

Palacký University Olomouc  
Faculty of Arts  
Department of English and American Studies

Barbora Vidašičová

Immigrant Experience in West Indian British Poetry

Bachelor Thesis

Supervisor: Mgr. David Livingstone, Ph.D.

Olomouc, 2015

Prohlašuji, že jsem tuto bakalářskou práci vypracovala samostatně pod odborným dohledem vedoucího práce. Veškeré použité literární prameny jsou uvedeny v seznamu použité literatury.

V Olomouci dne 5.5. 2015

Podpis .....

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I wish to express my gratitude to my supervisor Mgr. David Livingstone, Ph.D. for his tremendous support, understanding, dedicated involvement in every step of the preparation of this thesis, and, last but not least, the numerous insightful advices and helpful guidance throughout the whole writing process.

I would also like to show my gratitude to Mgr. Pavlína Flajšarová, Ph.D. Her enthusiasm for the topic sparked my interest in West Indian immigrants poetry leading me to choose this topic for my bachelor thesis. She also provided me with suggestions for reading materials, some of which I have used in my thesis.

## CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION .....	5
1 IMMIGRATION IN CONTEXT .....	8
1.1 The Windrush generation .....	10
1.1.1. Housing discrimination .....	13
1.1.2. Searching for a job .....	14
1.1.3. The Notting Hill riots .....	15
2 JAMES BERRY .....	18
2.1 Migrant in London.....	21
2.2 Beginning in a City, 1948.....	24
2.3 On an afternoon train from Purley to Victoria, 1955 .....	27
2.4 Comparison of the poems.....	30
3 BENJAMIN ZEPHANIAH .....	32
3.1 No Problem .....	35
3.2 Death of Joy Gardner .....	38
3.3 Comparison of the poems .....	41
4 JOHN AGARD .....	43
4.1 Palm Tree King .....	45
4.2 Remember the Ship .....	48
4.3 Comparison of the poems.....	51
CONCLUSION.....	53
RESUMÉ .....	56
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	59
ANNOTATION .....	63

## INTRODUCTION

Victory in the second World War provided only a little relief to the British Empire. On the surface it seemed glorious in every sense of the word – grandiose celebrations were held in London, involving military parades, crowds full of happiness and cheer, smiling and waving flags, politicians making powerful speeches and lastly, extravagant fireworks display after sunset. The postwar years saw a wide body of literary works and films that lauded the victory over Nazi Germany. However, after taking a closer look, it suddenly lost all its gloss.

The British Empire indeed paid a heavy price for the victory. What was once the world's leading economic power was in decline. Towards the end of the war, a great number of cities laid in ruins. The country was brought to bankruptcy and the government was forced to adapt strict austerity policies. Shops were closing down, food was scarce. The crisis situation not only slowed down the economy for many years, but also contributed to deepening of the wounds inflicted on national consciousness of the British people. To secure the economic recovery, the British government had to face the arduous task of bringing the country together and rebuilding the country's economy.

To achieve the economic recovery, the government first had to tackle the serious labor shortage problem. Britain, at the time abounding with opportunities, decided to deal with this labour shortage by allowing former colonial subjects to settle in Britain. They were promised a secure job, attractive wages and other benefits one could not refuse, especially as the prospects of future in the colonies were not very bright. Much of the postwar migratory waves originated in the former British colonies, such as West Indies and South Asia.

The year 1948 marked a major milestone in West Indian migrant history, with the arrival of *Empire Windrush*. This moment was a crucial point in the history of modern Britain, which contributed to the change of Britain into multi-ethnic society. Some of these immigrants later became among other professions musicians, poets and writers, which was a way of expressing their feelings about the new environment and also a form of integration into the society.

The first part of my thesis will introduce the cultural background of the West Indian immigration to Great Britain. The aim of this part is to provide a general outline of the historical role and significance of the West Indian immigrants. I will also

mention the different approaches of the members of British Parliament towards West Indian immigrants, the bills that were passed concerning the immigration and how the approach of the government has changed throughout history. The main focus in the first part will be placed on the individual waves of migration from the West Indies, the reasons which impelled these people to leave their mother countries and when exactly they made their way to Great Britain.

In the next section, I will concentrate on immigrants' disillusionment as their dreams of life in Britain were confronted with reality. In this part, I will extensively discuss the manifold hardships that the immigrants faced upon their arrival to Britain, especially concerning their search for job and various challenges faced in accessing affordable housing. Major conflicts that arise from the encounters of native British people and West Indian immigrants will be described alongside their causes and the necessary measures which were taken by the government to prevent the conflicts from recurring. The first part will also illustrate the cultural clash that many of the immigrants did not anticipate and how they dealt with being treated as menial, with their own culture being trampled and their native language being suppressed in their mind.

The main body of this thesis, starting from the second chapter, will be focused on the poetry of West Indian immigrants itself. The works of three significant representatives of West Indian poetry in Great Britain will be discussed – namely James Berry, Benjamin Zephaniah and lastly John Agard as the representative of contemporary West Indian poetry. This part of my thesis will deal largely with how their experience as immigrants and sometimes bitter life experiences were reflected in their work and how this experience was distinct from the other generation.

The dimensions of their immigrant experience will further be expanded to incorporate their approach to the society, development of their national identity over the years spent in Britain as well as the extent to which they were able to integrate into British society.

In closing, to avoid any misconceptions, I would like to clarify the terms used in this thesis. Geographically, West Indies is a historical area which gained its name from Christopher Columbus, who assumed, wrongly, that he found a western route to India. The area of West Indies consists of the islands of the Antilles and the Bahamas. For the purpose of this thesis, I am dealing only with the British West Indies and not

including the other areas, which is the reason why the terms British West Indies and West Indies will be used interchangeably in this thesis

## 1 IMMIGRATION IN CONTEXT

Between the wars, there were not so many significant movements of people from the West Indies to Great Britain. Most of the early shifts of people from the West Indies was to other islands which were under British administration, notably southern and eastern Caribbean islands. For the majority of people, the primary motive for the immigration were promising job prospects that the neighbouring regions offered (a significant number of immigrants leaving their countries were reliant on a request by their employer which enabled them to work in the country).

These various movements for job opportunities were mostly concerning sugar industry, even though other industries were quite prominent, too. Starting in the first half of 19th century, West Indian people, particularly Jamaicans, began to discover the opportunities offered by the wider world, in countries such as Panama, Costa Rica, United States and Cuba.

Throughout the 19th century, the sugar production in British West Indies continued to decline. Sugar producers came to the realisation that their production was not enough to compete against the countries such as Cuba. The price of sugar fell, the economy was near collapse. Many people working at the sugarcane plantations lost their job because, as Winder argues, “there was no work for the men who once hacked sweetness from the hills”.<sup>1</sup>

With the worsening economical conditions in the West Indies, immigration was a solution that was suggesting itself. It represented a means of escape from the impact of the West Indian crisis and never ending stream of difficulties. Before the Second World War, there were already small groups of West Indians in Britain, mostly consisting of ‘coloured’ middle-class members. However, West Indian immigration to Britain did not occur on larger scale until the Second World War.

Between 1941 and 1943, to boost production of munition factories, technicians and trainees from the West Indies came to work at the factories, mostly at the north west of England. It was a vital wartime task that required skilled workers and the West Indians, driven by the vision of a better life in Britain, accepted. They worked under a contract, which in much of the West Indies islands at that time was unimaginable,

---

<sup>1</sup> Robert Winder, *Bloody Foreigners: The Story of Immigration to Britain* (London: Abacus, 2005), 333.



and they also got a taste of what life in Britain feels like. The work under contract in Britain constituted a particular type of West Indian immigration pattern which was to continue after the war alongside a renewal of the “spontaneous movements typical of the pre-war era.”<sup>2</sup>

Another group of 10, 000 Jamaican tradesmen came to Britain to work for the military. Many of these men settled permanently in Britain after the war has ended. Not only due to more lucrative employment opportunities, but also because they saw for the first time with their own eyes what life in Britain had to offer to them. Living in Britain for them was like “peeking through the curtains of the exclusive club”.<sup>3</sup>

The year 1948 marked the symbolic start of the West Indian immigration boom. It was the year when the ship *Empire Windrush* made its way to Great Britain. The arrival of the ship was a moment that was to forever change the face of modern day Britain. Before the arrival of the *Empire Windrush* to Britain, labour shortage was felt very acutely. As a result of this, workers from Europe were encouraged to come to Britain and work there. Majority of these workers were of Italian and Polish origin. While the acceptance of these workers certainly strengthened the job market, the government soon came to the realization that it was not a way to heal the wounds of war and that they would soon need to find another way to fill the gaps in the job market.

Britain decided to seek the help of its former colonial subjects, the step it has been avoiding for a long time, especially because of Britain’s long-time refusal to accept the West Indian labour force. The unwillingness to accept the immigrants from the former colonies, as Harris has argued, “went far beyond the defensive struggles of white workers to retain their hard-won, more secure position within the labour process.”<sup>4</sup> It was deeply rooted in British history.

British Nationality Act, which came into effect in 1948, granted British citizenship and right of entry and settlement to people born in the Great Britain and all territories belonging to the British. Passing of the Act, as Hansen pointed out, “amounted to the creation of an institutional structure that would for several decades

---

<sup>2</sup> Elizabeth M. Thomas-Hope, “Caribbean diaspora, The Inheritance of Slavery: Migration from the Commonwealth Caribbean,” *The Caribbean in Europe: Aspects of the West Indian Experience in Britain, France and the Netherlands*, ed. Colin Brock (London, New Jersey: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1986), 23.

<sup>3</sup> Robert Winder, *Bloody Foreigners: The Story of Immigration to Britain*, 333.

<sup>4</sup> Clive Harris, “Post-war Migration and the Industrial Reserve Army” in *Inside Babylon: The Caribbean diaspora in Britain*, ed. Winston James and Clive Harris (London: Verso, 1993), 21.

shape the evolution of British immigration policy and nationality law.”<sup>5</sup> It sparked a considerable controversy in the Parliament, especially among Labour politicians and Colonial Office officials who, as Barczewski et al. noted, “privately expressed misgivings about the prospect of further black settlement in Britain.”<sup>6</sup>

However, no such request have been made public and the majority in the British Parliament presented no formal limits to immigration. In the next section, main focus will be put on the voyage of *Empire Windrush*, which was the result of this Act. The course of the voyage will be discussed, as well as the atmosphere on the ship, the government’s attitude towards the ship emerging closer to the British coastline and, lastly, the aftermath of the arrival of the immigrants to Britain.

### **1.1 The Windrush generation**

Although the *Empire Windrush* was not the only ship to carry the Caribbean immigrants to Great Britain, it was certainly the one which excited the most interest of both the general public and the community of journalists. She was “the first to be met by newsreel cameras, and the first to raise scarlet flushes of alarm in British newspapers and the House of Commons.”<sup>7</sup>

The *Empire Windrush* was originally named *Monte Rosa*. The ship itself has a very rich war history. She was commissioned before the Second World War, when she was used as a cruise ship. In the Second World War, the Nazis gained power over the ship and used her for military purposes. After the war has ended, the ship was seized by Britain and taken as a prize of war. They gave the ship a new name - Empire Windrush. Fashioned out of Nazi troopship, she started, once more, to serve her original purpose – to carry passengers.

In May 1948, the ship set sail to Kingston, Jamaica. At the time when it docked in the harbor in Kingston, the ship lacked passengers. To fill the ship’s capacity as much as possible and in order to avoid the scenario of profit losses, various advertisements had been published in newspapers all over Britain, namely *Daily Gleaner*. The aim of these advertisements was to arouse the interest of potential passengers. Substantial portion of the West Indian immigrants were those attracted by

---

<sup>5</sup> Randall Hansen, *Citizenship and Immigration in Post-war Britain: The Institutional Origins of a Multicultural Britain* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2000), 37.

<sup>6</sup> Stephanie Barczewski et al., *Britain since 1688: A Nation in the World* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 313.

<sup>7</sup> Robert Winder, *Bloody Foreigners: The Story of Immigration to Britain*, 348.

the advertisements.

According to the official figures, there were 492 passengers on the ship, majority of them being of Jamaican origin. However, in the official figures, an important fact was left out, that is the stowaways hiding on the board of the ship. Those were people who could not afford the ticket but were longing to go still. For much of the West Indian-bound immigrants, it was a life full of longing elicited by Britain's exclusivity, an aching sense of unattainability. For a long time, the country seemed remote and guarded and now, finally, it has been brought within reach of the common people. Indeed, the voyage was a "one off, a once-in-a-lifetime, never-to-be repeated lifeline."<sup>8</sup>

The ship's fare amounted to 48 shillings for those who wanted to secure a in the cabin and 28 shillings for passengers willing to travel on the lower deck, the latter being more seizable for many of the families, especially in Jamaica struck by the crisis. However, many families still could not afford the fare. Many families sold their property in order to help secure the financial backing of the trip. Another way of financial backing – so-called "pardner schemes", was a very common practise particularly in the Caribbean community. These consisted of groups of people, typically family members or friends, who, for a fixed period of time, as Aldred noted, could "pool their money and withdraw it on a rota basis to put the deposit down."<sup>9</sup>

Out of the 492 people who were fortunate enough to take the journey, the vast majority were men. These people were "responding largely to a call for man power in post-war Britain,"<sup>10</sup>, as there was desperate shortage of labour at the time. Although they did not reach abundance in finances, what they did have was "their wits and the sweat of their labour."<sup>11</sup> They were willing to accept any job with passion and enthusiasm.

They found multiple ways to amuse themselves during the fairly mundane voyage. In their spare time, they played cards and dominoes, gambling was also not uncommon to encounter on the board. The general mood on the board was cheerful and blithe and it seemed like nothing could go wrong until the wireless operators who were keeping track of the situation in British politics while engaged in game of

---

<sup>8</sup> Robert Winder, *Bloody Foreigners: The Story of Immigration to Britain*, 335.

<sup>9</sup> Bishop Joe Aldred, *Sisters with Power* (London: Continuum, 2000), 60.

<sup>10</sup> Glynn Gordon-Carter, *An Amazing Journey: The Church of England's Response to Institutional Racism* (London: Church House Publishing, 2003), 8.

<sup>11</sup> Robert Winder, *Bloody Foreigners: The Story of Immigration to Britain*, 336.

dominoes. Rumors spread on the ship that in the vicinity of *Empire Windrush*, there was a battleship named HMS *Sheffield*, which was under instructions to discourage the ship from docking. The rumors later proved untrue but it was still clear that they were by no means welcome in the country. Their visions of Britain, which they perceived to be the land of their dreams, were shattered by the conditions that they experienced.

George Isaacs, at the time Minister of Labour and National Service, made an official statement concerning the arrival of the West Indian groups in Britain on June 7, 1948. In this statement, he said: “The arrival of these substantial numbers of men under no organized arrangements is bound to result in difficulty and disappointment. I hope no encouragement will be given to others to follow them.”<sup>12</sup> Before their actual arrival, they sparked not only the general public interest but also anxiety in the British political scene. Their arrival was perceived to be a ‘problem’, a source of frustration, as a threat.

The *Empire Windrush* was to become a symbol of racial unease in Britain at that time. The dull flavor of the meat and boiled potatoes that the immigrants were served on the board was only a “dour foretaste of things to come.”<sup>13</sup>

The statement made by Colonial Secretary Creech Jones was somewhat more conciliatory, however, it did not brought no relief whatsoever to West Indians . Starting by saying that “these people have British passports and they must be allowed to land“, he expressed belief that “there is nothing to worry about because they won’t last one winter in England.”<sup>14</sup>

The ship finally arrived to the harbour in Tilbury, England on June 22, 1948. It was “sufficiently the novel to make headlines.”<sup>15</sup> Many excited onlookers gathered around them to greet the new arrivals, the “sons of the empire” as media called them. They were housed in an air raid shelters in south London, which became their temporary home for a brief period of time. Soon all of the immigrants found jobs in “foundries, as electricians, on farms, on the railways or in hospitals.”<sup>16</sup> Many of them afterwards seeked the nearest jobcentre to Tilbury, which was in Brixton, in search of accommodation. The “roots of a new population, and a new cultural atmosphere in

---

<sup>12</sup> Stephen Pollard, *Ten Days that Changed the Nation: The Making of Modern Britain* (London: Simon & Shuster UK Ltd., 2009), 6.

<sup>13</sup> Robert Winder, *Bloody Foreigners: The Story of Immigration to Britain*, 337.

<sup>14</sup> Stephen Pollard, *Ten Days that Changed the Nation: The Making of Modern Britain*, 7.

<sup>15</sup> Stephanie Barczewski et al., *Britain since 1688: A Nation in the World*, 313.

<sup>16</sup> Robert Winder, *Bloody Foreigners: The Story of Immigration to Britain*, 340.

Brixton, were planted a few days after their arrival.”<sup>17</sup>

## 1.2 Problems upon arrival

Despite successful crossing of the Atlantic and finding an employment with relative ease, there were still issues causing concern to the Jamaicans upon their arrival. One of the major difficulties they faced was finding a place to live. This was a major problem predicted by George Isaacs, who in 1946 strongly rejected acceptance of West Indian labourers in Britain, using “problems of shipping and accommodation” as an explanation for his stance.<sup>18</sup> The attitudes of majority of the society towards the West Indian population changed significantly after 1948. Stratton aptly described this situation by noting: “While the 50,000 or so blacks present in Britain before 1948 were tolerated, as Caribbean increased this number so white British tolerance waned.”<sup>19</sup>

### 1.1.1. Housing discrimination

One of the major problems that the West Indian arrivals encountered in Britain was that of finding a place to live. Wherever the West Indians turned to search for housing, they were rejected. Landlords were among the least tolerant groups in the British society, ‘they automatically saw them as bad risks.’<sup>20</sup>

West Indians were at the end of list when it came to council housing, even when they were able to save enough money to buy their own homes, it was nearly impossible for them to do so. Housing discrimination against West Indians was flourishing in the majority of neighbourhoods, including the poorest ones. Even the landlords who, as Smith argued, “did *not* specify a colour bar in their vacancy advertisements nevertheless discriminated against the black West Indian.”<sup>21</sup>

The upshot of it all was that the West Indian people were “lugging their suitcases vainly from street to street“, only to find out that “they had little option but to occupy the cheapest urban areas.”<sup>22</sup> This was quite common especially in big cities like Birmingham and Liverpool. If they succeeded at finding housing in urban areas,

---

<sup>17</sup> Robert Winder, *Bloody Foreigners: The Story of Immigration to Britain*, 340.

<sup>18</sup> Winston James, “Post-war Migration and the Industrial Reserve Army”, *The Caribbean diaspora in Britain*, ed. Winston James and Clive Harris (London: Verso, 1993), 21.

<sup>19</sup> Jon Stratton, *When Music Migrates: Crossing British and European Racial Faultlines, 1945-2010* (New York: Ashgate Publishing, 2014), 9.

<sup>20</sup> Robert Winder, *Bloody Foreigners: The Story of Immigration to Britain*, 350.

<sup>21</sup> Anna Marie Smith, *New Right Discourse on Race and Sexuality: Britain, 1968-1990* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 60.

<sup>22</sup> Robert Winder, *Bloody Foreigners: The Story of Immigration to Britain*, 350.

they were “usually offered the oldest council properties.”<sup>23</sup>

The accommodation agencies who were supposed to help the immigrants were instead giving misleading information about the accommodation. The housing they were offered was in reality overcrowded urban tenements in which they found no consolation. Many of the tenements have not yet recovered from the war. Industry ceased in the past years and remained dormant, many people were moving out. The immigration status has become an issue.

Most of the new arrivals, sooner or later, “fell prey to mean and unregulated landlordism, which was sometimes the work of other, rival immigrants.”<sup>24</sup> The landlords required them to pay more money than the rest of the tenants.

The difficulties the new arrivals were facing when finding housing that would be both affordable and dignified only contributed to their general disappointment with their new home.

### **1.1.2. Searching for a job**

Housing, however, was not the only problematic dimension of living in Britain for the immigrants. They were also having troubles finding a job with acceptable conditions in which they would not be forced to work unsocial hours. Out of desperation, substantial number of the West Indian immigrants eventually accepted low-paid jobs and applied to jobs for which they were overqualified. This was the case of for instance E.R. Braithwaite, a writer of Guayanese origin who previously served as a pilot in RAF and attended Cambridge, gaining degree in Physics. His comment was:

“Great was my amazement and chagrin, when, time after time, I was denied employment, with elaborate casualness and courtesy...In due course I was forced to confront the fact that, relieved of the threat of German invasion, the British had abandoned all pretence of hand-in-hand brotherliness and had reverted to type, demonstrating the same racism they had so roundly condemned in the Germans.”<sup>25</sup>

West Indians were considered, as Flajšarová pointed out, to be “primitive people who

---

<sup>23</sup> Anna Marie Smith, *New Right Discourse on Race and Sexuality: Britain, 1968-1990*, 60.

<sup>24</sup> Robert Winder, *Bloody Foreigners: The Story of Immigration to Britain*, 350.

<sup>25</sup> E. R. Braithwaite, Preface in Onyekachi Wambu (ed.), *Empire Windrush: Fifty Years of Writing about Black Britain*, Victor Gollanez, 1998, 15.

could only work in manual jobs.”<sup>26</sup> Although the racial atmosphere in the post-war Britain was tense and had an increasing tendency, the majority of West Indian people were still willing to stay in Britain in exchange for a relatively good payment (compared to the one in Caribbean). Britain “by and large lived up to their expectations of a jobseeker’s paradise.”<sup>27</sup>

### **1.1.3. The Notting Hill riots**

There were numerous clashes between native white Britons and West Indian immigrants in the years following 1948. These clashes escalated into a series of conflicts that we know today as Notting Hill riots of 1958. The open conflict broke out in late August 1958 and lasted until the beginning of September. They were accompanied by large-scale violence directed towards the West Indian immigrants.

The vast majority of the attackers were gangs of working class rebellious male youths who had begun to call themselves ‘The Teds’, also known as Teddy Boys. This was quite a new movement which gained notoriety as being hostile towards the immigrants, attacking their property, throwing petrol bombs into West Indians home and being endeavoured to drive the immigrants away from British neighbourhoods. Teddy boys developed on the ideas of Oswald Mosley, the founder of the British Union of Fascists. At the time when the Teddy Boys were active in the British society, number of leaflets were being published, urging the British citizens to ‘Keep Britain White’ and calling for revolt against the immigrant population. They would, as Witte noted, “cruise the streets looking for West Indians, Africans and Asians.”<sup>28</sup> As a result of these riots, four young people were arrested during the riots and were, consequently, imprisoned.

These results were, nevertheless, more far reaching than this. The conflicts whipped up hatred towards the West Indian population. Racism started to be, as Dieffenthaler noted, “inscribed into the ordinariness of British life”...<sup>29</sup> According to

---

<sup>26</sup> Pavlína Flajšarová, “No Matter How Long the Night, the Day is Sure to Come: Differences, Diversity and Identities in Caribbean-British Poetry since 1945”, in *American and British Studies Annual* 5 (2012): 23.

<sup>27</sup> Robert Winder, *Bloody Foreigners: The Story of Immigration to Britain*, 348.

<sup>28</sup> Rob Witte, *Racist Violence and the State: A Comparative Analysis of Britain, France and the Netherlands* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 30.

<sup>29</sup> Ian Dieffenthaler, *Snow on Sugarcane: The evolution of West Indian Poetry in Britain* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), 145.

Appiah and Gates they were made to feel that they were “black first and British last.”<sup>30</sup> What was once ‘mere’ hostility towards the West Indian presence became serious tension between the two races.

Creswell Durant commented on the tension in his poem *Colours*:

“when it was temporarily settled  
colours melted into one another again  
I saw it.  
Saw once the silence on the street  
converge impolitely at five in the borough council morning  
on two crossing sweepers black and white  
filling their brotherhood in the milk machine”<sup>31</sup>

It was not difficult to realize that, as with so many previous migrations, “the heart of the animosity was pumped by something very like fear.”<sup>32</sup> The West Indian immigrants were actively discouraged from settling in the country, nevertheless, they still kept coming.

Large-scale immigration to Britain did not begin until the 1950s. The number of West Indians coming to Great Britain continued to increase greatly, and in 1960s reached its peak. As Anwar has pointed out, majority of the West Indian immigrants coming to Britain at these years were “predominantly economically active persons” and “included high proportion of women.”<sup>33</sup>

Further government policy concerning the immigration, Commonwealth Immigrant Act, came into force in 1968. Unlike British Nationality Act, Commonwealth Immigrant Act’s chief objective was the reduction of the number of immigrants coming to Britain. This Act slammed the door on any newcomers who were not born in Britain or had at least one parent or grandparent born in Britain. This included also immigrants who previously enjoyed the right of free entry, such as West Indians.

---

<sup>30</sup> Anthony Appiah and Henry Louis Gates, *Africana: The Encyclopedia of the African and African American Experience* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 45.

<sup>31</sup> Creswell Durant, “Colours” in *Snow on Sugarcane: The Evolution of West Indian Poetry in Britain*, ed. Ian Dieffenthaler (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), 145.

<sup>32</sup> Robert Winder, *Bloody Foreigners: The Story of Immigration to Britain*, 343.

<sup>33</sup> Muhammad Anwar, *Race and Politics: Ethnic Minorities and the British Political system* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 8.



The results were striking. The number of immigrants decreased, and those who were already residing in Britain slowly started to integrate into society. It was a slow journey, however, in the following decades, generation after generation, Britain has witnessed their journey of integration into the society by means of, among others, music and poetry, which helped them to be perceived as integral parts of the society. In 1965, it was the black British people who started the Notting Hill Carnival. Where the riots took place, celebration which, according to Donnell, “subverted and ridiculed the ‘white massa’”<sup>34</sup> burst out.

It could be considered almost a revolutionary step as it “asserted black people’s presence in post-war Britain in such a strikingly visual and theatrical way that it could no longer be ignored”.<sup>35</sup>

Following this chapter I will discuss the works of four major West Indian poets which provide an insight into the West Indian experience of living in Britain, with primary aim to develop a greater understanding of the post-war West Indian settler’s attitudes and to tell their story from their point of view. Based on the poems, I will compare opposing viewpoints of the first and second generation of the West Indian immigrants and how these similarities and contrasts are displayed in the poems.

---

<sup>34</sup> Alison Donnell, *Companion to Contemporary Black British Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 182.

<sup>35</sup> Alison Donnell, *Companion to Contemporary Black British Culture*, 182.

## 2 JAMES BERRY

James Berry is one of the central figures of modern West Indian poetry. One of the most distinctive features of his poetry is incorporating both elements of standard English and Jamaican patois, which has a long tradition in West Indian poetry.

His love of literature was nurtured since early childhood. He learned to read at mere four years by reading mostly the stories in the Bible. Since his birth, he was surrounded by poverty. He grew up in a rural area on the coast of Jamaica called Fort Prospect. His family was very poor, subsiding on farming for their own survival. Life in poverty stricken Jamaica provided Berry with little comfort. Berry later recalled: “It (Caribbean) was in the state of helplessness. In fact, we had not emerged from slavery; the bonds were still around us.”<sup>36</sup>

Dismal state of Caribbean at the time only contributed to his growing dissatisfaction which led him to leave Jamaica to go to United States, strongly encouraged by his parents who realised that it was a one-time opportunity that their son cannot afford to miss. They knew that it was the only chance for him to have better life. It was at the time when farms in United States were facing a scarcity of labourers. In dire need of labor force, the farm companies decided to offer the jobs to Jamaicans. Since young people in the Caribbean feared that if they stayed they would end up like their parents who were “stuck there, with a few hills of yams, a banana field and a few animals,”<sup>37</sup> they gladly took advantage of this opportunity. Berry was 18 years old at the time and had little knowledge of the world, let alone the situation in the United States.

Upon his arrival to New Orleans, which became his temporary home, Berry found himself confronted with an unforeseen problem– racism. What was reality in the American society was something completely unanticipated by a Jamaican teenager, something he had never encountered before. United States, instead of giving him warm welcome, abandoned him to his fate. This is how he commented on his arrival in the United States: ...”We soon realised, as we have been warned, that there was colour problem in the United States that we were not familiar with in the Caribbean. America was not a free place for black people.”<sup>38</sup>

The country, instead of giving him a warm welcome, abandoned him to his fate.

---

<sup>36</sup> James Berry, “Coming to England“, Black History 365 2.1 (2008): 3, accessed March 8, 2016.

<sup>37</sup> James Berry, “Coming to England“

<sup>38</sup> James Berry, “Coming to England“

However frustrating his experiences were, living in the United States meant that a whole new world opened in front of young James Berry's eyes. A world of new colors, smells, and tastes. Maybe a little less inviting than those of his home back in Jamaica but still worth exploring. In his literary career, this experience of living in the United States provided Berry with a source of indefatigable source of inspiration for his works. I will provide more detailed analysis of some of them later in this paper. Greatly discouraged by what he experienced in the United States, he came back to Jamaica.

In the year 1948, Berry, as well as many other Jamaicans, learnt about the possibility of travelling to England on a ship called *Empire Windrush*. However, at the time when the ship arrived, his financial situation made it impossible for him to pay the expenses. For that reason, he was forced to postpone his trip to Britain and wait for another ship, *SS Orbita*, carrying the second group of West Indian immigrants to Britain. The ship arrived to Britain in September 1948, three months after *Empire Windrush*. When they arrived in Britain, there was still a dire need for workers to "rebuild the country" and "clear up the mess".<sup>39</sup> The new arrivals were, as Berry himself said, "well received."<sup>40</sup>

When trying to make a balance of all the experiences upon the arrival, Berry however stated that even though the attitude of the British was frequently one of helpfulness, soon after their arrival they encountered wide array of issues such as racism, various prejudices and stereotypes, finding a suitable lodging, "the difficulty of being seen as an ordinary decent young man, just because you had a black skin."<sup>41</sup>

His excitement of coming to a new country was short-lived as it began to dawn on him that to be a black person in British way of life would be a seemingly burdensome experience, as he was going to deal with the problem of white people's inward dread of black face<sup>42</sup> on a daily basis.

After having settled in London, he took the opportunity to attend evening classes to continue the studies that he had interrupted in his homeland. By day, he gained experiences working as a telegrapher and besides that, he slowly started making his way in the world of poetry. First collection of poems that he published was called *Fractured Circles* and gained him wide recognition. More collections were to follow

---

<sup>39</sup> James Berry, "Coming to England"

<sup>40</sup> James Berry, "Coming to England"

<sup>41</sup> James Berry, "Coming to England"

<sup>42</sup> James Berry, "Coming to England"

shortly after.

However, it is not only his contribution to poetry which gained him wide recognition in the world of literature. He is also a prolific editor, he collected a significant body of works of other West Indian authors that he put together in anthologies, most famous being the *Bluefoot traveller: Poetry by West Indians in Britain* which was, according to Dieffenthaler, the “first nationwide anthology to really set the scene for West Indian British poets”.<sup>43</sup>

What is particularly impressive about this anthology is the name itself. Bluefoot in UK is a synonym for a penniless Jamaican drifter is, “a barefooted peripatetic who wanders from village to village over long hot roads, with blistered feet that remain blue however long he remains at his latest stop.”<sup>44</sup> This aptly summarizes the life of many Jamaicans who settled in Britain. Another significant anthology that Berry edited was the *News from Babylon: Book of West Indian British Poetry*. According to Arnold, many of these anthologies, “attested to the markedly increasing international visibility of West Indian poetry”.<sup>45</sup>

Berry became a speaker of his generation, of West Indians coming to Britain, appealing for the development of their national consciousness, national identity and loyalty to their roots. Many of his early poems were aimed at a greater realization of how their cultural heritage can enrich British society. This was greatly emphasized especially in *Lucy's letters and Loving* (1982) which concentrates on the “consciousness-expansion process that black people's presence has set up in Britain”.<sup>46</sup> However, at the same time, he spoke for “those without voice”, people who became so influenced by the British way of life that they lost the cultural ties with their home. He inspired these people to find their own voice, identify themselves with their native culture and helped them developed a sense of pride for their cultural heritage.

Since late 1980s, he dedicated himself fully to writing poems for children, most notable among them being the collections such as *A Thief in the Village and other stories* (1987), *When I dance* (1988), and *A Nest full of Stars* (2002), one of the more recent of his poetry collections. His children poems are celebrated in the literary field

---

<sup>43</sup> Ian Dieffenthaler, *Snow on Sugarcane: The evolution of West Indian Poetry in Britain*, 144.

<sup>44</sup> Ian Dieffenthaler, *Snow on Sugarcane: The evolution of West Indian Poetry in Britain*, 144.

<sup>45</sup> Edward Baugh, “A History of Poetry”, in *A History of Literature in the Caribbean*, ed. A. James Arnold (Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2001), 275.

<sup>46</sup> Edward Baugh, “A History of Poetry”, 275.

because they, according to Silvey, “ring with the mellifluous cadences of the Caribbean.”<sup>47</sup>

In the following sections, I am going to analyse the poems of James Berry which come from different collections yet all of them in some way reflect on his experience as an immigrant in Britain. I am going to discuss major themes that the author explores in these poems as well, how the poems vary in terms of the poet’s experience as an immigrant and, lastly, what they seem to suggest about the immigrant’s integration into British society.

## 2.1 Migrant in London

The poem “Migrant in London” was first published in the collection named *Fractured Circles* (1979). This collection attempts to put together some of the most famous of Berry’s poems. This creates a vast body of work which enables the reader to witness the poet’s journey from his early poetry towards the more recent one.

The poem itself depicts the inner struggles of a migrant who found himself in a world in which, as Innes points out, he feels “culturally at home” but at the same time “physically homeless”.<sup>48</sup>

Sand under we feet long time.  
Sea divided for we, you know,  
How we turned stragglers to Mecca.

The pining poet recalls his life back in Jamaica and all that has been familiar to him, the home that he wants and does not have. He lets his imagination run free as he fantasizes about his home island, about the sand which leaves strangely pleasant sensations in his fingers and the sea which triggers so many memories. He is left longing for the flavors of his homeland while he contemplates about what his present home is going to bring to him.

In this poem, the author appears to compare his new home, London, to Mecca. The significance of Mecca for Muslims is very similar to that of London to West Indians. Over time, London achieved a major importance for West Indians as it was

---

<sup>47</sup> Anita Silvey, *Children’s books and Their Creators* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2002), 359.

<sup>48</sup> C. L. Innes, *The Cambridge Introduction to Postcolonial Literatures in English* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 178.

considered “a place where one can and must pay homage”,<sup>49</sup> especially owing to its past of the center of the colony. People from all over the West Indies travelled to London and were fascinated, by the history, by the views, by the surprises it brought to them. It provided a good platform to learn and develop their careers, a synonym for fresh starts.

Further analyzing the poem, the poet appears to be making a contrast between his homeland, Jamaica, and his current place of residence. One major contrast is made between the rural life where the pace of life was not so hectic and the urban life – bustle and rushed life where people get easily stressed out.

An' in mi hangin' drape style  
I cross worl' centre street, man  
An' busy traffic toot horns

The poet found himself in a new city, in the “worl' centre”<sup>50</sup>, which gives the impression of being high and mighty. Immediately upon his arrival to London, he sees all of its iconic landmarks.

I see Big Ben strike  
the mark of my king town  
Pigeons come perch on mi shoulder  
roun' great Nelson feet

On one hand, the new place leaves him amazed. For the first time in his life, he can see all the great monuments that he read about in his school books.

At the same time, however, the new place brings confusion. He is confronted with the world he is not familiar with, with a place where lives move at a fast pace, which can be perceived through “busy traffic toot horns”<sup>51</sup>. To be able to live in this new place, he is required to maintain its pace.

The reader can observe that in this part, for the first time in the poem, there is an

---

<sup>49</sup> C. L. Innes, *The Cambridge Introduction to Postcolonial Literatures in English*, 179.

<sup>50</sup> James Berry, “Migrant in London“, in *Writing Black Britain 1948-1998: An Interdisciplinary Anthology*, e d. James Procter (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2000), 20-21.

<sup>51</sup> James Berry, “Migrant in London“, 20-21.

interplay between standard English and Jamaican patois. This indicates the poet's confusion as the memories of his home mingle with the sights of London, his present reality. He is enthralled by all that he sees but at the same time unable to let go of the memories of his homeland. It is "his sense of self, and his ambivalence" that is "marked by the variations of language from Jamaican English to Standard English."<sup>52</sup> The last part of the poem quoted below is dominated by the overall triumph of the speaker

I whisper, man you mek it.  
You arrive.

Fear mixes up with excitement as he comes to the full realization of his triumph. He can hardly contain his joy. Somehow he is not able to believe that he made it, that he finally arrived in Britain so at first he whispers the words to himself, he appears to be afraid that somebody might take it away from him if he said it loud.

This changes towards the end of the poem:

Then sudden, like, quite loud I say,  
'Then whey you goin' to sleep tonight?'<sup>53</sup>

In this final part of the poem, the voice of reason comes into play that ultimately suppresses his excitement. By asking himself "Then whey you goin' to sleep tonight?,"<sup>54</sup> he realizes that he needs to focus on more basic and more practical matters that essentially become matters of survival. Surviving in Britain will apparently not be easy and will involve number of challenges that the migrant will have to tackle.

Thus the reader can observe that it is the "mingled feelings of achievement and apprehension"<sup>55</sup> which accompany the migrant's arrival that are being expressed in this poem. The imagery of the poem profoundly encapsulates this confusion, the noises of the new city, but also the clash between two sharply different cultures that strikes him

---

<sup>52</sup> C. L. Innes, *The Cambridge Introduction to Postcolonial Literatures in English*, 179.

<sup>53</sup> James Berry, "Migrant in London", 20-21.

<sup>54</sup> James Berry, "Migrant in London", 20-21.

<sup>55</sup> C. L. Innes, *The Cambridge Introduction to Postcolonial Literatures in English*, 178.

The author further underlines the inner conflict by incorporating two contrasting languages, standard English and Jamaican patois, which he seems to employ deliberately to emphasize the confusion in his mind as well as the complexities of the language within the former empire.

As the migrant has just arrived in Britain, the hardest part is still ahead of him. The lack of solid plan for the future is very apparent, especially in the last part of the poem. His future in a new country is still very unclear.

## **2.2 Beginning in a City, 1948**

The poem “Beginning in a City, 1948” was first published in the collection *Windrush songs* (2007). In this poem, Berry further reflects on his first experiences upon arrival to Britain, however, unlike previous poem which examines the emotional aspects of the arrival to a new country, “Beginning in a City, 1948” focuses rather on telling the story as well as practical matters of daily life in the new country.

In the first line of the opening stanza, the author gives a deeper insight into his reasons for leaving his mother country and settling in Britain:

Stirred by restlessness, pushed by history,  
I found myself in the centre of Empire.

The first reason that pushed him out of his home country, Jamaica, is that he was “stirred by restlessness”<sup>56</sup>. He was keen to explore new places and Britain provided a way of escaping the daily grind.

The second reason he gives for leaving Jamaica is being “pushed by history”<sup>57</sup>, which is the reference to a sense of togetherness that the former British colonies felt with Britain swamped by post-war crisis and felt obliged to help Britain recover from the effects of war.

He is filled with great expectations. He refers to his new home, London, as the “centre of the Empire”<sup>58</sup> which conveys a sense of hugeness and importance that the British Empire had back in the 20<sup>th</sup> century when it covered almost a quarter of the

---

<sup>56</sup> James Berry, “Beginning in a City, 1948” in *Windrush songs* (Northumberland: Bloodaxe Books, 2007), 78.

<sup>57</sup> James Berry, “Beginning in a City, 1948”, 78.

<sup>58</sup> James Berry, “Beginning in a City, 1948”, 78.



surface of the Earth. He hopes that he will be able to start a new life here.

However, the following stanza implies that London did not live up to his expectations:

I knew no room. I knew no Londoner.  
I searched without knowing.

He realizes he has nowhere to go and no one to call for help. He comes to London without having a place to stay or even knowing anyone in the city. He has nothing to do but to wander aimlessly with his briefcase, “search without knowing”<sup>59</sup>.

Depressing atmosphere that prevails in the city only contributes to his disillusionment:

In dim-lit streets, war-tired people moved slowly  
like dark-coated bears in a snowy region.

He realizes there is something very different about this place. It is already night time as he makes his way through “dim-lit streets”<sup>60</sup>, he feels heaviness in the air and in the movement of the people who are described as “war-tired”<sup>61</sup>, supposedly because they still suffer the consequences of war, and moving “slowly like dark-coated bears in a snowy region”<sup>62</sup> which refers to the layers of clothing they wore to protect them from cold. He realizes the contrast between London, which appears cold and gloomy, and Jamaica, which he recalls was sweet and inviting.

Only when he wanders through the streets it dawns on him just how different he is from everyone else:

I in my Caribbean gear  
was a half-finished shack in the cold winds

Especially the way he is clothed implies that he has not yet integrated into British

---

<sup>59</sup> James Berry, “Beginning in a City, 1948”, 78.

<sup>60</sup> James Berry, “Beginning in a City, 1948”, 78.

<sup>61</sup> James Berry, “Beginning in a City, 1948”, 78.

<sup>62</sup> James Berry, “Beginning in a City, 1948”, 78.

society, his clothes is not suitable for the cold weather in Britain and apparently makes him look odd. He compares himself to “a half-finished shack in the cold wind”<sup>63</sup> which implies a sense of vulnerability and supposedly even shame, perhaps because he receives surprised looks from the onlookers.

Carefully navigating through the streets of London, the author of the poem gradually succeeds at finding temporary accommodation.

I was left in a close-walled room,  
left with a dying shadeless bulb,  
a pillowless bed and a smelly army blanket—  
all the comfort I had paid for.

He spends night in a “close-walled room”<sup>64</sup>, with no light but that of “dying shadeless bulb”<sup>65</sup>. He is made to sleep in “a pilowless bed”<sup>66</sup> and cover himself with “smelly army blanket”<sup>67</sup> which is not enough to keep him warm at night. Although it is not the life he dreamed of, he acknowledges the fact that he cannot have the luxury of being able to choose where he is going to stay and has to accept the situation because it is “all the comfort” that he “had paid for”<sup>68</sup>.

As the poem goes on, he is introduced to his roommates which he refers to as his “inmates” as if he found himself in the prison cell, which reinforces the reader’s perception of the place as very hostile with oppressive atmosphere.

The faces of the people he meets are not very friendly either:

Weather-cracked faces, hairy and hairless, were chewing.  
No woman smiled. No man chuckled.  
Words pressed through gums and gaps of rusty teeth.

Towards the end of the poem, the author’s perception of the place and the tone of the poem changes from gloomy to optimistic as he meets fellow Jamaican on Coldharbour

---

<sup>63</sup> James Berry, “Beginning in a City, 1948”, 78.

<sup>64</sup> James Berry, “Beginning in a City, 1948”, 78.

<sup>65</sup> James Berry, “Beginning in a City, 1948”, 78.

<sup>66</sup> James Berry, “Beginning in a City, 1948”, 78.

<sup>67</sup> James Berry, “Beginning in a City, 1948”, 78.

<sup>68</sup> James Berry, “Beginning in a City, 1948”, 78.

Lane where he sees a queue of men. Curious about what is going on, he asks:

'Wha happenin brodda? Wha happenin here?'

and is astonished when he hears the answer of one of the men in the queue:

Looking at me he said 'You mus be a jus-come?

He recommends him a place where he can find a room and the author finishes the poem somewhat relieved making an eloquent statement:

So, I had begun — begun in London.<sup>69</sup>

This last line reflects the change in the author's way of thinking as he overcomes the initial despair and becomes hopeful about his future in London, but at the same time it conveys quite new feelings of fear and insecurity that gradually fill his mind.

### **2.3 On an afternoon train from Purley to Victoria, 1955**

"On an afternoon train from Purley to Victoria" is arguably the most famous of James Berry's poems. Written in 1955, not a long time after James Berry's arrival in Britain, the poem presents an encounter between two strangers, the speaker – West Indian man and a woman who engages in a conversation with him while travelling on the train:

Hello, she said and startled me  
Nice day. Nice day I agreed.

Something about the lady's greeting "startled him", presumably because she is one of a few British people who have found the boldness to approach him and reach out to him. Although it is just a basic greeting, for West Indian immigrant in Britain it is presumably the highest level of intimacy he has been exposed in an encounter with stranger. The way he responds: "Nice day. Nice day I agreed"<sup>70</sup> suggests that he is

---

<sup>69</sup> James Berry, "Beginning in a City, 1948", 78.

<sup>70</sup> James Berry, "On an Afternoon Train from Purley to Victoria, 1955" in James Berry, ed., *News for Babylon: The Chattoo Book of Westindian-British poetry*, 190.

merely being polite. He appears to view the lady as someone to be treated with caution and who should be kept in safe distance.

In the next stanza, the lady continues the conversation and gives a likely reason why she approached him:

I am a Quaker she said and Sunday  
I was moved in silence  
to speak a poem loudly  
for racial brotherhood.

Firstly the woman opens up about her religious beliefs and admits that she is a Quaker, which is the fact that she greatly emphasizes as she puts it at the beginning of the sentence. The reader further learns that she is rather enthusiastic about the rights of “racial brotherhood”<sup>71</sup> as she was just recently “moved to silence”<sup>72</sup> to take a stand by reading the poem. This seems to serve as a step to assure the man that he can trust her and also a step to approach him and learn more about him.

The lady’s mention about the poem seems to grab the speaker’s attention and he starts to be more engaged in the conversation:

I was thoughtful, then said  
what poem came on like that?

The speaker lays stress on the fact that he was “thoughtful”<sup>73</sup> towards her, he paid attention to what she was saying but at the same time he seemed to remain cautious about saying anything that might hurt the lady. He appears to be aware that she has some important thoughts on mind and he wants to avoid direct confrontation or evoking feelings of depreciation in her.

In the remainder of the conversation, the lady expresses curiosity about his country of origin:

Where are you from? she said.

---

<sup>71</sup> James Berry, “On an Afternoon Train from Purley to Victoria, 1955”, 190.

<sup>72</sup> James Berry, “On an Afternoon Train from Purley to Victoria, 1955”, 190.

<sup>73</sup> James Berry, “On an Afternoon Train from Purley to Victoria, 1955”, 190.

Jamaica I said.

What part of Africa is Jamaica? she said.

Where Ireland is near Lapland I said.

She asks a seemingly naive question which, as Larrissy argues, aptly expresses the “cultural confusion of the host society in encountering the new black settlers in Britain”.<sup>74</sup> Although the lady was fighting for “racial brotherhood”<sup>75</sup>, she seems to lack basic knowledge about the traditions or origins of the people that she is fighting for. The question she ask also reflects on the fact that for most of the majority of white society in Britain at the time, those people had the reputation of former slaves who were brought from Africa. Despite living in a different period, some people were still stuck in their old ways of thinking about the world.

The speaker is aware that this mindset is common among white Britons. He does not seem offended nor startled by her question. Instead he reacts with a slightly ironic comment “Where Ireland is near Lapland”<sup>76</sup>. He is not surprised as he is used to people asking questions like this.

So sincere she was beautiful  
as people sat down around us.<sup>77</sup>

In this very last stanza, he takes a soft stance towards the lady. He thinks of her as being ‘so sincere’<sup>78</sup> in a way it made her beautiful. This comes as a surprise because readers would expect him to grow resentful or bitter towards her after she posed the question. The speaker seems to have become internally reconciled with his identity of a man of color in a new country and the culture he is surrounded by. He appears to have adapted to contemporary situation.

---

<sup>74</sup> Sarah Lawson Welsch, “Generation One: Windrush: ‘But Let Me Tell You How This Business Begin’” in *The Cambridge Companion to British poetry, 1945-2010*, ed. Edward Larrissy (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 183.

<sup>75</sup> James Berry, “On an Afternoon Train from Purley to Victoria, 1955”, 190.

<sup>76</sup> James Berry, “On an Afternoon Train from Purley to Victoria, 1955”, 190.

<sup>77</sup> James Berry, “On an Afternoon Train from Purley to Victoria, 1955”, 190.

<sup>78</sup> James Berry, “On an Afternoon Train from Purley to Victoria, 1955”, 190.

## 2.4 Comparison of the poems

The poems I have discussed in the previous sections each reflect on the author's experience of immigration "in a world where race remains a major fault line."<sup>79</sup>

The speakers of the poems are fueled by a need to find a place in the world where they belong, where they are welcome and accepted.

In each of the poems, however, the author employs contrasting views on the new country in order to display different phases of immigration that the speaker is going through. The first poem echoes the emotions evoked by the arrival to the immigrant's new country of residence, fleeting glimpse of excitement upon seeing the London's iconic landmarks including Big Ben and Nelson's column. Seeing all the sights that until recently he had not considered even crossing leaves him amazed but also bewildered as the sights mix with the memories of his homeland. He has great expectations of the new country and retains positive attitude until the end of the poem when he realizes there is a number of practical steps that he needs to take to take roots in the country.

The second poem, unlike the first one, presents a very different phase in the immigration process. The "honeymoon phase" is brought to a crashing halt as the newly arrived immigrant faces a wide range of difficulties, as finding suitable accommodation and building new relationships in the country that they chose for their home. The speaker of the poem is made to adapt to considerable differences of weather and the behavior of the people, both seemingly cold and hostile. He feels like he is invader in his new country, an unwelcome guest. His great expectations fade as he is starting to acknowledge the reality. He feels lonely, he is lost, he does not have anybody to help him. However, spark of hope ignites his hopeless situation as he meets fellow Jamaican who helps him in search for a place to stay. He is slowly beginning to see the bright spots.

The third poem represents the immigrant's gradual integration into society. Even though the speaker is still a little cautious when encountering native people, he is getting used to his new environment, the people and their customs. He becomes accustomed to people asking seemingly naïve questions about his origin and seems to tolerate their slightly narrow view of the world. When exposed to prejudices, he

---

<sup>79</sup> Sarah Lawson Welsch, "Generation One: Windrush: 'But Let Me Tell You How This Business Begin'", 183.

appears to treat them in a humorous manner without finding it offending.

The reader thus witnesses a transformation of the speaker from a newly arrived immigrant with great expectations of what the country is like into an immigrant who has reconciled himself to the fact that his new home is far from ideal. He puts off his old self and his way of thinking and he gets accustomed to the fact there are no countries which are better than the other, it is just the matter of his perspective and giving the country the opportunity to become his new home. This realization helps him to grow comfortable with his new home.

### 3 BENJAMIN ZEPHANIAH

Benjamin Zephaniah belongs to the second generation of Jamaican poets. Born in Handsworth near Birmingham, England, to Jamaican mother and Barbadian father, he spent a significant part of his childhood in Jamaica whose distinctive culture, especially its musical heritage, had a profound influence on his poetry. Since his early childhood, his mother, nurse of Jamaican origin, has nurtured his gift for performance poetry. Zephaniah attended school in Birmingham where he had his first experiences with racism which sickened him and made him immerse himself into composing poetry. Expelled out of school at early age, unable to read or write, his only consolation was found in channeling his feelings through poetry. His aim was to bring poetry everywhere – to the streets, churches and various public places.

By the age of fifteen, he was already a well-established poet in his native Handsworth, cultivating a poetic style that came to be called as dub poetry. This represents, as Fred d'Aguiar argues in his essay "A Theory of Caribbean Aesthetics", "the idea of poetry as performance by a single voice holding forth with an argument, story or assessment of the society."<sup>80</sup> Although dub poets perform without a backing music, the reggae rhythm is clearly distinguishable in their poetry. Dub poem is, according to Oku Onura who promoted the term, essentially "a poem which has a built-in reggae rhythm – hence when the poem is read without any reggae rhythm (so to speak) backing, one can distinctly hear the reggae rhythm coming out of the poem."<sup>81</sup>

Based in Handsworth, he soon grew dissatisfied with addressing issues of concern to the community in the place where majority of people were of Jamaican and Indian origin. He sought to reach broader audience which is the reason why, in 1979, he moved to London. London enabled him to fulfill his fantasy of becoming a writer. It was here that he started his literary career, releasing his debut poetry collection, *Pen Rhythm* (1980). At the early age, he started developing a voice that made him famous, writing about both local and global thorny social and political concerns, taking part in the struggles to oppose the oppression and injustice being directed towards black British people. He addressed the urgency of this oppression and injustice for instance in *Too Black, Too Strong*, in which he stated:

---

<sup>80</sup> Fred d'Aguiar, "A Theory of Caribbean Aesthetics" in *Anglophonia - French Journal of English studies: Divergences et Convergences* 21 (2007): 97.

<sup>81</sup> Stewart Brown, "Dub Poetry: Selling Out", in *Poetry Wales* 22,2 (1987):54.



in theory Britain should be the last place on earth where you should find racism. But the reality is that many people are suffering from what I call the 'last off the boat syndrome'. They conveniently forget their journey here and now live in the fear that Britain will be flooded by penniless asylum seekers who would then drain out precious society of everything they hold dear.[. . .] I also feel concerned that in the country of my birth my rights are ignored. In this multicultural, multiracial country, its prisons, its courts, even its hospitals don't recognise my religion or cultural heritage.<sup>82</sup>

As he himself claims, he “writes what he feels about being in a world in which a whole litany of abuses of humanity exist.”<sup>83</sup>

His captivating ability to perform his poems is, indeed, what distinguished him from his contemporaries. It is no surprise that he came to be known as the pioneer of performance poetry in Britain. By his poems, he brings the words to life and provides his listeners with unique aesthetic experience as they are presented with the exploration of himself as well as the array of concerns particular to his generation. His poems aptly portray the alarming issues present on both local and global level which made them suitable for reading at various demonstrations, youth gatherings, outside police stations and array of other public places to spread awareness of the issues.

Throughout his literary career, he has felt compelled to reach out even to the people who do not read poetry, which is the reason why he did not flinch from reading his poems in prisons and many areas which are considered rather perilous, such as Palestine. Many of his live performances were televised in British households which contributed significantly to improve the awareness of around issues specific to black British community but also global issues advocating for among others the issues of environment, gender equality and rights of animals. Even today, he appears to speak universal language that people can relate to.

His legacy reaches far beyond writing and composing poetry. Although less distinguished, he is the author of novels primary aimed at adult and adolescent readership. Some of his most significant contribution to British fiction was his debut novel *Face* (1999) which reflects on the inner struggles of a teenage boy who suffers injury that profoundly influences his life and *Refugee Boy* (2001) which recounts the

---

<sup>82</sup> Benjamin Zephaniah, *Too Black, Too Strong*, (Highgreen: Bloodaxe Books, 2001), 11-12.

<sup>83</sup> Kwame Dawes, „Too black, too strong“ in *World Literature Today* 21 (2002): 159.

story of an attempt by an African boy to find a safe haven in Britain after his homeland is struck by a violent civil war. His novels, as John McRae and Ronald Carter have pointed out, “face up to very serious issues of in clear and unpretentious language.”<sup>84</sup>

Apart from novels, Zephaniah made a lasting contribution to children’s poetry. His first book for children, *Talking Turkeys* (1995), was greeted with unprecedented response from readership and helped him garner wide recognition as children’s poet. Through his poetry, he encourages children all over Britain to observe the world and nurture their sense of wonder and curiosity about everything.

Zephaniah is also a gifted and well-respected playwright. Majority of his plays are, as Gordon Collier argues, “consistently written in verse and performed in the recitative, rhythmic style characteristic of dub poetry.”<sup>85</sup> He received numerous literary awards and honorary doctorates from many British universities, including University of North London, University of Central England, Staffordshire University and University of Westminster.

Albeit being prominent member of Rastafari movement and honorary patron of the Vegan society, Zephaniah strongly opposes any kind of labels or categorization. He claims that he cannot be restricted to the realm of mere “Rastafarian poet” or “vegan poet”. Instead, he offers perspective on his identity as being “thoroughly British – a man with no anxiety about declaring his Britishness and his willingness to own that identity.”<sup>86</sup>

Prolific in his writing, he was remained involved in musical scene throughout his career. He released a number of reggae and dub recordings including *Us and Dem* (1990) and *Belly of de Beast* (1996). He recorded a song dedicated to Nelson Mandela with a Jamaican reggae band Wailers after the death of their founder, Bob Marley which helped Zephaniah to get involved in charity work in South Africa.

The following sections focus on different aspects pertaining to Zephaniah’s immigrant experience analyzed through the lens of his poetry. I will discuss two poems from his poem collection *Propa Propaganda* (1997) which elaborate some of Zephaniah’s most challenging thoughts on the issue of stereotypes assigned to black

---

<sup>84</sup> John McRae and Ronald Carter, *The Routledge Guide to Modern English Writing: Britain and Ireland* (London: Routledge, 2004), 67.

<sup>85</sup> Christian Habekost, “Cross-Cultural Alliances: New Developments in Dub Poetry” in *Us/The: Translation, Transcription and Identity in Post-Colonial Literary Cultures* ed. Gordon Collier (Amsterdam, Atlanta: Rodopi, 1992), 235.

<sup>86</sup> Kwame Dawes, „Too black, too strong“, 159.

British people in Britain, British attitudes, racial discrimination, violence and inequality. In these sections, I will put special emphasis on the closer examination of what these poems reveal about different levels of Zephaniah's experience as a second generation immigrant as opposed to his first generation counterpart, James Berry.

### 3.1 No Problem

The poem "No Problem" was featured in Zephaniah's collection *Propa Propaganda* (1996). The poem is a vivid recollection of author's experiences from early childhood up to the present day. The author powerfully addresses the perennial issue of stereotypes that were, and still are, circulating within British society as well as rather incomplete view that the British have of black British migrants. The poem emphasizes the pressure of the society on the individual to comply with established rules and smoothen the characteristics that distinguish the individual from the crowd. It raises a question of whether it is necessary for an individual to conform to the patterns of society to be accepted. While the tone of the poem is predominantly political, mild satirical overtones can be discerned in the speaker's description of himself.

The poem is written in non-standard English which appears to be used deliberately to distinguish the speaker from the other people, from the norm, and highlight the poet's refusal to conform to the wishes of the society. This non-standard English pattern can be traced from the very first stanza:

I am not de problem  
But I bare de brunt  
Of silly playground taunts  
An racist stuns

The first stanza presumably presents a depiction of the author's own childhood in Britain. The prevalent tone of the poem is very personal, achieved especially by the use of first person pronoun – "I".

The poet reminisces about his experiences of growing up, about "silly playground stuns"<sup>87</sup> and "racist stuns"<sup>88</sup>, of growing up in an area where "every day you were

---

<sup>87</sup> Benjamin Zephaniah, "No Problem" in *Propa Propaganda* (Newcastle: Bloodaxe Books, 1997), 38.

<sup>88</sup> Benjamin Zephaniah, "No Problem", 38.

reminded of your color.”<sup>89</sup> He is highly critical of his peers, he refers to their behavior as “silly” which depicts their immaturity in speaker’s eyes.

Great emphasis is put on the fact that he is “not de problem”<sup>90</sup>, he is not the issue that needs to be dealt with, which suggests there are much more important issues that should be addressed and focused on. The speaker appears to make a clear statement that it is the attitude of common British people towards him which is needs to be dealt with. However, common people refuse to acknowledge this and this creates a gap that separate the speaker and the people he addresses which is seemingly difficult to bridge.

Zephaniah further strengthens the depiction of his childhood as one of plight when he recalls being subject of racism and stunts from his peers as “de brunt,”<sup>91</sup> the burden that he was forced to bear. The treatment he receives from his peers proves to be one of reckless disregard, inflicting pain and humiliation to him.

I am not de problem  
If you give I a chance  
I can teach yu of Timbaktu  
I can do more than dance

In this part of the poem, he encourages the common British people to free themselves from prejudices that they have developed and abandon the notion of race as fixed entity, but rather align themselves with the culture of black settlers in Britain, deepen the communication and seek unity despite cultural differences. The speaker states that if given a chance, he is determined to broaden the people’s cultural horizons (“I can teach yu of Timbaktu”)<sup>92</sup>, as well as convince the people that the abilities of black settlers are much more varied than often suggested (“I can do more than dance”).<sup>93</sup> Moreover, the latter sentence also appears to imply that the common people identify race drawing on their own highly limited knowledge. This leads them to assume the uniformity of people of different race, i.e. “All black people can dance”.

Zephaniah offers a different perspective in his poem, he challenges the common

---

<sup>89</sup> “An interview with Benjamin Zephaniah“, accessed April 2nd, 2016  
<http://ro.uow.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1394&context=kunapipi>.

<sup>90</sup> Benjamin Zephaniah, “No Problem”, 38.

<sup>91</sup> Benjamin Zephaniah, “No Problem”, 38.

<sup>92</sup> Benjamin Zephaniah, “No Problem”, 38.

<sup>93</sup> Benjamin Zephaniah, “No Problem”, 38.

people to develop a cross-cultural mindset.

I am not de problem  
I greet yu wid a smile  
Yu put me in a pigeon hole  
But I a versatile.

In this final part of the stanza, the speaker confirms that he nonetheless maintains a positive attitude towards those who perpetuate the racism and categorize him according to racial stereotypes (“I greet you wid a smile”).<sup>94</sup> The treatment he receives from other people is, however, quite the opposite. His description of their behavior is a lament the lack of understanding: “You put me in a pigeon hole”<sup>95</sup>. He is put in a place which impedes his individuality and forces him to surpress his individuality, or at least a part of it. The speaker’s statement “But I a versatile”<sup>96</sup> suggests a strong resistance to be pigeonholed by the British society. He is confident that any categories established by the society are too small too hold him which appears to instill in him a sense of pride.

The tone that is created in the first lines of the second stanza is very different from that of the first one. While in the first stanza, the prevalent tone that was used implied that the speaker is agitated and rather angry (which can be observed from the frequent use of enjambment), in this stanza, he adopts a calm tone:

These conditions may affect me  
As I get older,  
An I am positively sure  
I have no chips on me shoulders,

In the first two lines of the second stanza, there is a shift in the speaker’s attitude towards his current situation. He appears to leave the negative emotions aside and deal with them as he gets older. He no longer desires the reaction to the unfair treatment he

---

<sup>94</sup> Benjamin Zephaniah, “No Problem”, 38.

<sup>94</sup> Benjamin Zephaniah, “No Problem”, 38.

<sup>95</sup> Benjamin Zephaniah, “No Problem”, 38.

<sup>96</sup> Benjamin Zephaniah, “No Problem”, 38.

receives to be tinged with anger and resentment. He appears to have decided to pursue a sort of passive resistance.

Black is not de problem  
Mother country get it right,  
An just for de record,  
Sum of me best friends are white <sup>97</sup>

In this final part of the stanza, he makes one last plea to what he lovingly refers to as his “mother country” <sup>98</sup> to “get it right.”<sup>99</sup> This is followed by a sharp, biting coda that is again challenging fixed mindset of the majority of white society: “Sum of me best friends are white”. This statement attempts to cross the fuzzy lines dividing the races and aim at the realization that we are all human beings and should be granted the same rights.

### 3.2 The Death of Joy Gardner

The poem “Death of Joy Gardner”, similarly to the previous poem, was published in the collection *Propa Propaganda* (1996). This poem is a recollection of the events of summer 1993 when police and immigration officers entered the flat of Joy Gardner, Jamaican woman living in Britain. Although she gave birth to her son in Britain and her mother had a permanent resident status, she has been denied application for permanent residency in Britain and so she had to be deported. After the arrival of the police and immigration officers, deportation detention followed which put her into coma. She later died in the hospital. Persoon and Watson noted that many people regarded her death as “the British state’s disregards for the lives of immigrants and members of ethnic minority communities, and the institutional racism that fostered it.”<sup>100</sup>

In his poem, Zephaniah reflects on the treatment of Joy Gardner by the officers, as well as “the larger sense of historical betrayal felt by many of those with roots in

---

<sup>97</sup> Benjamin Zephaniah, “No Problem”, 38.

<sup>98</sup> Benjamin Zephaniah, “No Problem”, 38.

<sup>99</sup> Benjamin Zephaniah, “No Problem”, 38.

<sup>100</sup> James Persoon and Robert R. Watson, *Encyclopedia of British poetry* (New York: Infobase publishing, 2015), 153.

Britain's former colonies.”<sup>101</sup>

The first line of the first stanza captures the deportation detention:

They put a leather belt around her  
13 feet of tape and bound her  
Handcuffs to secure her  
And only God knows what else

The act of Joy Gardner's detention was later criticised by many organisations focused on human rights and the family members. Myrna Simpson, Joy's mother, later stated: “When they arrived at her house with those thing, those body belts, the tape - they weren't looking to find a human being, because you do not do that to a fellow human being. You would not do that to your dog.”<sup>102</sup>

She's illegal, so deport her  
Said the Empire that brought her

“The Empire that brought her”<sup>103</sup> is a reference to British violent colonial past that is now over and is instead replaced by a period in which, as Mac Phee argued, “the presence of Joy Gardner and others no longer considered a part of that ‘us’ becomes an inexplicable and threatening presence, such an outrage against decency and the good order of the nation as to become criminal.”<sup>104</sup> Although Joy Gardner's presence in Britain is one of the result of the Empire's long-time intervention in foreign affairs, the Empire does not appear to be willing to bear the consequences of the intervention and, instead, treats the people who were once living in their territory as criminals.

The idea of the Empire's violent invasion is further developed in the fourth stanza:

---

<sup>101</sup> James Persoon and Robert R. Watson, *Encyclopedia of British poetry*, 153

<sup>102</sup> Heather Mills, “A Life Without Joy”, *The Guardian*, accessed April 4<sup>th</sup>, <http://www.theguardian.com/celldeaths/article/0,2763,195387,00.html>

<sup>103</sup> Benjamin Zephaniah, “The Death of Joy Gardner” in *Propa Propaganda* (Newcastle: Bloodaxe Books, 1997), 11.

<sup>104</sup> Graham MacPhee, Introduction to *Postwar British Literature and Postcolonial Studies* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2011), 153.

The Bible sent us everywhere  
To make Britain great

This invasion was supported by “imperialist ideologies that justified slavery and colonialism in the name of ‘civilisation’, Christianity and the spread of ‘free trade’”<sup>105</sup>

She died.  
Nobody killed her  
And she never killed herself

This is a sort of paradoxical statement made by the author. Although she is dead, and she did not kill herself, “Nobody killed her”<sup>106</sup>. Although three officers were charged with manslaughter, they were later acquitted and since then, no judgment was passed on the perpetrators. This “failure of justice to materialize for black people” is a frequent theme in Zephaniah’s poetry, including this poem.

This following stanza is a direct appeal to the people to make a stand for the victims of human rights violation and oppose the inequality experienced by ethnic minorities in Britain:

No matter what the law may say  
A mother should not die this way  
Let human rights come into play  
And to everyone apply.

The author further states that to bring a significant change to the system of the country, it is necessary to maintain an open dialogue with people who have influence over important decisions concerning the race relations that are to be made in the country:

We must talk some Race Relations  
With the folks from Immigration

---

<sup>105</sup> Graham MacPhee, Introduction to *Postwar British Literature and Postcolonial Studies*, 153.

<sup>106</sup> Benjamin Zephaniah, “The Death of Joy Gardner”, 11.



About this kind of deportation  
If things are to improve

The last lines of fourth stanza express author's fear that he is facing the risk of imminent violence that not only puts his life at stake but jeopardizes black Briton's freedom in general:

For I fear as I walk the streets  
That one day I just may meet  
Officials who may tie my feet  
And how I would escape.

When the author moves to the final part of the poem, he shifts the reader's attention from the death of Joy Gardner and the trial and instead focuses on the police and immigration officers, expressing concern about the clarity of their moral vision and their conscience:

I cannot help but wonder  
How the alien deporters  
(As they said to press reporters)  
Can feel absolute relief.<sup>107</sup>

### 3.3 Comparison of the poems

Benjamin Zephaniah, as mentioned earlier in this paper, is a second generation Jamaican poet whose poems bear in several ways much more radical content than those of the first generation. Born in Britain, he is "seen as representing the face of a new, multicultural Britain and as such his work is regarded as an extension of the traditional canon."<sup>108</sup> Both these poems address the issues of racial discrimination that the author

---

<sup>107</sup> Benjamin Zephaniah, "The Death of Joy Gardner", 11.

<sup>108</sup> Sigrid Rieuwerts, "'We are Britain!' Culture and Ethnicity in Benjamin Zephaniah's Novels" in *Children's literature in Second Language Education* ed. Janice Bland and Christina Lütge (New York, London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 129.

himself has experienced in his childhood and whose marks are “still visible today.”<sup>109</sup> Both poems offer an account for the frustration of the speaker as well as the refusal to accept how he himself and the members of his race tend to be treated by dominantly white British society.

In addition to that, both poems are responses to deeply prejudicial mindset of the British society, however, in each of the two poems, different response is introduced. In the first poem, the speaker appears to adopt a conciliatory tone which is demonstrated when, albeit being treated unfairly because of the prejudices that the society holds, he does not display anger, neither holds grudges. He challenges the people to shift their attention away from him back to the core of the problem. He prompts them to inspect themselves and to reassess their attitudes and everything they thought to be true, which is, along with the willingness to learn from each other, the only way to achieve settlement and overcome the disputes between the races.

The second poem, on the other hand, expresses the speaker’s anger towards the country where an individual is still being treated according to the color of their skin. It is a stark poem of outrage over the inhumane violence directed towards the members of his race and over the ignorance of the courts who do not punish the perpetrators but instead sweep the problem under the carpet. It is rather a declaration than query. The poem further emphasizes the necessity to take action to prevent things such as these from happening in a civilized country.

---

<sup>109</sup> Sigrid Rieuwerts, “‘We are Britain!’ Culture and Ethnicity in Benjamin Zephaniah’s Novels”, 129.

## 4 JOHN AGARD

John Agard is the representative of contemporary West Indian poetry. He was born in British Guiana (now Guyana), a country that both geographically and culturally belongs to the British West Indies but is closely related to the Caribbean region. He spent a large portion of his life in Georgetown, Guyana's capital where he attended school and started his literary career. His early literary attempts coincided with the time of significant changes in his homeland – Guyana gained independence from British rule in 1966 and at this time, Agard already had started his journey as a writer, publishing his works in the school magazine. His love for language was continuously nurtured by cricket commentaries that he listened to on the radio, which was the reason which prompted him to start composing his own poetry.

Before he settled in Britain in 1977, he had a brief career as a teacher as well as sub-editor and feature writer for the *Guyana Sunday Chronicle*. Meanwhile, he continued to write poetry which resulted in the publication of his first collection of poetry – *Shoot Me with Flowers* (1974). Three years later, he followed in his father's footsteps and moved to London. He was notably zealous to raise awareness of the Caribbean literature and cultural heritage in England which he achieved by visiting schools all over Britain to give lectures enhancing student's interest and understanding of Caribbean literature and culture. These lectures were sponsored by Commonwealth Institute for which he worked from 1978-1985.

Consequently he committed himself to writing poetry. What is particularly notable about his poetry is that much of his work as a poet is, as Ray noted, “constructed around a single theme.”<sup>110</sup> This is a case of for example the book *Man to Pan* (1982) which is centered around steelpanns which accompany calypso songs typical of the Caribbean region. John Agard's poetry is distinctly Caribbean in flavor, weaving a variety of issues including racial and cultural stereotypes and, as Styles and Bryan have argued, “themed collections on everything from maths to fairy tales.”<sup>111</sup> He broadens the canvas of contemporary British poetry by including a large number of references to Caribbean myths and tales which contribute to the unique and often startling imagery of his poetry.

---

<sup>110</sup> Mohit K. Ray, *The Atlantic Companion to Literature in English* (New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers & Distributors, 2007), 6.

<sup>111</sup> Morag Styles and Beverly Bryan, “Diaspora consciousness: identity and exile in Caribbean British poetry” in *Teaching Caribbean Poetry* ed. Beverley Bryan and Morag Styles (London, New York: Routledge, 2014), 70.

Although he is acclaimed as an “electrifying performer”<sup>112</sup>, Agard also made significant contributions to children’s literature, the most significant of them being the collections *Lend Me Your Wings* (1987) and *No Hickory, No Dickory, No Dock* (1991), a collection of nursery rhymes which arose from his cooperation with his partner, Grace Nichols. In 2013, he was awarded Queen’s Gold Medal for his contribution to British poetry, notably for his more recently published works, *Alternative Anthem: Selected Poems* (2009) and *Goldilocks on CCTV* (2011). He became the second black writer in history to receive this award, the first one being Derek Walcott.

Apart from his publishing his own poetry, Agard also made extensive and valuable contributions to various anthologies, “particularly those”, as Stade and Karbiener note, “that emphasize Caribbean culture and children’s literature.”<sup>113</sup> Several of these anthologies he also edited. These include for instance *The Penguin Book of Caribbean Verse* (1986) and *A Caribbean Dozen* (1996) which he edited together with Grace Nichols.

In the following sections, I will analyze two of Agard’s most celebrated and recognized poems that examine some of the strands of Agard’s experience as a post-war West Indian immigrant and challenge the common stereotypes about black people. In these sections, I will explore how his experience of a newly arrived immigrant is reflected in these two poems and what observations he made about life in Britain in general. In addition I will examine his use of standard English in contrast with creole constructions which, as Manolachi put it, in Agard’s case serve to “tilt the balance in favour of the less educated (according to the West Indian standards) and against the sometimes indifferent highly educated or the academics.”<sup>114</sup>

#### **4.1 Palm Tree King**

The poem “Palm Tree King” was featured in the collection *Mangoes and Bullets* (1985). In this poem, the author highlights the issue of racial prejudice, one of the major race-related issues that many of the newly arrived immigrants encountered upon

---

<sup>112</sup> Morag Styles and Beverly Bryan, “Diaspora consciousness: identity and exile in Caribbean British poetry”, 70.

<sup>113</sup> George Stade and Karen Karbiener, *Encyclopedia of British Writers, 1800 to the Present*, 2nd ed. (New York: Facts on File, 2009), 8.

<sup>114</sup> Monica Manolachi, “Caribbean poetry in Britain, a Literary Site of Cultural Change,” *Studia UBB Philologia LVIII* 3 (2013): 175

their arrival in Britain. The author further demonstrates that even though the British society has progressed, the roots of the prejudices have run deep and the attitudes and unwillingness to see past the color of their skin show utter disregard for the people of different race:

Because I come from the West Indies  
certain people in England seem to think  
I is an expert on palm trees.

In this first stanza, the author uses a typical part of Caribbean scenery – palm trees – to demonstrate the conventional ideas that people in the British society have formed about the immigrants of West Indian origin, they construe that because of their origin (“Because I come from West Indies”<sup>115</sup>), they are predisposed to knowledge of palm trees, that they are “experts on palm trees.”<sup>116</sup> “Certain people in England”<sup>117</sup> as they are referred to by Agard, still hold the same rigid racial stereotypes. These stereotypes inevitably contribute to incomplete and inaccurate image of the West Indians and are resistant to change, even in the face of compelling evidence to a variety within a group of people of a certain race.

Apart from being an integral part of a Caribbean scenery, the symbol of a palm tree in this poem also adds a tinge of exotic to the aspect of “European-ness” of the British society and appears to imply the common perception inbuilt in the British society of regarding West Indian immigrants as the exotic “others” while they demand them to perceive them as real people, to reveal the truth about the “other”. This leads to gradual marginalization of these people and their separation from the mainstream society which live under the impression that they are being inclusive but do the opposite, without meaning to.

Beginning the second stanza, perhaps in an attempt to face the issue with a dignity, the author adopts a stance of peaceful resignation:

So not wanting to sever this link  
with me native roots (know what ah mean?)

---

<sup>115</sup> John Agard, “Palm Tree King” in *Mangoes and Bullets* (London: Serpent’s Tail, 1990), 36.

<sup>116</sup> John Agard, “Palm Tree King”, 36.

<sup>117</sup> John Agard, “Palm Tree King”, 36.

or to disappoint dese culture vulture

I does smile as a cool breeze

While in the first stanza, the poet appears to react with bitterness at being portrayed in his stereotypical role of an “expert on palm trees,”<sup>118</sup> the immediately following stanza indicates that he gradually embraces these assumptions related to his race, the stereotypical views held by the society, because of the mere fact of “not wanting to sever this link.”<sup>119</sup>

People who hold stereotypical views of his race are in this poem referred to as “culture vulture.”<sup>120</sup> This clearly emphasizes that the author’s seemingly wry attitude towards them, implying that the interest they are showing to him is not genuine and they merely view him as an exotic human attraction. There is a hint of mockery in the author’s perspective, but “less belligerent, as he prefers to adopt a humorous discourse.”<sup>121</sup>

The last line of the stanza indicates that there is no recognizable contempt in the author’s stance. He “does smile as a cool breeze”<sup>122</sup> at the observation of the people, perhaps in order to disguise his inner conflicts. He does not smile wanely, as the reader might suppose, but as a “cool breeze”<sup>123</sup> with a touch of Caribbean freshness.

Moving on to second part of the the third stanza, the poet further succumbs to outdated stereotypes and the role of a “palm tree king” that is assigned to him:

I is the palm tree king  
I know palm tree history  
like de palm o me hand  
In fact me navel string  
bury under a palm tree

Accepting his role of a “palm tree king”, he resolves to do what is expected of him, to satisfy the hunger of the native Britons to boost their multicultural experience as they

---

<sup>118</sup> John Agard, “Palm Tree King”, 36.

<sup>119</sup> John Agard, “Palm Tree King”, 36.

<sup>120</sup> John Agard, “Palm Tree King”, 36.

<sup>121</sup> Monica Manolachi, “Caribbean poetry in Britain, a Literary Site of Cultural Change”

<sup>122</sup> John Agard, “Palm Tree King”, 36.

<sup>123</sup> John Agard, “Palm Tree King”, 36.

are exposed to foreign culture. This stanza illuminates the poet's wit and his mastery of wordplay by employing two senses of the word palm: palm as a tree and palm as an inside part of hand that is part of an idiomatic expression: "I know palm tree history like de palm o me hand"<sup>124</sup> To reinforce his acceptance of the stereotypical role that he was assigned and his innate knowledge of palm trees, he further states that his "navel string" is buried "under a palm tree" by which he confirms his assumed strong connection to palm trees, similar as of the mother to her new born baby.

The final stanza creates a sense of uncertainty in the reader:

But before you say anything  
let I palm tree king  
give you dis warning  
Ah want de answer in metric  
it kind of rhyme with tropic  
Besides it sound more exotic<sup>125</sup>

The author is aiming to warn the people from something but the warning remains unspoken and is not uttered even at the end of the poem. However, the reader can observe another hint of the author's resignation to his assigned role in that he wants to "answer in metric"<sup>126</sup> which is another attempt to succumb to society's expectations of him, to adapt to European system. This act of conforming becomes his final stance.

## **5.2 Remember the Ship**

The poem "Remember the Ship" is centered around the poet's arrival to Britain and how his view of the new country is altered by the emotions he experiences at the time of the arrival. The poem is addressed to the people in the present-day British society and strongly appeals to create a new, multicultural identity within contemporary British society, identity that would be based on shared language and fundamental values that are respected by the people, these being the essential elements for effective communication between the people of different race and ethnic background.

In the first stanza, the author gives convincing evidences that he internalized his

---

<sup>124</sup> John Agard, "Palm Tree King", 36.

<sup>125</sup> John Agard, "Palm Tree King", 36.

<sup>126</sup> John Agard, "Palm Tree King", 36.

Britishness, proving his national belonging not just by his citizenship but rather in his mindset and shared language roots:

As citizen  
of the English tongue  
I say remember  
the ship  
in citizenship  
for language  
is the baggage  
we bring.

The authority of his utterance in the first two lines of the first stanza leaves no room for doubt that the poet is indeed the “citizen/of the English tongue,”<sup>127</sup> by which he suggests that he shares some of the aspects of common British identity with the rest of the British people – he is a speaker of the English tongue which is part of British national heritage. This is the one thing that binds the British people with him, even though he comes from a different cultural background.

The poet urges the British people to “remember/the ship/ in citizenship,”<sup>128</sup> the image of the ship being used here, according to Stein, carries “sufficient gravitas and indeed evokes the slave ship, the refugee’s boat, the exile’s vessel.”<sup>129</sup> The poet appears to imply that the people still retain fixed ideas of the origin of the black British people, viewing them merely as former slaves brought to England on slave ships.

When the poet states that “the language/ is the baggage/ we bring,”<sup>130</sup> he suggests that the indisputable asset that the black British immigrants have is the language they bring with them to their new country and which enables them to communicate with the native Britons.

A little further in the poem, the poet explains his purpose for being in Britain:

---

<sup>127</sup> John Agard, “Remember the Ship“ in *Writing Black Britain 1948-1988: An Interdisciplinary Anthology*, ed. James Procter (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2000), 258-259.

<sup>128</sup> John Agard, “Remember the Ship“, 258-259.

<sup>129</sup> Mark Stein, *Black British Literature: Novels of Transformation* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2004), 107.

<sup>130</sup> John Agard, “Remember the Ship“, 258-259.



I'm here to navigate –  
not flagellate  
with a whip of the past  
but again I say remember  
the ship  
in citizenship

In this stanza, the author explores what Stein refers to as “the concept of the navigating individual who does not use the past as a whip”<sup>131</sup> but rather seeks to give direction to those who want to follow them. As Stein further points out, “Agard’s ships navigate a continuous ocean that does not tolerate the strictures of poetics and politics,”<sup>132</sup> but rather seeks moves towards reconciliation, hoping for a safe passage and a safe arrival.

The poet again emphasizes that it is necessary for people to “remember/ the ship/ of citizenship”, citizenship not necessarily pertaining to national belonging but rather to common heritage that the former colonies share with Britain.

The end of the poem demonstrates the abolition of racial prejudices that is merely the poet’s dream. This constructs a sort of utopian future of complete absence of racial disparity and building bridges between people of different races and cultures in Britain:

and diversity  
shall sound its trumpet  
outside the bigot’s wall  
and citizenship shall be  
a call  
to kinship  
that knows  
no boundary  
of skin

The poet is dreaming of a land where diversity would be celebrated and valued instead

---

<sup>131</sup> Mark Stein, *Black British Literature: Novels of Transformation*, 107.

<sup>132</sup> Mark Stein, *Black British Literature: Novels of Transformation*, 107.

of being disparaged. The sound of the trumpet “outside the bigot’s wall”<sup>133</sup> is a reference to the biblical story that took place at the battle of Jericho in which the Israelites blew the trumpets and the walls of Jericho fell by mere sound of the trumpets which enabled the Israeli army to take over the city. The poet hopes for similar thing to happen in Britain. He hopes that soon the walls that separate the races will be broken down when the “diversity shall sound its trumpet.”<sup>134</sup> The Britain of the poet’s dreams “knows/ no boundary/ of skin.”<sup>135</sup>

The poem’s ending is highly optimistic about the future for Britain:

and the hearts offer its wide harbours  
for Europe’s new voyage  
to begin<sup>136</sup>

This last stanza of the poem further explores the utopian vision of united Britain sought by the author. The poet urges Europe to “offer its wide harbours” to the people who seek shelter and want to make their home in Britain and in one breath he asserts that it is the only way “for Europe’s new voyage/ to begin.” But it is not merely Europe who should reach out to them but the people themselves. He calls for acceptance that transcends the traditional boundaries in the society, as wide as the open sea.

### 5.3 Comparison of the poems

John Agard is a representative of second generation poets as he only moved to Britain when he was 28, he was at the time, in a similar way as James Berry, very well acquainted with the life in West Indies. Having grown up in the city of Georgetown in Guyana, his experience of living in Britain was severely fragmented by his memories of his home island, unlike the second generation of immigrants majority of whom, as Arana and Ramey have suggested, “knew no home other than Britain.”<sup>137</sup> His poetry exhibits a profound “sense of drawing upon two traditions simultaneously and in varying measure.”<sup>138</sup>

---

<sup>133</sup> John Agard, “Remember the Ship“, 258-259.

<sup>134</sup> John Agard, “Remember the Ship“, 258-259.

<sup>135</sup> John Agard, “Remember the Ship“, 258-259.

<sup>136</sup> John Agard, “Remember the Ship“, 258-259.

<sup>137</sup> Lauri Ramey, “Contemporary Black British Poetry” in *Black British Writing*, ed. R. Victoria Arana and Lauri Ramey (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 119.

<sup>138</sup> Ian Dieffenthaler, *Snow on Sugarcane: The evolution of West Indian Poetry in Britain*, 15

This is manifested especially in the first poem where there are slight indications of Jamaican Patois even though it is mixed up with “standardized” English. This gives the reader of the dual identity that was very commonly manifested in the poetry of second immigration poets. The use of Jamaican Patois spelling suggests that he questions the established rules of both the language and the country, for instance smooth speech and stiffness of manners, and contrasts them with vigorous and cheerful realities of the Caribbean region. The second poem, on the other hand, is written entirely in standard British English which suggests that the author sees no other choice but to adapt and follow the rules of the country that he lives in and its rules of language use.

The two poems are similar in that both offer the glimpse into the poet’s experience as an immigrant in a very different setting from his country of origin. Both poems illuminate the hardships faced by the immigrants in Britain. “Palm Tree King” explores the issue of race-related prejudices that ultimately subside within British society and are too embedded to be fully eradicated. The poet further examines the dangers of holding onto such stereotypes, various ways in which the evaluation of the people is impaired by such stereotyping and it also sheds light on people’s unwillingness to learn from the other. The poet is reluctant to succumb to the norm and most importantly, to people’s expectations of him which serves to create great pressure on people to redefine their fixed ideas about his race.

This is also a prominent issue in the second poem, “Remember the Ship.” This poem was written much later, in 1998, and the advancement of the author’s attitude towards the British society is evident. The poet, instead of growing bitter towards the society because of the stereotypes they hold, seeks to advance the reconciliation between the races, the common ground that binds the races together – in this case the language and shared culture. The poet appeals to the people to realize the benefits of cultural and racial diversity in the society. Towards the end of the poem, the author expresses his hope to see a united Britain that does not create boundaries between the people of different skin colour and instead finds ways to build bridges.

## CONCLUSION

Poetry of the West Indian immigrants who journeyed to Britain displays subtle differences regarding the poetic style of the authors as well as variations in language use and attitude towards the mainstream society. Careful examination of the individual poems, however, also shows numerous similarities. These similarities reach far beyond the shared cultural heritage of the islands in the British West Indies and their historical resemblance. They reflect on their shared experiences of being treated unjustly, oppressed, discriminated against and stereotyped because of their skin color. Their poetry also offers glimpse into their life as they navigate through the maze of living in a new country. The poems I have selected for the purpose of this thesis were written by James Berry, Benjamin Zephaniah and John Agard.

The thesis has been divided into two parts. The first part was devoted to providing historical background for the West Indian immigration to Britain. Firstly, the origins of the West Indian immigration were examined along with the root causes that pushed the early immigrants out of their homeland. Furthermore, the thesis explored the relationship between the Second World War and its impact on the British Empire and how it was linked with the West Indian immigration. The remainder of the first part of the thesis is divided into the arrival of the Empire Windrush which was one of the most significant moments in the post-war history of the West Indian immigration and, consequently, the aftermath of the ship's arrival since which the immigrants had to grapple with several problems including housing discrimination and issues which resulted in many race-related riots and conflicts in London and other places all over Britain.

The second part focused on analyzing the individual poems by the above stated authors. It was aimed at how their immigrant experience was depicted in their poetry and, in addition to that, how the experience of the first generation of West Indian immigrants was different from that of the second generation. The poems will be analysed in the next sections.

The first three poems that were analysed in the thesis were poems by James Berry. The poems carry the themes of pining for home and the immigrants's confusion as the world that they were familiar with, the fond memories of their homeland, are confronted with the reality and sights of the new countries and the practical issues that they have to solve. This is evident especially in the poem "Migrant in London" which,

however, deals mostly with the emotional aspects of the immigrant experience, unlike the second Berry's poem to be analyzed, "Beginning in the City, 1948" which was focused more on practical matters related to living in a new country, such as finding suitable housing. The author depicts the great expectations that the immigrants are filled with and how they were often disillusioned by the atmosphere in the city and the attitude of the people.

The third Berry's poem reflects on what is a recurrent theme in West Indian poetry, the racial stereotypes that the mainstream society has affixed to black British people as well as covert hypocrisy of the mainstream British society which is often unwilling to obtain all the information about them, although they come to identify themselves as advocates for racial equality. Despite things not being in his favour, the author holds no visible grudge for the people and instead attempts to find common ground amidst the two diverse traditions.

Subsequently, the poetry of Benjamin Zephaniah was examined. Although he holds a similarly, if not more prominent, role in the field of performance poetry, he also published several collections of poems in printed form. Much of his poems offer musings on the life of members of the black community in Britain, highlighting the social and political issues that they face such as injustice and discrimination based on race which persists in the British society and is often neglected and avoided. These themes are also reflected in the poems analysed, most prominently in the poem "Death of Joy Gardner" which expresses the author's anger over the use of often unnecessary violence against the black members of the British society and the fact that the society is blind to the problem and reluctant to take measures to prevent these things from happening.

The second Zephaniah's poem to be discussed was "No Problem", which, unlike "Death of Joy Gardner", adopts a more conciliatory tone. It presents a challenge to traditional attitudes and stereotypical views of the mainstream British society. The author aims mainly to build greater knowledge about the black community and, similarly as James Berry, to stress the importance of establishing common ground and learning from each other which is likely to be the only way how to see the achievements.

Lastly, two poems by John Agard were introduced to explore which aspects of the immigrant experience, if closely examined, can be discerned in contemporary West Indian- British poetry. In his poems, Agard tackles the issues of stereotypes which is

most closely observed in the poem “Palm Tree King”. Apart from the superficial nature of the stereotypes that the people latch onto and that prevent them from seeing the people as they are, the poet discovers the risk of succumbing to such stereotypical views and acting in accordance with the society’s expectations. The poet indicates that many of the victims of stereotypes resort to conformity and peaceful resignation because they have no other choice.

The poem “Remember the Ship”, on the other hand, displays the advancement in the author’s attitude towards the society, a sense of optimism about the future of race relations in Britain. He rests on the conviction that the rigid race boundaries that persist in Britain have the potential to be transgressed, though in today’s circumstances, it appears to be a mere utopia. This consensus is built upon similar building blocks as in the poems by the previously discussed authors – finding a common ground, in Agard’s case shared language and culture.

As follows from the individual analysis, the poems, although written by authors who belong to different generations of West Indian immigrants and have different experience of living in Britain, exhibit striking similarities. The poems of the second generation immigrants in general could be said to reflect a lesser degree of influence by the culture of their home country. Benjamin Zephaniah, for instance, although he spent a number of years of his childhood in Jamaica, lacked more intensive contact with his parents’ country of origin and his Jamaican roots altogether.

On the other hand, the poets of the first generation such as James Berry and John Agard, having spent a significant part of their life in West Indies, exhibit a greater transnational ties with their homeland. Their life in Britain reveals profound influence by the retrieved memories of their homeland. Their poems reflect on the emotional confusion of the people who were born outside Britain and now get accustomed to living in a different country. Their poems capture how the memories of their home intermingle with their present setting as well as their inability to let go of the memories.

The comparison between the two generations of the West Indian immigrants further contemplates the similarity of the two generations of immigrants in terms of grappling the issue of racial stereotypes. This issue is prolifically explored by West Indian poets, regardless of which immigrant group they belong to.

However, unlike the foreign-born generation which appears to have adopted an attitude of passive resistance and seeking a common ground that serves as the basis for effective communication with people of a different race, the second generation actively

resists and rejects the stereotypes and challenges the mainstream society to change their mindset and attitude and shift their attention towards the real people and their stories.

## RESUMÉ

Tato bakalářská práce pojednává o problematice přistěhovalectví ve Velké Británii a jeho dopadech na život a tvorbu básníků, kteří se do Velké Británie přistěhovali z ostrovů Západní Indie, patřící v koloniálním období pod britskou správu. Cílem této práce je přiblížit čtenáři přistěhovalecké zkušenosti průvodně západoindických básníků, jak se v jejich tvorbě promítají s přistěhovalectvím nejúžeji spjaté prožitky s důrazem na srovnání prožitků příslušníků první generace s druhou generací přistěhovalců a jejich mírou integrace do britské společnosti. Básně, které jsou předmětem zkoumání, byly napsány autory Jamesem Berrym, Benjaminem Zephaniahem a Johnem Agardem.

Hlavní část této práce začíná seznámením čtenáře s historickým kontextem přistěhovalectví do Velké Británie. Vlna přistěhovalectví byla podpořena zejména poválečným vývojem britské ekonomiky, která se potýkala se stagnací v důsledku nedostatku pracovní síly. K řešení této situace přispělo přijetí Zákona o britské národnosti (British Nationality Act), který vstoupil v platnost v roce 1948. V tomtéž roce připlula do Tilbury loď Empire Windrush, která symbolizovala začátek pozvolné proměny charakteru britské společnosti a kultury ze zastaralé tradice v novou multikulturní společnost. Přistěhovalci hledali zejména únik z bezútešné situace na západoindických ostrovech, které v důsledku ekonomické destabilizace neposkytovaly velké možnosti obživy. Po příjezdu do Británie však byli přistěhovalci konfrontováni s realitou rasové diskriminace, se kterou se setkávali při hledání ubytování a rasistickými projevy, které později vyústily v osobní útoky a násilné rasové konflikty.

Na tuto kapitulu dále navazuje nejrozsáhlejší část této práce, zabývající se rozбором tvorby již zmíněných autorů. Tato analýza je koncipovaná tak, že první část každé kapitoly je tvořena biografickými údaji autorů, pozornost je věnována především jejich původu a tématům, kterými se zabývali ve své tvorbě a které úzce souvisí s jejich vlastní přistěhovaleckou zkušeností.

Dále jsou zmíněny také odlišnosti literární kariéry jednotlivých autorů. Autory zkoumané v této práci dělí často i několik desítek let, v jejichž průběhu přišli do Británie, přesto jejich tvorba vykazuje podobné znaky. Tvorbou autorů patřících k první generaci se prolínají dva kulturní světy, které nejsou od sebe zřetelně oddělené – vzpomínky na jejich rodnou zemi, ve kterých jsou stále zakotveni, a reálný svět,



realita země, ve které nyní žijí. Toto prolínání je vyjádřeno, kromě vizuálních vjemů typických pro jejich rodné prostředí (například výjevů palem, procházení se po písku a mořského pobřeží), také směsí fonetických rysů jamajské angličtiny a standardní britské angličtiny, které se s postupnou integrací do společnosti sjednocují. Naopak příslušníci druhé generace přistěhovalců, zastoupeni Benjaminem Zephaniahem, v důsledku menšího vystavení vlivům kultury domovské země nejsou ovlivněni prolínáním dvou světů a jejich vědomí identity a náležitosti k národnostní skupině je tudíž jasněji vymezeno.

Dalším prvkem přistěhovalecké zkušenosti je rasová diskriminace a stereotypy v zobrazování černochů, které ovlivňují postoj britské společnosti k západoindickým přistěhovalcům. Tímto tématem se zabývají všichni zmínění autoři. Co odlišuje jednotlivé generace přistěhovalců, je přístup k těmto projevům. Zatímco příslušníci první generace se pokouší hledat způsoby, jak dosáhnout dialogu smíření mezi lidmi různých ras a ustupuje kultuře společnosti a často se uchylují ke konformismu (což je jev, který vyjadřuje John Agard, jehož protagonista volí pasivní odpor a podvoluje se obecným stereotypům o sobě samém). Příslušníci druhé generace přistěhovalců se naopak vůči stereotypům ostře vymezují kvůli jejich zjednodušující povaze a apeluje na změnu postojů ve společnosti a na větší ochotu vnímat se navzájem a učit se jeden od druhého. Zatímco příslušníci první generace mají sklony přehodnocovat své postoje ve snaze integrovat se do většinové společnosti, příslušníci druhé generace odmítají konformitu společnosti a jevy, které se konformitě podobají.

Závěrem každého rozboru je porovnání jednotlivých básní a jejich odlišností. Toto porovnání se zaměřuje na to, jak se časový odstup mezi jednotlivými básněmi promítá do postojů autorů vůči společnosti a jakým způsobem je reflektována fáze přistěhovalectví, ve které se autor v daném momentu nachází. U všech autorů se s odstupem času projevuje větší smířlivost vůči společnosti a ochota dosáhnout alespoň částečného konsenzu.

## 8 BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Agard, John. *Mangoes and Bullets*. London: Serpent's Tail, 1991.
- d'Aguiar, Fred. "A Theory of Caribbean Aesthetics." *Anglophonia - French Journal of English studies: Divergences et Convergences* 21 (2007): 97.
- Aldred, Joe. *Sisters with Power*. London: Continuum, 2000.
- Anwar, Muhammad. *Race and Politics: Ethnic Minorities and the British Political system*. New York: Routledge, 2010.
- Appiah, Anthony and Henry Louis Gates. *Africana: The Encyclopedia of the African and African American Experience*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.
- Barczewski et al., *Britain since 1688: A Nation in the World*. New York: Routledge, 2015.
- Baugh, Edward. "A History of Poetry", in *A History of Literature in the Caribbean*, ed. A. James Arnold. Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2001.
- Berry James. *News from Babylon: The Chatto Book of Westindian-British Poetry*. London: Hogarth Press, 1984.
- Berry, James. *Windrush Songs*. Northumberland: Bloodaxe Books, 2007.
- Braithwaite, E. R. Preface in Onyekachi Wambu (ed.), *Empire Windrush: Fifty Years of Writing about Black Britain*, ed. Victor Gollanez, 1998.
- Brown, Stewart. "Dub Poetry: Selling Out". *Poetry Wales* 22, no. 2 (1987) 53-54.
- Creswell Durant, "Colours" in *Snow on Sugarcane: The Evolution of West Indian Poetry in Britain*, ed. Ian Dieffenthaler. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2009.
- Dieffenthaler, Ian. *Snow on Sugarcane: The evolution of West Indian Poetry in Britain*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009.
- Donnell, Alison. *Companion to Contemporary Black British Culture*. New York: Routledge, 2002.
- Dawes, Kwame. "Too black, too strong." *World Literature Today* 21 (2002): 159.
- Flajšarová, Pavlína. "No Matter How Long the Night, the Day is Sure to Come: Differences, Diversity and Identities in Caribbean-British Poetry since 1945." *American and British Studies Annual* 5 (2012): 23.
- Gordon-Carter, Glynne. *An Amazing Journey: The Church of England's Response to*

- Institutional Racism* (London: Church House Publishing, 2003), 8.
- Habekost, Christian. "Cross-Cultural Alliances: New Developments in Dub Poetry." In *Us/The: Translation, Transcription and Identity in Post-Colonial Literary Cultures* ed. Gordon Collier. Amsterdam, Atlanta: Rodopi, 1992.
- Hansen, Randall. *Citizenship and Immigration in Post-war Britain: The Institutional Origins of a Multicultural Britain*. New York, Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Harris, Clive. "Post-war Migration and the Industrial Reserve Army." In *Inside Babylon: The Caribbean diaspora in Britain*, ed. Winston James and Clive Harris. London: Verso, 1993.
- Innes, C. L. *The Cambridge Introduction to Postcolonial Literatures in English*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- "Interview with Benjamin Zephaniah" Accessed April 2nd, 2016.  
<http://ro.uow.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1394&context=kunapipi>.
- James, Winston. "Post-war Migration and the Industrial Reserve Army", *The Caribbean diaspora in Britain*, ed. Winston James and Clive Harris. London: Verso, 1993.
- MacPhee, Graham. Introduction to *Postwar British Literature and Postcolonial Studies*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2011.
- Manolachi, Monica. "Caribbean poetry in Britain, a Literary Site of Cultural Change." *Studia UBB Philologia LVIII* 3 (2013): 175.
- Mills, Heather. "A Life Without Joy." *The Guardian*, accessed April 4<sup>th</sup>,  
<http://www.theguardian.com/celldeaths/article/0,2763,195387,00.html>
- McRae, John and Ronald Carter. *The Routledge Guide to Modern English Writing: Britain and Ireland*. London: Routledge, 2004.
- Persoon, James and Robert R. Watson. *Encyclopedia of British poetry*. New York: Infobase publishing, 2015.
- Pollard, Stephen. *Ten Days that Changed the Nation: The Making of Modern Britain*. London: Simon & Shuster UK Ltd., 2009.
- Procter, James (ed). *Writing Black Britain 1948-1988: An Interdisciplinary Anthology*. Manchester: Manchester UP, 2000.
- Ramey, Lauri. "Contemporary Black British Poetry." In *Black British Writing*, ed. R. Victoria Arana and Lauri Ramey. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004.
- Ray, Mohit K. *The Atlantic Companion to Literature in English*. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers & Distributors, 2007.

- Rieuwerts, Sigried. "‘We are Britain!’ Culture and Ethnicity in Benjamin Zephaniah’s Novels” in *Children’s literature in Second Language Education* ed. Janice Bland and Christina Lütge (New York, London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 129.
- Silvey, Anita. *Children’s books and Their Creators*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2002.
- Smith, Anna Marie. *New Right Discourse on Race and Sexuality: Britain, 1968-1990*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- Stade, George and Karen Karbiener. *Encyclopedia of British Writers, 1800 to the Present, 2nd ed.* New York: Facts on File, 2009.
- Stein, Mark. *Black British Literature: Novels of Transformation*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2004.
- Stratton, Jon. *When Music Migrates: Crossing British and European Racial Faultlines, 1945-2010*. New York: Ashgate Publishing, 2014.
- Styles, Morag and Beverly Bryan. "Diaspora consciousness: identity and exile in Caribbean British poetry." In *Teaching Caribbean Poetry* ed. Beverley Bryan and Morag Styles. London, New York: Routledge, 2014.
- Thomas-Hope, Elizabeth M. "Caribbean diaspora, The Inheritance of Slavery: Migration from the Commonwealth Caribbean." In *The Caribbean in Europe: Aspects of the West Indian Experience in Britain, France and the Netherlands*, ed. Colin Brock. London, New Jersey: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1986.
- Welsch, Sarah Lawson. "Generation One: Windrush: ‘But Let Me Tell You How This Business Begin.’" In *The Cambridge Companion to British poetry, 1945-2010*, ed. Edward Larrissy (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016).
- Winder, Robert. *Bloody Foreigners: The Story of Immigration to Britain*. London: Abacus, 2005.
- Witte, Rob. *Racist Violence and the State: A Comparative Analysis of Britain, France and the Netherlands*. New York: Routledge, 1996.
- Zephaniah, Benjamin. *Too Black, Too Strong*. Highgreen: Bloodaxe Books, 2001.
- Zephaniah, Benjamin. *Propa Propaganda*. Newcastle: Bloodaxe Books, 1997.

## **ANOTACE**

Příjmení a jméno: Vidašičová Barbora

Katedra: Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky

Název práce: Poezie západoindických přistěhovalců ve Velké Británii

Vedoucí práce: Mgr. David Livingstone, Ph.D.

Počet stran: 55

Klíčová slova: imigrace, Empire Windrush, Velká Británie, rasismus, James Berry, Benjamin Zephaniah, John Agard

Tato bakalářská práce pojednává o tradici poezie přistěhovalců ze západoindických ostrovů, konkrétně ve Velké Británii. První část si klade za cíl popsat jednotlivé přistěhovalcké vlny a zasadit je do historického kontextu. Největší pozornost je věnována poválečné éře přistěhovalců, zejména přistání lodi *Empire Windrush* a následkům tohoto historického momentu. Tato část se dále zaměřuje na problémy, se kterými se západoindičtí přistěhovalci v Británii nejčastěji setkávali. Druhá část práce se zaměřuje na jednotlivé básně západoindických autorů s cílem zjistit, jak se liší zkušenosti první a druhé generace přistěhovalců a jak jsou tyto zkušenosti reflektovány v tvorbě zástupců jednotlivých generací.

## ANNOTATION

Name: Vidašičová Barbora

Department: Department of English and American Studies

Title of the thesis: Poetry of West Indian Immigrants in Britain

Thesis supervisor: Mgr. David Livingstone, Ph.D.

Number of pages: 54

Keywords: immigration, Empire Windrush, Great Britain, racism, James Berry, Benjamin Zephaniah, John Agard

This bachelor's thesis deals with the tradition of West Indian immigration to Great Britain. The aim of the first part of the thesis is to describe the individual waves of immigration and place them into the historical context. Great attention is paid to the post-war era of the West Indian immigration, especially to the arrival of *Empire Windrush* and the impact of this historical moment. This part further examines the hardships that the West Indian immigrants most frequently encountered upon their arrival to Britain. The second part of the thesis presents the poems written by West Indian immigrants with the primary aim of exploring the differences between the experiences of the first and second generation of immigrants and how these experiences are reflected in their poetic work.