre

This movement emerged in the middle of the nineties of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, after decades of suppression of the British theatre and successfully extended its rich history. In-yer-face theatre became soon popular all over the world. First plays arose in Bush Theatre in London, but because of insufficient capacity, they were later moved on the big stages of the Royal Court Theatre. In-yer-face theatre contains now a wide line of authors, but among the most significant writers belong Sarah Kane, Mark Ravenhill, Anthony Neilson or Martin McDonough. Kane's *Blasted* is considered to be the pillar work of the movement. Her other significant works include *Crave* or *4.48 Psychosis*. Even nowadays, 20 years after their premieres, these dramas are performed on world's stages, which prove their value and fact that the works and their authors have still a lot to say.

### 2. 1. In-yer-face theatre in historical context

Any new culture wave, movement or grouping is an outcome of recent historical and/or political events in the world. In order to understand the revolution of British theatre, it is important to look back at important historical events of 80's and 90's of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The turn of these two decades was affected by many changes happening all around the world. Mankind witnessed the end of the Cold War between West and East accompanied by the fall of the Berlin Wall and dissolution of the Soviet Union. Great Britain was entering into new era after Margaret Thatcher's three terms as Prime Minister, with John Major taking her place. With the beginning of the 90's, a wave of optimism was spreading around the world in all its spheres. Culture in general begins to be free, open for experiments and generously subsidized. 1980's saw a crisis in British theatre. A political shift to the right expressed by Thatcherism, the failure of the political left, withdrawal of money for the arts and a loss of confidence in theatre as a political arena collectively resulted in a nervous retreat from mainstream politics.<sup>1</sup> Many people argue in which way, and if at all, Thatcher changed the course of British theatre and culture in general. Under her watch, as Michael Billington writes in *The Guardian*, "we saw a shift away from public subsidy to corporate sponsorship, a transformation of the Arts

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<sup>1</sup> Taylor, L. (2011) The experience of immediacy: emotion and enlistment in fact-based theatre. *Studies in Theatre and Performance*, 31 (2). pp. 223-237. ISSN 1468-2761 doi: 10.1386/stap.31.2.223\_1 Available at <http://centaur.reading.ac.uk/22120/>

Council from an independent agency to an instrument of government, and the growth of a siege mentality in arts organisations.”<sup>2</sup> Although she presented herself as friendly to art, she did not give it the needed space to evolve, and rather tried to determine its direction and shape. That is why musicals characterized the eighties. Andrew Lloyd Weber and Cameron Mackintosh’s works represented for Thatcher what British culture should look like. She eventually became a target for artists.

It was her economic policies, her military adventure in the Falklands and her apparent support for private avarice over public welfare that put her in the shooting gallery for so many artists. Salman Rushdie, an active opponent, pilloried her in *The Satanic Verses* (1988) as Mrs. Torture and Maggie the Bitch. Alan Ayckbourn’s play *A Small Family Business* (1987) satirized Thatcherite views on family and looking out for No. 1, just as the film *Wall Street*, released the same year, burlesqued Reaganite greed.<sup>3</sup>

Despite of the noticeable release in British society, the situation in theatre did not look, at least in the beginning, very optimistic. The big breakout did not happen until 1995. Some journalist even spoke about theatre’s crisis, about its withdrawal from central social happening. A playwright Nick Ward noted, “Never had the theatre been so out of touch with youth.”<sup>4</sup> But in the middle of the nineties comes to a breakthrough, as British Labour Party lead by Tony Blair took over the governance and, partially out of pure populism, his government starts to support this new arising theatre wave. As Aleks Sierz states, “youth could be critical of capitalism without writing state-of-the-nation plays; it could be sceptical of male power without being dogmatically feminist; it could express outrage without being politically correct.”<sup>5</sup> Ward’s words were proven wrong, because it was young people, the *Thatcher’s children* who caused the revolution in play writing, and theatre, once again, found its place in people’s everyday life.

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<sup>2</sup> Billington, Michael. *Margaret Thatcher casts a long shadow over theatre and arts*. In: *The Guardian* [online]. 08. April 2013 [cit.2016.04.12]. Retrieved from: <http://www.theguardian.com/stage/2013/apr/08/margaret-thatcher-long-shadow-theatre>

<sup>3</sup> GREEN, Robert Everett. *Margaret Thatcher in pop culture: A Scrooge with all the power and no midnight conversion*. In: *The Globe and Mail*. 08. April 2013 [cit.2016.04.05]. Retrieved from: <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/thatcher-portrayed-as-scrooge-with-all-the-power-and-no-midnight-conversion/article10885380/>

<sup>4</sup> SIERZ, Aleks. *In-yer-face theatre: British drama today*. London: Faber and Faber, 2001. ISBN 0571200494. 37 P.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. P. 36

## 2. 2 What is In-yer-face Theatre?

In 1995 Charles Spencer, a British journalist, wrote in his *Trainspotting* review: “You may not like these in-your-face productions, but they are quite impossible to ignore.”<sup>6</sup> Without any wider definition, Spencer captured in this short sentence the whole substance of In-Yer-Face theatre. Once people come across this kind of play, they are most likely to remember it, think about it and discuss it all over again. The phrase, derived from longer expression *in your face*, implies some sort of unpleasant confrontation with someone or something. Something very direct, unavoidable, even aggressive. It indicates a conflict between two parts. Someone who finds themselves in an *in-your-face-situation*, there is nothing they can do about it.

The phrase does not have its roots in the theatre world, it allegedly originated during a baseball game in 1976 in United States of America. A sport journalist Charles Rosen used it to describe someone’s disdain for other players. It soon became a slang expression and its meaning was slowly losing its association with sport. It was not until 2001, when Simon Gray, late English playwright and memoirist, used the phrase for the first time to describe contemporary English theatre. Here is an extract from his play *Japes*:

And you know—you know the worst thing—the worst thing is that they speak grammatically. They construct sentences. Construct them! And with some elegance. Why? Tell me why? (Little pause.) Actually, I know why. So that the verbs and nouns stick out—in your face. In your face. That’s the phrase, isn’t it? That’s the phrase! In your face!<sup>7</sup>

The phrase was officially acknowledge after Sierz key publication in which he focuses on theatre of 1990’s Britain. It was not however coined by him, like many incorrectly believe, as *Japes* was the first one to use it.

When you look up the phrase in dictionaries, the definitions are more or less the same; according to *New Oxford English Dictionary* (1998), the phrase is described as something “blatantly aggressive or provocative, impossible to ignore or avoid”. The *Collins English Dictionary* (1998) extends the definition by adding the word “confrontational.” The widest definition so far, has been offered by Aleks Sierz who says that in-yer-face theatre “is any drama that takes the audience by the scruff of the neck and shakes it until it gets the message.”<sup>8</sup> It is all about

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<sup>6</sup> SIERZ, Aleks. *In-yer-face theatre: British drama today*. London: Faber and Faber, 2001. ISBN 0571200494. 36 P.

<sup>7</sup> GRAY, Simon. *Japes*. Rev. ed. London: Nick Hern Books, 2001. ISBN 1854596322.

<sup>8</sup> SIERZ, Aleks. *In-yer-face theatre: British drama today*. London: Faber and Faber, 2001. ISBN 0571200494. P. 6

sensation. It questions moral norms and tries to cross or move the borders of what can be and should be shown on stage. The way how in-yer-face theatre gets under one's skin is actually very easy; it aims on our basic feelings such as shame or humiliation. According to Sierz, the best plays should "take us on an emotional journey"<sup>9</sup>. Theatre was a way how to let people face displeasing problems of the world, the truths that people do not want to see or hear unless they concerned them. It makes people look at what we want to both, consciously and subconsciously, avoid, because it "reminds us of the awful things human beings are capable of, and of the limits of our self-control."<sup>10</sup>

In-yer-face theatre evinces some strong connections and undeniable similarities with another big phenomenon that turned British playwriting upside down – the era of so called Angry Young Men. Closer look is provided for instance by Špálová who points out the mutual features in her publication *John Osborne as a Precursor of In-Yer-Face Theatre*. The most noticeable results of the comparison is according to her the analogy in social-historical situation from which these 2 movements arose, as either of them is preceded by a playwright crisis. The resemblance lies also in its significant social influence, since they manage to approach experts as well as lay public and put theatre in the centre of cultural life. Both phenomena were also based on experiments, shocking changes and breaking conventions. The beginnings were in both cases influenced by foreign production. Špálová also stresses the importance of determined initiators who helped to promote it. Sarah Kane's *Blasted* and John Osborne's *Look back in Anger* - either of the movement had its dominant writer who defined the whole movement and their key plays served as muster by which others created and were judged.

Finally, she also points out the importance of financial support that was provided. The fact, that the both cases were named by two individuals cannot be omitted either; in case of Angry Young Men, it was Kenneth Tynan who coined the name, in the other case it was mentioned Aleks Sierz.<sup>11</sup> Both movements caused a big sensation in British theatres.

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<sup>9</sup> SIERZ, Aleks. *In-yer-face theatre: British drama today*. London: Faber and Faber, 2001. ISBN 0571200494. P. 7

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> ŠPÁLOVÁ, Marie. John Osborne jako předchůdce In-Yer-Face theatre. Sborník prací filozofické fakulty Brněnské university Q8/ 2005

## 2. 3 Forms and features of in-ye-face theatre

In-Yer-Face theatre does not have only one form. In his publication, Sierz divides In-ye-face theatre on *hot* for extreme form of plays, and *cool* for plays that try to keep a certain distance from an audience. The distance is both, physical – as the plays are shown in bigger theatres – and psychological, such plays often contains more humour. Horošćák offers more detailed division in dependence on topics. His ideas are presented in an article by Izavćuk, he presents several categories, such as *Pink Plays*, that is dramas containing homosexual topics, *Crisis of masculinity Plays*, such pieces deal with equality between men and women and questioned males in general, *Urban plays*, those were based on author's relation to a certain city or area, *Irish plays*, based on author's origin, *Plays by female playwrights*, such include plays by Sarah Kane or Judy Upton, and finally *newspaper (publicist) plays* whose topics were of social or political nature.<sup>12</sup> Whether *hot* or *cool*, *Pink* or *Irish*, none of the plays should never fail to shock the audience and question their morality. In order to do so, in-ye-face theatre plays have a very specific set of features.

Every author, of course, uses a different way to approach the audience, but there some common features that define in-ye-face dramas and distinguish them from other works. Basically, anything that makes spectators feel uncomfortable, vulnerable or embarrassed watching, is displayed on the stage. “The language is usually filthy, characters talk about unmentionable subjects, take their clothes off, have sex, humiliate each other, experience unpleasant emotions, become suddenly violent.”<sup>13</sup> According to Kane “there isn't anything you can't represent on stage. If you are saying that you can't represent something, you are saying you can't talk about it, you are denying its existence.”<sup>14</sup> The abolishment of censorship in 1968 in Britain should not be omitted as it played a key role in what can be performed on the stage today. Three years before the abolishment, Edward Bond staged his controversial and violent play *Saved* (1965), including a baby in a pram being stoned to death. The play was both, defended and attacked and “became a symbol in the argument for and against censorship.”<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> IZAVĆUK, Jaroslav. *Power of Irrational or Coolness: New Themes in British Drama*. 1. vyd. Hradec Králové: Univerzita Hradec Králové, 2014

<sup>13</sup> SIERZ, Aleks. *In-ye-face theatre: British drama today*. London: Faber and Faber, 2001. ISBN 0571200494. P. 10

<sup>14</sup> BAYLEY, Clare. *A Very Angry Young Woman*. In: *Independent* [online] 23. January 1995 [cit. 2016.05.05.] Retrieved from: <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/a-very-angry-young-woman-1569281.html>

<sup>15</sup> SIERZ, Aleks. *In-ye-face theatre: British drama today*. London: Faber and Faber, 2001. ISBN 0571200494. 19 P.

One of the common features is violence. When it is shown on the stage, audience suddenly realizes that it is impossible to ignore, whether the presented violence is of physical or mental nature. The act of violence on stage was introduced already in the ancient times and lots of authors, including Kane, were inspired by ancient plays. This movement was also often called *neo-Jacobean*, as violence was a common feature also in the period of English renaissance, primarily Jacobean tragedies.<sup>16</sup> It was also a common feature commonly seen in Shakespeare's tragedies.

The writers also aimed to break taboos, such as homosexuality, sex or crisis of masculinity. If they are broken publicly, the effect on people is much bigger, than when it is done privately or in secluded groups. Although sex is an integral part of people's live, shown publicly it never fails to offend and scandalize without even being real. Under taboos belong not only unmentionable subjects, but also rude and vulgar words. Swearwords have a big power in theatre, because they are used publicly, in a big group of people. In order to violate audience's personal space, the writers use a shock technique, under which belong all the above mentioned elements.<sup>17</sup> The attempt to shock and deviate could have been seen also by other artists outside theatre, for example Damian Hirst and his work *The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living* or *Mother and Child, Divided* etc. It means that the shock can be both, visual or audible.

Although people are used to see all these elements in television or read about them in book, theatre is in this point of view incomparably more powerful, it cannot be simply turned off or closed. The potency of theatre is that it is present and real. Hence it is way stronger than any other art forms. Everything is real and happens just a few steps from the audience.

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<sup>16</sup> SIERZ, Aleks. *In-yer-face theatre: British drama today*. London: Faber and Faber, 2001. ISBN 0571200494. 19 P.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.



### 3 Postcolonial literature

Postcolonial literature is a study on the effects of colonialism on cultures and societies and on how these societies responded to. It is a literature written by authors who come from countries that were once under the dominance of European colonial powers. It can be written by those who lived in colonised countries, but also by authors coming from the second or third generation. It covers literatures from countries such as India, Pakistan, many African and Caribbean countries etc. Among the most read post-colonial writers belong for example: Salman Rushdie (*Midnight Children*, 1981), Chinua Achebe (*Things Fall Apart*, 1958), and Arundhati Roy (*The God of Small Things*, 1997).

#### 3.1 Postcolonial literature in historical context

The era of colonisation dates back to the 15<sup>th</sup> century, when Spanish and Portuguese explorers discovered new lands in America and Asia. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, European countries colonised much of Southeast Asia and Africa, and their dominance was substantial. Among those colonial powers were England, France, Belgium, Spain, Netherlands, Portugal and Italy. The colonies they owned were exploited and served as a source of raw materials, labour and for extending the territory. The most prominent position among colonisers belonged to British Empire. It is believed that at the peak of colonization every fourth inhabitant in the world was “a subject of Queen Victoria”.<sup>18</sup> Already during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, states like India started to demand their rights on independence. The process of decolonisation, however, comes with the end of the World War II. During the war, European countries were driven out of Asia by Japan. The end of the war brought hope, as many colonised countries started to demand their independence, either peacefully or through rebellions. In 1946 the British Empire lost Jordan, followed by India, Pakistan, Ceylon, Burma and many more. Within just 15 years as much as 36 states freed themselves from their colonisers. All of these ‘3<sup>rd</sup> world countries’ are what we know as postcolonial states. It can be argued that such countries are not post-colonial, but ‘neo-colonial’: Taking into consideration that the countries gained only economic freedom and in terms of economics they remained dependent on their former colonizers.<sup>19</sup> These

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<sup>18</sup> ABRAMS, M. H. (ed.). *The Norton anthology of English literature*. 6th ed. New York: W.W. Norton, c1996. ISBN 0-393-96803-0.

<sup>19</sup> O'REILLY, Christopher. *Context in Literature. Postcolonial literature*. Cambridge University Press. 2007. [online]. Retrieved from: [http://education.cambridge.org/media/651467/post\\_colonial\\_literature.pdf](http://education.cambridge.org/media/651467/post_colonial_literature.pdf)

new states had a few in common – they were non-white, with developing economies and facing internal problems that were the result of their colonial past.<sup>20</sup>

The impacts of colonialism were immense. Colonisers violated the personal spaces of invaded peoples and completely changed the way of their development in all its spheres. The most recognisable impacts of colonisation are spreading of diseases, exploitation, enslavement, racism, alienation colonized lands from their own places, culture and language.<sup>21</sup> The studies of Postcolonialism tries to deal with these impacts by responding back to the colonial powers.

### 3. 2 Postcolonial literary studies and theory

Postcolonial studies are an incredibly extensive discipline that involves many branches and subcategories. This thesis cannot, and has not ambitions to, cover all of them. Therefore, this part offers only a brief introduction to postcolonial theory, as it has no application in the practical part.

The idea behind postcolonial theory is to examine the culture of states that were once under the influence of colonial powers. It also seeks to critically investigate what happens “when two cultures clash and one of them ideologically fashions itself as superior and assumes dominance and control over the other”.<sup>22</sup> Postcolonial literatures actually emerged as an alternative for what was called *Commonwealth literature*, *New Literatures in English* or *Literatures other than English or American*. Over the years, this approach was criticized for its insufficiency, it was too centric and positivist and offered interpretation only from the Western point of view. It can be said that the Postcolonial studies emerged from “the inability of European theory to deal with the complexities and varied cultural provenance of post-colonial writing”.<sup>23</sup> The criticism peaked at the end of the 1970’s after Edward Said’s work *Orientalism: Western Conception of the Orient* (1978) was published. He points out at the prejudiced attitudes of the Western world. Said also claims that the process of colonisation was not a one-way matter. According to him,

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<sup>20</sup> MENTAN, Tatah. *The state in Africa: An Analysis of Impacts of historical trajectories of Global Capitalist Expansion and Domination in the continent*. African Books Collective.2010. ISBN 9956-616-12-5

<sup>21</sup> FERGUSON, Niall. *Empire: How Britain Made the Modern World*. London: Allen Lane, 2003. ISBN 0141007540.

<sup>22</sup> ANDERSON, Gary L. a Kathryn. HERR. *Encyclopedia of activism and social justice*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, c2007. ISBN 141291812X.

<sup>23</sup> ASHCROFT, Bill, Helen TIFFIN a Gareth GRIFFITHS. *The empire writes back: theory and practice in post-colonial literatures*. London: Routledge, 1989. New accents (Routledge). ISBN 0-415-01209-0. 11 P.

the colonised areas had a great impact on the culture of colonisers. Said also offered the distinction between “colonialism” and “imperialism.” He defines “imperialism” as “the practise, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan centre ruling a distant territory,”<sup>24</sup> whereas “colonialism”, almost always a consequence of imperialism, “is the implanting of settlements on distant territory.”<sup>25</sup> Said’s works, that are based on Michel Foucault’s perception of Post-structuralism<sup>26</sup>, are fundamental for the studies of Postcolonialism and all postcolonial theorists proceed from his publications.

Among other significant theorists belong an American University Professor Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Homi K. Bhabha. Spivak contributed primarily by her translations Jacques Derida’s *Of Grammatology*. In her own works, Spivak deals with the issue of identity, such as race, gender or social classes. Bhabha’s works are focused primarily on the space that arose between coloniser and colonised and the mutual influence between them. He also came with terms such as *Mimicry*, *Third Space* or *Hybridity*. Edward Said, Chakravorty Spivak and Homi K. Bhabha are all considered to be the pillars of Post-colonial theory.

### 3. 3 Postcolonial literature and its typical features

The Trio of theorists Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin penned a work titled *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practise in Post-colonial Literature* (1989). The title references an article *The Empire Writes Back in a Vengeance* written by Salman Rushdie, one of the most known postcolonial writers. Their work is considered to be the most complex book ever written on the subject of Postcolonial literatures, as it covers all its aspects and gives explanations to the key terms.

Postcolonial literature is without any doubt a response to the Empire. A classic example is a work by Jamaica Kincaid and her point of view on the issue of colonization.

Antigua is a small place, a small island...It was settled by Christopher Columbus in 1493. Not too long after, it was settled by human rubbish from Europe, who used enslaved but noble and exalted human beings from Africa [...] to satisfy their desire for wealth and power, to feel better

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<sup>24</sup> SAID, Edward W. *Culture & imperialism*. Vintage ed. London: Vintage, 1994. ISBN 0-09-996750-2. P.9

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Post-structuralism is a label formulated by American academics to denote the heterogeneous works of a series of mid-20<sup>th</sup>-century French and continental philosophers and critical theorists who came to international prominence in the 1960’s and 1970’s. POSTER, Mark. *Critical Theory and Poststructuralism: in Search of a Context*. Cornell University Press, 1989. ISBN: 0801495881. P. 5-6.

about their own miserable existence, so that they could be less lonely and empty– a European disease.<sup>27</sup>

Kincaid belong to the first generation of authors who usually expressed their disdain for everything English, or European, for that matter.

One cannot say, that the Postcolonial literature came immediately after colonies gained their freedom. Its development was a long process that went through multiple stages, beginning long before the gain of independence. According to Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, the first stage begun already during the imperial period, the writings were mostly in the language of the imperial centre and if not, they were written by people who represented the imperial powers; for example gentrified settlers, soldiers or travellers. The problem is that these texts were always emphasising the imperial power over the colonised country.<sup>28</sup> A typical work from this stage of development is for example Rudyard Kipling's *Christmas in India (Departmental Ditties and Other Verses, 1888)*. The second stage of production is the literature produced "under imperial licence" by "natives" or "outcasts".<sup>29</sup> It includes works written by English educated Indian upper class. They wrote in the language of the dominant culture. Although Postcolonial literature is an evident response to the Empire, "it should not, however, be defined as purely against it, because it is also a literature written after the end of formal colonial rule."<sup>30</sup> The next stage is represented by writers who experienced the period of decolonisation, followed by authors who have roots in once colonized countries, but live in Western world, often in the country of the colonizer.<sup>31</sup> In this category belongs also Tanika Gupta.

As already stated, Postcolonial writing reacts on the imperial rule and its impacts. Such works share features and characteristics. Among the most significant belong the use of language, concern of the place and displacement, reworking colonial art-forms and reclaiming spaces and places. Writers often deal also with asserting culture integrity and revising history.

Probably one of the crucial and problematic concerns of Postcolonial writing is language in which the works should be written. If the authors write in English, they write in the language

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<sup>27</sup> KINCAID, Jamaica. *A Small Place*. New York: Plume Book, 1989. ISBN 0-452-26235-6. P. 80-81

<sup>28</sup> ASHCROFT, Bill, Helen TIFFIN a Gareth GRIFFITHS. *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literatures*. London: Routledge, 1989. New Accentes (Routledge). ISBN 0-415-01209-0. P. 12

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> O'REILLY, Christopher. *Context in Literature. Postcolonial literature*. Cambridge University Press. 2007. [online]. Retrieved from: [http://education.cambridge.org/media/651467/post\\_colonial\\_literature.pdf](http://education.cambridge.org/media/651467/post_colonial_literature.pdf)

<sup>31</sup> MUSILOVÁ, Markéta. Současná postkoloniální literatura psaná v anglickém jazyce. In: iLiteratura.cz [online] 20. January 2005 [cit. 2016.05.05.] Retrieved from: <http://www.iliteratura.cz/Clanek/17069/soucasna-postkolonialni-literatura-psana-v-anglickem-jazyce>. Translated by Radka Dolezalova

of their former colonisers. On the other hand, it is also the language that helps them spread their message around the world. It, of course, does not concern only English. When is it better to write in the language of indigenous people? Use of language is a strategic choice. For example, in case of *National* or *Regional literatures*, authors write in the language of the people, because they are aimed on people who speak the language of the country. Some, like Soyinka, believe that it is important to adopt the language to local circumstances.<sup>32</sup> That is how variants of English such as *Creole* or *Pidgin* were formed – the colonisers’ language was adopted to the needs of original inhabitants.

Another concern is the relationship between coloniser and the colonised. This is where Bhabha came with the idea of *Hybridity*. In this process, different cultures are mixed up. The colonisers came, brought their own things and left. Is it good or bad? Bhabha says it is both. India is according to him a new hybrid culture – the old and imposed culture crashed with the original one and created something new.<sup>33</sup> The impact of colonisation cannot be, from this point of view, understand as necessarily evil. One of the impacts of colonialism was that indigenous people were force to leave the places they once inhabited. By doing so, indigenous people lost their connection with those places. From this originates another concern of Postcolonial literatures – reclaiming spaces and places. The authors attempt to restore this alienation using dramatization, narration and description. Another culture is a reviving of the original culture that was clearly suppressed by the culture of Empire and “openly denigrated in favour of elevating the social and culture preferences and conventions of the colonizers.”<sup>34</sup> As a response, authors seek to lift up the indigenous culture. J. Nozipo Maraire, a Zimbabwean doctor and writer, once noted: “*Until the lion learns to write, every story will glorify the hunter.*” Postcolonial writing interprets history from the perspective of the colonised, so that the acts of imperial powers cannot be justified. Postcolonial writers also describe indigenous people, places and culture as detailed as possible. By doing so, they seek to avoid any misinterpretation that leads to inaccuracies and generalization.

Later authors deal more with the present situation of those who emigrated to the West rather than with the history and direct impacts of colonialism. These writers freed themselves from the compulsory topics mentioned above, even though their family history still has a strong voice

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<sup>32</sup> GILBERT, Helen (ed.). *Postcolonial plays: an anthology*. London: Routledge, 2001. ISBN 978-0-415-16449-8.

<sup>33</sup> BHABHA, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge, 1998. ISBN 0-415-05406-0.

<sup>34</sup> ASHCROFT, Bill, Helen TIFFIN a Gareth GRIFFITHS. *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literatures*. London: Routledge, 1989. New Accentes (Routledge). ISBN 0-415-01209-0.

in their works. Such works cover topics like difficulties of multiculturalism, obstacles of integration and racism, but also political corruption, race and class relations, gender and sexuality or media representation.

Both in-her-face theatre and Postcolonial literature had a great impact on British literature. In-her-face ended the theatre crisis of the 80's. Postcolonial authors changed the perception of Orient by the West by rewriting historical events from their point of view. In-her-face authors seek to confront the audience with unpleasant affairs in the world using raw shock technique that involves breaking taboos such as violence, nudity, sex or vulgar speech. On the other hand, early postcolonial authors dealt with the impact of Empire's colonisation on the original inhabitants, the later authors focus more on lives of those who come from colonised countries but now live in the countries of their former colonisers and face a large variety of issues.

#### **4 Tanika Gupta**

Tanika Gupta successfully represents the second wave of dramatists from the Asian subcontinent. She had some plays staged in The Royal Court theatre or aired on BBC and won several prizes for her works during her career. Gupta's early works are characterised by the concern about her ancestors, for example play *Voices on the Wind* (1995) deals with a tragic history of her family. Gupta is one of playwrights supporting Women centre stage, created by Sphinx Theatre Company. WCS is a part of a new gender equality project and its main goal is to push for better representation of women in theatre. Gupta's work has been awarded many times. Her first prize, *EMMA* (BT Ethnic and Multicultural Media Award for Best Television Production) came in 1998. In 2005 she was awarded by Amnesty International Media Awards. She was also awarded the MBE (Member of the Order of the British Empire).

##### **4. 1 Life and Work**

Tanika Gupta was born in 1963 into an artistic family. Her father was a singer and her mother was an Indian dancer, and both of them used to perform Indian dance dramas. There is no doubt that this background gave her the best assumptions on starting an artistic career on her own. Unlike most of her peers who were pushed by their parents to become successful lawyers and doctors, Gupta has never felt this kind of parental pressure that is so much typical for an Indian mentality, she was strongly encouraged by her parents. Actually, it was her father who

gave her the idea of writing her very first novel. She was in her early twenties at that time. Apart from an overwhelming support from the side of Gupta's family, her artistic growth is determined by three important phases.<sup>35</sup> The first one being her activity in *Asian Women Writers Collective*, the second one taking part in one of the BBC workshops for young writers, and finally producing of her first stage play at the Cottesloe Theatre. Even though her first novel was not very good and got rejected by many publishers, Gupta continued her writing.

She joined *Asian Women Writers Collective* (AWWC), founded by Ravinder Randhawa in 1984. As Randhawa herself explains, the AWWC's aim was "to promote creative writing by Asian women through a supportive environment and make their writing more accessible to publishers."<sup>36</sup> Lay and Dadswell add, the success of the AWWC is evidenced in the large number of participants who have enjoyed successful writing and theatre careers, including Maya Chowdry, Leena Dingra, Joyoti Grech.<sup>37</sup> The working of this organization was based on mutual reading of everyone's works and subsequent criticising each other. This particular experience helped Gupta to focus on drama, as her dialogues were pointed out to be excellent. Participating in an all-woman's writing group helped to give her the confidence to develop her dramatic voice. She took a part in BBC Young Playwrights Festival which catapulted her into the world of recognized authors. She based the success on what was nearest to her, her roots. As she explained in an interview:

I put my on this Indian accent and pretended I was a seventy-five-year-old woman who was reminiscing about her life as she was burping a breaking wind and drinking champagne. From that experience I had my first play produced on BBC Radio 4 and that is where it actually started for me, in radio. <sup>38</sup>

As she explains in her interview with Billingham, she was inspired and influenced in two directions; in her play writing and in discovering of her own identity. In terms of plays, she was influenced primarily by two artists. Arthur Miller, a Pulitzer Prize-winning author of 'Death of a Salesman' and Caryl Churchill, a British innovative author of numerous plays. Miller's works are about the conflict between the individual and the society. Churchill's artistic development is very similar to the one of Gupta's. She admits, she has not read a single play written by them,

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<sup>35</sup> BILLINGHAM, Peter. *At the sharp end: uncovering the work of five contemporary dramatists*. London: Methuen Drama, 2007. ISBN 0713685077. P. 205-225

<sup>36</sup> ASIAN WOMEN WRITERS COLLECTIVE. *Membership information*. In: VADS, the online resource for visual arts [online] 1989 [cit. 2016.05.05.]

<sup>37</sup> LEY, Graham, Sarah DADSWELL. *British South Asian Theatre: A Documented History*. University of Exeter Press, 2011. ISBN 978 0 85989 833 1

<sup>38</sup> BILLINGHAM, Peter. *At the sharp end: uncovering the work of five contemporary dramatists*. London: Methuen Drama, 2007. ISBN 0713685077.

she only went to see the plays in theatre, but the impact of both writers is clearly visible in her works. Concerning the discovering of her own racial identity, she read works written by Maya Angelou and Toni Morrison. Both of them successful Afro-American female writers, the latter a Nobel Prize winner. Those two writers were important to Gupta, because they were writing about their roots just like she has been.

#### 4. 2 Reception

Gupta expressed multiple times her disagreement with labelling of authors in relation to their country of origin, language, culture or religion. At the beginning of her career, Gupta did not mind being perceived or labelled as an Asian writer, mainly because she was, according to her own words, searching for and establishing own identity. Since her later works had a wider spectrum of themes, she started to be annoyed by these ‘boxing’ on the basis of your race, religion, or origin. None of those should predetermine your writing. She has commented on this topic many times, here is an example:

I am not an Asian writer, I’m a writer. You would not call Tom Stoppard a Czech writer or a white writer or an English writer, would you, so why should I be labelled? It is the same way that writers who are women don’t want to be called women writers because, again, you put them in a box.<sup>39</sup>

She has also highlighted that her works are focused on different cultures, not only on Asian themes. *Sugar Mummies*, for example, is set in Jamaica, while in *White Boy*, she reacted on the increasing number of teenage deaths caused by stabbing.

The following practical part analysis Gupta’s works and shows the located features and elements.

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<sup>39</sup> BILLINGHAM, Peter. *At the sharp end: uncovering the work of five contemporary dramatists*. London: Methuen Drama, 2007. ISBN 0713685077. P. 87



## **5 Selected works by Tanika Gupta**

This practical part analyses three Tanika Gupta's works and presents located postcolonial elements and aesthetics of in-her-face theatre. Located features are accompanied by extracts from the plays. The following chapters also briefly introduce main characters, plots and circumstances that made Tanika Gupta write these works.

### **5. 1 White Boy**

White Boy was put on the National Youth Theatre at the Solo Theatre in 2007. The background of the story is the increasing number of teenage stabbings in London. Within two years, as many as 28 teenagers lost their life. The numbers do not seem to be sinking, by 2015 185 teenagers were killed, 128 murders were caused by stabbing.<sup>40</sup> Most of the murders are described as "gang-related." Gupta's work deals primarily with the issue of young violence. She also raises "the political issue of the status of the white working class"<sup>41</sup> and anti-Muslimism prejudices and racism.

#### **5. 1. 1 Characters**

The story centres on 5 main characters. Ricky is a white young boy who looks up to his best friend Victor and speaks with fake Caribbean accent in order to be like him. Victor is a prodigy, he is a promising soccer player and is very popular among his friends. Zara is a kind 15-year-old black girl who is in love with Victor. Shaz is also 15 years old, she wears hijab and is often a target for mockery. Her Asian boyfriend Kabir is of the same age. Sorted is a bullied Sudanese youth, he speaks with a strong accent and has a stammer. Flips is 16 years old, he is a school racist bully.

#### **5. 1. 2 Plot Overview**

The story opens up with a fight between Flips and Mohammed being cheered up by other students. The latter ended being beaten up and had to be admitted to a hospital. In the second scene students discuss the fight. Sorted discovers that Zara and Shaz carry small knives in their bags, because they do not feel safe and want to be able to protect themselves if needed.

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<sup>40</sup> CITIZENS REPORT. Mapping the location and victim profile of Teenage murders in London from 2005 to 2015 [online] 2015 [cit. 2016.05.05] Retrieved from: <http://www.citizensreportuk.org/reports/teenage-murder-london.html>

<sup>41</sup> GUPTA, Tanika. *Political plays*. Oberon, 2012. ISBN 1849432473, 9781849432474. P. 12

After a while Victor enters the scene and Zara tries to win his attention. Following scene focuses on a soccer match after which Victor and Ricky talk about girls and families. Ricky admits to Victor that he regrets not having roots other than English and claims that “ain’t cool to be white anymore.”<sup>42</sup> In the following scene, the main characters are on their “litter duty,”- everyone complains on this kind of work except for Sorted who talks about his past in a refugee centre, his mates are surprised. Flips enters the following scene, attempting to impress Zara who is apparently uncomfortable. Flips later asks her if she knows where Sorted is, because he allegedly owns him money. She is supposed to pass a threat on Sorted. On the next day Sorted, with the help from Victor and Ricky, luckily escapes Flips who threatens to stab him to death. Zara visits visibly shaken Sorted in his hostel and leave her knife at his place, because the school searches up students and install new camera system on the school estates. Flips, who has been excluded from the school, appears suddenly asking for Sorted. Victor and Ricky have a fight over football and Zara. Ricky is obviously jealous of Victor for having all he ever wanted without moving a finger, they leave angrily. Groups of students play on the school yard. Out of sudden, Flips emerges carrying a baseball bat truculently chasing Sorted. Zara, Shaz and Ricky stand in front of Sorted to protect him. Flips is about to smash Ricky with his bat, but Victor jumps in front of him and is mortally wounded. Everyone is in shock, Sorted pulls out Zara’s knife, stabs Flips to death and escapes. In the following scenes, Ricky blames Zara and Sorted for causing Victor’s death. Sorted talks about his past and the hopes his parents had for him. In the last scene, the police come and arrest Sorted.

### **5. 1. 3 Postcolonial Elements in *White Boy***

Although Sudan never was a direct British colony, the Empire had a great influence on the country between the years 1899 – 1956. Britain helped Egypt to suppress so called “Mahdist movement” that lasted for eighteen years. As a result, Sudan became a condominium of the United Kingdom and Egypt. Gupta focuses on those who came to Britain in hope for better lives, struggle with integration as they carry the past with them. It can be seen in one of the final dialogues between Ricky and Sorted.

SORTED: My m-m-mother wanted me to be a t-eacher. And my father, he said, if-if – if I worked hard – I could be a l-lawyer. Then, then war. Guns everywhere. T-t-trucks in the n-n-n-ight with men ans g-g-guns... I hide. I watch.

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<sup>42</sup> GUPTA, Tanika. *White boy*. London: Oberon Books, 2008. ISBN 1840028602. P. 37

RICKY: Who ask you to come into my world? Why didn't you just stay in that shit hole you come from? Why bring all your problem here? Your pain? Your misery? I ask you? I invite you? You fuckers, coming into my country with your shitty lives and your torture stories. Like animals. Change us all into animals like you. Now I do not even feel like I belong here. Like I am the fucking odd one out.

SORTED: You are lucky n-not to know what is like to live in suffer.

RICKY: Now we all know.

Ricky's approach is paradoxical. He, on one hand, regrets being pure Englishman without any foreign roots and that is why he tries to mimic Victor, on the other hand, he despise by those who came from the "third-world" countries.

In terms of integration, Gupta shows both, successful – presented by Victor's family, and unsuccessful – presented by Sorted.

Concerning language, Gupta writes all her works in English. Through the character of Ricky who unsuccessfully tries to copy his best friend Victor, she uses a fake Jamaican English. Here is an example:

RICKY: Just tellin' you how it is. You is an innocent in dis jungle of life. Think everyone is a coolio. But dem is bad.

RICKY: Listen Bredda...

VICTOR: Don't bredda me. You got no respect. Just 'cos you learn the lingo, don't mean you are one of us.

Like many postcolonial works, *White Boy* contains some dialogues that point out on anti-Muslim approach of some people. Although it is not a key theme in the book, some hints can be seen for example in the conversation among Shaz, Ricky and Kabir.

RICKY: You two should be careful. One day, you're gonna get caught red handed. Someone's gonna see you, grass on you and that's it Shaz. One way ticket to Malaysia – married off to a man with a tash and huge belly.

SHAZ: Leave it out.

ZARA: Lipsin' is definitely against your religion.

RICKY: Look at you, all hijab and trousers – bit fucking hypocritical innit?

*White Boy* is not a purely postcolonial writing. It contains, however, some features such as the use of language, the question of immigration and issues linked to Muslim culture.

#### **5. 1. 4 Aesthetics of in-yer-face theatre in *White Boy***

The crucial feature of in-yer-face theatre is shock. The shocking part in Gupta's work is surely the end when 2 young people lose their lives in vain. The story line contains many comical speeches and situations that belong to teenage lives. That makes the end of the book even more surprising. By killing off an innocent character Victor and indicating Sorted's failed attempt to integrate, supported by the fact that they were not older than 16, *White Boy* also aims on the emotions of the audience.

The drama also contains a considerable amount of vulgar expression and filthy language. Here are some examples:

KABIR: Who has been shagging out here?

SHAZ: Some desperate twat.

FLIPS: ...little cunt's been fleecing me – owes m big time.

Vulgar speech is, sadly, part of most teenagers' speech, so the question is if it still has the ability to shock and insult the audience as it did in the 90's.

Gupta's work also react to the quickly changing social landscape in Britain which might be for some people a touchy subject. What stands behind failed integration, is it nations unwillingness to accept those who need it, or do the immigrants take their country's problems with them?

As mentioned above, Gupta opens an uncomfortable topic of teenage murders and leaves the audience wondering if everyone, school, parents and social workers, try to prevent this from happening and if so, do they do enough?

## 5. 2 Sugar Mummies

Sugar Mummies is the youngest play out of those that are mentioned in this thesis. It is a comedy-drama focusing on female sex tourism in Jamaica. The WTO defines sex tourism as “trips organized from within the tourism sector, or from outside the sector but using its structures and networks, with the primary purpose of effecting a commercial sexual relationships by the tourists with residents at the destination”<sup>43</sup>. Among the most popular destination belong many Caribbean countries, Indonesia, Columbia, Kenya or Thailand. It is estimated that more than 50% of tourists heading into these countries travel primarily for sex tourism. Although sex tourists have a reputation for being middle-aged men, each year, as many as 600,000 women from western countries reportedly engage in sex tourism.<sup>44</sup> This quickly growing unofficial tourism branch is a result of poverty in those undeveloped countries and brings lot of problems, such as abuse of minors, spreading of venereal diseases, and general support of a black market. The story centres on 4 women of different ages and origins.

### 5. 2. 1 Characters

One of the women who came to the island is Kitty, she is a thirty-eight years old white teacher looking for some fun. Naomi, is a mixed race woman in her late twenties whose aim is to find her biological father who is supposed to live in Jamaica. Maggie, white woman in her fifties accompanies Naomi on her way. Yolanda is an American woman in her early fifties who visits the island every year. Angela is a forty-eight years old Jamaican woman whose husband is dying of AIDS. Her son Andre is a grill chef at a hotel, the only male character who disapproves the idea of female sex tourism and wants to leave the island to secure better future for him. Sly is a young street gigolo who sees female sex tourism as an easy source of money. Antonio is the youngest character, he is only seventeen years old who, because of his inexperience, became a target of humiliation after he fails to fulfil Maggie’s expectations. Reefie is fifty-year-old experienced gigolo who believes that Jamaican men cannot hope for better future and often argues with Andre because of that.

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<sup>43</sup>WTO. Statement on the Prevention of Organized Sex Tourism. In: World Tourism Organization Network [online] 18-22 October 1995 [cit. 2016.05.05.] Retrieved from: <http://ethics.unwto.org/en/content/staements-policy-documents-child-protection>

<sup>44</sup> HUFFINGTON POST. Sex Tourism: It's not just for men anymore [online video] 5. September 2013 [cit. 2016.05.05.] Retrieved from: <http://live.huffingtonpost.com/r/segment/sex-tourism-its-not-just-for-men-anymore/5220abc678c90a2d1200015e>

### **5. 2. 2 Plot overview**

The beginning of the story is rather slow, it is opened by a conversation between Angel and Reefie who are later joined by other characters and everyone gets to know each other talking about casual stuff. Maggie and Kitty talk about Jamaican men and admire their physical attractiveness. It is obvious that Yolanda and Reefie have a strong bond from past. Sly does his best to attract a new customer – Maggie. Later that night, everyone gather at a party. The women enjoy men’s attention, except for Naomi who confides Andre that she was born in Jamaica. Andre talks about his ambitions to become a student and secure a better life for himself. Following day, Naomi plans to visit the Public record office in Kingston to find her biological father. Sly, Andre and Antonio talk disgracefully about female tourists as a source of money. Reefie, the head of this “business”, Andre reveals that he is disgusted by this and refuses to sleep with women for money. As the story comes to its end, several problems emerge among the characters. Maggie and Antonio had unsuccessful attempt to have sex. She is annoyed and humiliated and seeks revenge. She asks him to strip, ties him up. She wants to punish him for exploiting female tourists and accuse him from being gay and beats him up with a branch of a palm. After spending a night together, Kitty accidentally insults Sly by saying “you eat like a savage”. Andrew gets upset after Naomi’s offer to pay his school fees and has a fight with Reefie who laughs at his hopes for better future. Reefie eventually finds out that he is Naomi’s father, but decides to keep it for himself. At the end of the book, Andrew’s father dies from AIDS.

### **5. 2. 3 Postcolonial elements in *Sugar Mummies***

The story is set in the Caribbean island of Jamaica, a former British colony that gained independence in 1962. The actions of British Empire dates back to the slave trade and were immense. The economic growth of British towns such as Bristol or Liverpool during the industrial revolution was directly linked to the exploitation of slaves. As Billingham claims, “Gupta’s play seeks to draw parallels between the slave trade and the exploitation of young, attractive black Jamaicans for sexual adventures by white women in the present”.<sup>45</sup> Through the characters of Reefie and Andre, Gupta shows how some inhabitants can deal with the country’s situation. Whereas Reefie is convinced that the past predetermined their lives, Andre has high

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<sup>45</sup> BILLINGHAM, Peter. *At the sharp end: uncovering the work of five contemporary dramatists*. London: Methuen Drama, 2007. ISBN 0713685077. P.78

ambitions of getting out of the island and start a proper career rather than being depended on the female sex tourism. As obvious from their conversation:

REEFIE: You think a nice gyal like dat would have anything to do wid a wurtless grill boy? A kitchen hand?

ANDRE: You wicked Reefie. You bring everyone down to your level. Me different. Me not like you.

REEFIE: You not better dan yoar father fadder. He sell himself for a plate of food.

The arguments between Kitty and Sly or Naomi and Andre shows, how the once abolished slavery can be still present in people's mind.

KITTY: You worthless piece of filth. I hate you! You'll live and die in poverty. Never able to provide for your miserable kids. Boy did you miss your chance. I could've lifted you from your shit life. I hope you rot on this stinking island.

SLY: And how am I supposed to respec' a gyal like you? You tink me a savage, a house slave. You look at me and is jealous of my skin, but glad you is white. You tink you is superior.

KITTY: Let go off me. I'll scream. I'll bring the manager in and have you whipped. Have you thrown in jail you fucking black bastard. NIGGER!

It could be argued if this using of young Jamaican men for sex is a new form of slavery, but as Sierz says, the exploitation is mutual, as the local men are interested in the money and see the women as a ticket to escape from the island.

Since the story is set in Jamaica, most of the story is written in Jamaican English, but it is put into a contrast with flawless British and American English of the female characters.

ANDRE: Sea urchin. Dey like hanging round de coral walls. You step on one o'dem, their quill can pierce your skin and break off. Agonising.

NAOMI: Ever been stung by one of those?

ANDRE: No, only jellyfish. Sting bad but hot sand tek away de pain. Me bes' friend at school – Stevie he stand on a stingray.

#### **5. 2. 4 Aesthetics of in-er-face theatre in *Sugar Mummies***

As mentioned in the first part of the thesis, in-er-face authors often dealt with taboos, such as homosexuality etc. In this book, Gupta also opens a hidden taboo – sex tourism. The

fact that it is women who pay for sex and not men, amplifies the power of this taboo. By openly discussing sex, some members of the audience might feel uncomfortable, as evidenced in Kitty and Maggie's dialogue:

MAGGIE: Big, luscious, kissable lips.

KITTY: Real men.

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

KITTY: Jamaican steel. And it's not over in two minutes. They can keep going all night.

MAGGIE: 'Once you go black, you never go back'

Apart from that, Gupta also uses a vulgar language that creates certain awkwardness, especially when it is aimed against women, like when Antonio insults Maggie.

ANTONIO: Let me go. Who'd wan' fuck an ugly bitch like you? You a raas blood claat....gorgon...bomba clawt....old duppy hag!

KITTY: You evil, evil bastard. You fucking liar...fucking two-faced fucking shit. You led me on.

SLY:...What man would want a desperate ugly bitch like you?

*Sugar Mummies* have some Postcolonial elements as well as the aesthetics of in-yer-face theatre. The problem is that each story and issue gets only the minimum of time on the stage. Each aspect is only slightly touched and therefore does not have the ability to properly shock the audience.

### **5. 3 Gladiator Games**

In this drama, Gupta deals with one of the thorniest problem in today's society – racism. Gupta paid attention to this topic also in her previous works *Fragile Land* and *Inside Out*. Her story is based on real event that occurred in 2000 in a London prison, when Zaheed Mabarek, a British Asian teenager was killed by his cellmate Robert Stewart at the Feltham Young Offender's Institution just 5 hours before his release. Zaheed Mabarek was sentenced to 90-days imprisonment after stealing razor blades worth £6. To cite the words of Imtiaz Amin (Mubarek's uncle), the aim of the play was "to expose the catalogue of failures that led to



Zahid's brutal murder."<sup>46</sup> In May 2015, a movie titled '*We Are Monsters*' was released, looking at the story from Stewart's point of view and is often compared to Steve McQueen's *Hunger*, considering the impact on prison services.

As already mentioned, it is a real-life story. Writing the story, Gupta spent many days interviewing almost everyone related to the story. By doing so, she created a classical example of a verbatim theatre, a form of Documentary theatre. Verbatim theatre has emerged in the 1990's and became extremely popular post-9/11. In the last decade, this form of theatre is used to stage international and national problems.<sup>47</sup> Such plays are based on interviews with people connected to the topic of the play in order to secure high level of authenticity. It also helps to increase interests in what happens around us, but does not really affect us until we stand under a direct confrontation.

### **5. 3. 1 Characters**

For a relatively short drama, there is a big number of characters. The two main characters are Zahid Mubarek and Robert Stewart who share a cell together. Zahid is of Asian origin and Robert is a multiple times sentenced irredeemable criminal with psychological problems and racist behaviour. Imtiaz, Zahid's uncle, convinced the family to fight for an inquiry and his monologues accompany the whole story. There are also several Feltham prison officers, prisoners and barristers who appear only when statements are made during the inquiry.

### **5. 3. 2 Plot overview**

The whole story opens with Imtiaz's monologue about Zahid. Two parallel stories are shown on the stage, circumstances that led to Zahid's murder and the inquiry process 4 years after his death. The family is gathered in the hospital and discuss if they are going to fight for justice, as they feel the death could have been prevented. Via Gunn's confession, we learn more about Stewart's past. He caused problems in every jail he has ever been to. He flooded the cell or set it on fire, bit his arm or smashed his head against the wall. Before entering Feltham, Stewart was to some degree involved in a murder of a cellmate. Various inmates talk about their

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<sup>46</sup> GUPTA, Tanika. *Gladiator Games*. London: Oberon, 2005. ISBN 1840026243. P. 9

<sup>47</sup> HOLDSWORTH, Nadine. a Mary. LUCKHURST. *A Concise Companion to Contemporary British and Irish Drama*. Oxford: Blackwell Pub., 2008. ISBN 1405130539. P. 49

experience with prison, one of them shared a cell with Stewart. During the inquiry, deficiencies of prison working are mentioned. For example there are no black or Asian police officers in the prison, but plenty such prisoners. They believe the staff was racist and mention that the prisons are overcrowded. Sets of records about Stewart were not read when he came to Feltham. Stewart comes in Zahid's cell. A voice from tape recording says that Zahid was killed for pleasure of others – he was put in the cell on purpose (it was later disproved). Stewart tells Zahid that he wants to chop off his girlfriend's head and then fight over music they listen to. Parents visit Zahid and he admits he is afraid of Stewart. Meanwhile in his cell, Stewart rips a leg off a table. Jamie, Stewart and Zahid have a little argument over a radio. The fight continues, Stewart accuses Zahid from using his shower gel and writing paper, tries to make a big scene out of nothing. Zahid meets his parents again, they talk about the release day. Zahid apologize for what he did. During the inquiry, Giffin says that there were 15 occasions to prevent the murder and lists them. Back in the cell, Stewart writes racially hatred letters and reads them out loud. During that speech, Zahid is killed by Stewart. Amin talks about the time he came to United Kingdom. They remember what Zahid was like. The story ends with one of Zahid's letter being read out loud.

### 5. 3. 3 Postcolonial features in *Gladiator Games*

The main character and his family come from Pakistan. Originally a part of India, Pakistan achieved independence from the Empire in 1947. Up to the present day, more than one million Pakistanis live in the United Kingdom. This include people who either migrated from Pakistan or have Pakistani descent. Gupta does not deal with the influence of the Empire, she follows up the issues of failed integration in the British society. On one side, there is a Pakistani young boy who ends up in prison after shop-lifting, and on the other, there is Stewart, a white racist who represent those who undermine the building of tolerant society.

STEWART: Can't you understand me accent or somethin'?

ZAHID: Take a chill pill.

STEWART: I know what you lot are like. Fuckin' robbin' us all the time.

The disdain is also obvious from Stewart's letter that he wrote during his stay in the prison:

STEWART: I'M GONNA NAIL BOMB THE ASIAN COMMUNITY OF GREAT NORBURY, ST LUMM RD + THEM AREAS. IT'S ALL ABOUT IMMIGRANTS GETTING SMUGGLED IN HERE.

ROMANIANS, PAKIS, NIGGERS, CHINKIES TRYIN' TO TAKE OVER THE COUNTRY AND USING US TO BREED HALF CASTES.

At the beginning, Gupta also suggests that Zahid (or all Asian prisoners in genera) was supposed to face racism not only from prisoners like Stewart, but also from the workers of Feltham prison. In his testimony, Nigel Herring claims that Zahid was put in the cell with a racist on purpose for the pleasure of others. The prison staff were allegedly engaged in a game known as “Gladiator” or “Coliseum”. This presumption was also supported by one of the prisoners:

INMATE: They put you in a cell for someone, you know you don't like the person, or the person is like a bully or stronger than you...the screws know that gets to you, so that put you in a cell just to get on your nerves. Then when you come out they expect you to do something to them like going mad, that's why it's called a wind up...and when you do that they think, “Yeah yeah we've got him.

Other examples of Postcolonial literature were not found in this drama.

#### **5. 3. 4 Aesthetics of in-er-face theatre in *Gladiator Games***

The aim of this drama is to bring spectator's attention on the issue of prison for young criminals. Gupta questions some aspects of prison working in fulfilling their purposes. What's more, the prison system might not help to rehabilitate the inmates, it can actually make things worse. The unpleasant part is that it really happened and most of the dialogues, including Zahid's family, are real. A shocking element is also the brutal murder of young Zahid. Even though the audience knows about his death in advance, watching an imitation of a murder that actually really happened must be very unsettling. The play leaves audience wandering what society does in order to help children prisoners to change themselves. Other aspects of in-er-face such as frequent using of vulgar words or taboos breaking were not found.

## 6 Conclusion

After the play *Blasted* was staged, nothing indicated a beginning of a new theatre era. Despite numerous harsh critic reviews that most frequently used words as “disgusting”, “unacceptable” or even “feast of filth”, but with some time most of the critics changed their opinion. The confrontational form and uncensored content of the plays earned the label *in-yer-face*. As stated in theoretical part, in-yer-face theatre resembles in many aspects the era of Angry Young Men. Subsequently, the range of in-yer-face forms is briefly introduced. In short, in-yer-face plays confront audience with what they do not want to see or hear. Writers and actors shock the audience by openly breaking taboos. It can be said that Gupta was, to a certain extent, influenced by the in-yer-face theatre as the aesthetics of it can be observed in her plays. Considering that she began to write in the decade when in-yer-face theatre arose, it is expectable. In case of *Sugar Mummies*, it is for example the way how sex is being publicly discussed or the open insulting and humiliation of both male and female characters. In *White Boy* it is also the rude abusive language that is used among children and the shocking end resulting in murder of two young individuals. *Gladiator Games* had the least similarity to any in-yer-face play, apart from shocking end, no characteristic features were found in this play. Gupta’s works differ from in-yer-face dramas in staging, because her plays take place on more places whereas in-yer-face plays are usually situated in one room.

The second part dealt also with Postcolonial literature. The formation of this literary branch was set in a historical context and the most influential Postcolonial theorists were shortly introduced. The following chapter highlighted the most common elements typical for Postcolonial plays. After gaining independence from the Empire, writers who came from colonized countries wrote their works as a certain response to the colonial powers. They presented the colonial period from their point of view. In the three selected works by Tanika Gupta, she shows an empathy for those in minority. She does not, however, blame the Empire for their unfortunate destinies, like most of Postcolonial writers do, and let the spectator choose their side. Her plays are in this point of view equalized. In terms of Postcolonial literature, all three works contain some characteristic elements as they have at least one character who comes from a postcolonial country or, in case of Sudan, countries that were somehow influenced by the Empire. First two works are also partly written in a language other than British English which is also one of the features so much typical for Postcolonial writers. There is a visible shift in her writing, one of her first works *Voices on the Wind* (1995) describes a story of her great-

uncle who eventually shot a British general in a revolt and was hanged as his punishment. In her later works Gupta freed herself from typical muster for Postcolonial writers and deals with a wider range of themes and use her dramas as political tools to attract an attention on serious issues such was the story behind Zahid Mubarak's death. In general, Gupta deals rather with presence than with past, but the trace of postcolonial literature are still apparent.

The thesis aimed to find postcolonial elements and aesthetics of in-yer-face theatre in three late works written by Tanika Gupta. Each play contained at least one feature from both parts and thus fulfilled its assumptions.

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