

THE DEPICTION OF MULTI-CULTURAL BRITAIN IN DAVID EDGAR'S PLAYING WITH FIRE

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Abstract

David Edgar is one of the most influential playwrights of the contemporary era who boldly had confronted the constrictions of multi-cultural societies scratching his name in the history of the socio-political playwrights. Multiculturalism is one of the visible phenomena in British society that captures various writers like David Edgar with its celebration of cultural segregation and fusion. The migration, political issues, and social fragmentation are factors that accelerated the increase and spread of this phenomena. This study on Edgar's most controversial play *Playing with Fire* (2005) because it tackles cultural and socio-political issues portraying realistic events and their effect on community who are living in multicultural societies such as Britain. This study is adopting the postcolonial frame by using the cultural concepts of Homi Bhabha such third space to view a new vision to the relation between culture and the construction of British society. This study poses the following question: Is it possible for the newcomers to integrate within the multicultural society such British society. As, this study draws a fact that cultural values of a specific community or person cannot be suddenly omitted but they can import more different traditions, beliefs, ideas and life style because each culture has capacity and flexibility to absorb new items.

Keywords: (David Edgar ,Multiculturalism , third space, Homi Bhabha , Playing with Fire).

تصوير بريطانيا متعددة الثقافة في مسرحية اللعب بالنار لديفيد اداكار

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الملخص

ديفيد اداكار هو احد الكتاب المسرحيين الاكثر تأثيرا في الفترة المعاصرة و الذي واجه قيود مجتمعات متعددة الثقافة بجرأة ،ناقشا اسمه في تأريخ الكتاب المسرحيين في المسرح الاجتماعي و السياسي. التعددية الثقافية هي احدى الظواهر البارزة في المجتمع البريطاني التي تستقطب مختلف الكتاب مثل ديفيد اداكار باحتفائها بالاختلاف و الانصهار الثقافي. الهجرة ،القضايا السياسية و التفتت الاجتماعي كلها عناصر أدت الى تسريع نمو و انتشار هذه الظاهرة.

الدراسة الحالية تتناول مسرحية اللعب بالنار و التي تعتبر من اكثر مسرحيات ديفيد اداكار جدلا لأنها تناولت قضايا ثقافية، اجتماعية و سياسية مصورتا احداثا حقيقية و تأثيرها على مجموعة من الناس الذين يعيشون في مجتمعات متعددة الثقافة مثل بريطانيا. و ان الدراسة الحالية تتبنى اطار ما بعد الاستعمارية عن طريق استخدام مفاهيم ثقافية لهومي بابا مثل مفهوم الفضاء الثالث و ذلك لعرض رؤية جديدة للعلاقة بين الثقافة و تركيب المجتمع البريطاني. و ان الدراسة الحالية تطرح السؤال الاتي: هل من الممكن على الوافدين الجدد ان يندمجوا في مجتمع متعدد الثقافة كالمجتمع البريطاني ؟ بالإضافة الى ذلك فإن الدراسة الحالية توضح حقيقة معينة و هي ان القيم الثقافية لمجموعة معينة او لأي شخص لا يمكن ان تحذف فجأة و لكن من الممكن استيراد تقاليد، اعتقادات ، افكار و انماط حياة مختلفة لان كل ثقافة تتمتع بالقابلية و المرونة على استيعاب مفردات جديدة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: (ديفيد اداكار، التعددية الثقافية، الفضاء الثالث، هومي بابا، اللعب بالنار).

Introduction

RD HISTORIAN. The truth is, every country is invented” (Edgar,2008,p.p.59-60"

Multiculturalism is a presence of different cultures in one society that produces cultural, linguistic and religious misunderstandings that pervades clashes among communities. The inability to assimilate in a specific conversation contributes to the increase of tension throughout these communities. The disintegrating is institutional not personal that completely impact the construction of the society. (cattle,2001)

Everyone works in cultural field agrees that third spaces will be created when different groups share unfamiliar experience with each other and such kind of spaces lead most of people to disconnect parts of their cultural identity from what they have inherited from new culture.(Edgar,2005,p.151)

The term 'multicultural' has come to define both a society that is particularly diverse, usually as a result of immigration, and the politics necessary to manage such a society. It has come to embody, in other words, both a description of a society and a prescription for managing it. Multiculturalism is both the problem and the solution – and when the problem and the solution are one and the same we can only be dealing with political snake oil.(Malik,2010,p.70)

Multicultural societies face two paradoxical demands and needs for creating a political frame that enables them to reconcile these demands and needs in an acceptable manner. The multicultural society should reinforces the sense of unity and the sense of belonging among its citizens as otherwise it will be disable to live as a united society that able to take and enforce decisions in order to control conflicts. Conflicting seems greater in the diversity in one society and such kind of society feels threatened by

lack of cohesion, lack of confidence and readiness to accept and live within this society. (Parekh,2001)

The demands of diversity cannot be disregarded by a multicultural society. Diversity cannot be wished away or suppressed without an intolerable level of coercion, and frequently not even then. It is by definition an unavoidable aspect of its collective existence. Moreover, because people are bonded to and influenced by their culture, and because respect for it is intimately linked to self-respect, People's culture and cultural community are entitled to the same fundamental respect as their fellow humans. In addition to gaining their loyalty, respect for their culture also helps them integrate into society at large and gives them the courage and confidence to engage with people from different backgrounds. As a valuable collective asset, cultural diversity is also desirable for society at large.(Ibid)

Minority groups are putting more and more pressure on modern societies to accept their cultural differences and acknowledge their identity. Although this is frequently referred to as the multiculturalism challenge, the term "multicultural" encompasses a wide range of cultural pluralisms, each of which presents unique difficulties. Minorities are integrated into political communities in a number of ways, ranging from the voluntary immigration of individuals and families to the conquest and colonization of formerly independent societies. The characteristics of minority groups and the kind of relationship they wish to have with the broader society are impacted by these variations in the methods of incorporation. Therefore, generalizations regarding the objectives or outcomes of multiculturalism can be highly deceptive. In fact, this fault plagues a large portion of the public discourse surrounding multiculturalism. For instance, proponents of multiculturalism argue that this concern for integration is a reflection of cultural imperialism, while opponents frequently claim that it ghettoizes minorities

and prevents them from integrating into mainstream society. These accusations are both oversimplified, ignoring the distinctions between minority groups and misinterpreting their true intentions.(Kymlicka,1995)

When formerly autonomous, geographically concentrated cultures are incorporated into a broader state, cultural diversity results. These assimilated cultures, sometimes referred to as "national minorities," usually want to continue existing as separate societies alongside the majority culture and call for different kinds of autonomy or self-government in order to do so. Additionally, immigration by individuals and families leads to cultural diversity. These immigrants frequently form loose associations that may be referred to as "ethnic groups." Usually, they want to be accepted as complete members of society and to blend in with it. Their goal is not to become a distinct and independent nation alongside the mainstream society in order to create a larger society, even though they frequently strive for greater recognition of their ethnic identity. These are not natural laws; they are merely broad trends. As that proceed, each of these broad categories will require additional clarification and qualification. However, without seeing how the historical integration of minority groups shapes their collective institutions, identities, and aspirations, one cannot begin to comprehend and assess the politics of multiculturalism. The coexistence of multiple nations within a state where "nation" refers to a historical community that is more or less institutionally complete, occupies a specific territory or homeland, and shares a unique language and culture is one source of cultural diversity. In this sociological sense, a nation is closely associated with the concept of a people or culture. In fact, these ideas are frequently described in relation to one another. Therefore, a country with multiple nations is a multination state rather than a nation-state, and the smaller cultures make up "national minorities." As happens when one cultural community is invaded and subjugated by another, or when it is relinquished from one imperial power to another, or when its homeland is

overrun by colonizing settlers, the integration of various nations into a single state may be involuntary. However, when various cultures decide to unite in a federation for their mutual advantage, a multination state may also emerge voluntarily. (Ibid)

Conceptual Framework

Homi Bhabha's creative concepts continue to influence our understanding of and approach to navigating the challenges of cultural heterogeneity in the modern world. Renowned postcolonial thinker Homi K. Bhabha's work has greatly affected cultural studies, particularly with regard to diversity and identity. The concept of multiculturalism, the development of new cultural forms by the mixing of several traditions and identities is among his main contributions. Bhabha challenges the strict boundaries between cultures, arguing that identities are not fixed but rather continuously shaped through encounters with the "other". Homi Bhabha underlines in the framework of cultural diversity the need of appreciating the mobility and variety of cultural identities. Assimilationist models and oversimplified ideas of multicultural cohabitation are both criticized by Bhabha, who contends that true cultural interaction takes place in what he refers to as the Third Space, a space of translation and negotiation where new identities and meanings are created. (Bhabha,1994)

Bhabha's ideas promote a better comprehension of the ways in which language, history, and power shape cross-cultural relationships. He considers culture and life style to be dynamic and interrelated rather than separate or essentialised. His writings demonstrate how intercultural communication may foster creativity and change (Rutherford, 1990)

In the case when the colonial power pledges to translate the cultural identity of the colonized people who often symbolize "the other" within a single society is described as multiculturalism, according to Bhabha.

Regardless of the genuineness of essentialist cultural identity, Bhabha contends that new identities emerge from the blending of aspects of colonizers and colonized people. As a result, it may be observed that colonizers' lifestyles influence colonized people, and vice versa. The concept of "Third space" serves nations that avoid the eternal belief of antagonistic binarisms. In such societies that adopt multiple languages, races, political norms, religions, and ways of living, multiculturalism acts as a counterbalance to essentialism and fixed properties, encouraging the creation of a new space known as the third space. (Papastergiadis, 1997,p.33)

David Edgar as socio-political Playwright

David Edgar was born in Britain (1948) who becomes a playwright after working in journalism. He can be considered as one of the greatest postmodernist British writers because of his artistic literary as well as his writings for television and radio. He has his own imprint in contemporary British theatre and in presenting of socio-political topics in journal articles, newspapers and other publications. In addition to giving frequent public speeches before a range of organizations, such as the Commission on Racial Equality, the Royal Society of Arts, Manufacturing and Commerce, the Fabian Society, and the annual Marxism conference, David Edgar has maintained a high profile as a public intellectual by delving deeply into a wide range of political issues through newspaper opinion pages, journal essays, and book reviews. David Edgar has therefore had a significant role in British public life, especially in respect to the interactions between the arts, the government, and society, much beyond his own creative output. In addition to continuing to create a theatre that reflects the social dilemmas of modernity as they have evolved from the Second World War to the new century, David Edgar was already known for staging the paradoxes that he and his generation were presently experiencing. (Reinelt & Hewitt, 2011)

David Edgar is a master political writer in that he tackles the most fundamental issues of how people organize and run their lives in contemporary society in all of Edgar's plays, novels, and other works. Issues like the link between politics, governance, and the state, the challenges of democratic practice, and disagreements over what constitutes the public interest are all covered in the majority of his plays. However, each performance offers viewers a unique experience with the fictionalized reality of these puzzles and the people that inhabit and operate inside them. (Ibid)

Playing with Fire as a critique of multicultural Britain

Playing with fire can be considered as a political critique of British multicultural policies because its two acts prefaced with two political quotations I want the message to local government to be loud and clear. A changing role is part of your heritage. The people's needs require you to change again so that you can play Your part in helping to modernize Britain and, in Partnership with others, deliver the policies on which this government was elected. If you accept this challenge, you will not find us wanting. You can look forward to an enhanced role and new Powers. Your contribution will be recognized. Your status enhanced. If you are unwilling or unable to work to the modern Agenda then the government will have to look to other partners to take on your role (Playing with Fire, p. 6)

In one hand this outset suggests David Edgar's attempt to explore the satisfaction and acceptance of the British society by mentioning such kind of well-known and important character in the British society like Tony Blair. However, this opening alludes to the complex interrelationship between local and national politics. This relationship focusses on a significant problem facing British society: multiculturalism, which was embraced by the new Labour administration in 1997 as part of its main vision for a contemporary Britain. In 2001, riots broke out in the northern

British cities of Burnley, Oldham, and Bradford as a result of racial tensions between white working class groups and ethnic minority communities. The disturbances are raising questions about the successes of integration, assimilation, and diversity. In addition to the equality and inclusivity that aim to anatomise the ideas of New Labour. By portraying a true town from a fictitious distance, *Play with Fire* examines the strained relationship between the government and the populace. (Edgar,2005,p.146)

In playing with fire, Edgar inspired by the political event of Britain in 2001 when race riots broke out in some northern towns like Bradford ,Oldham and Burnley that were not much multicultural and concentrated Muslim communities of different origins such Pakistani and Bangladeshi which felt that they were threatened by far-right groups which grasped increasing dominance over poor white labour –class communities. In each once, this threat triggered battles between the police and young Asian workers seeking to defend their territories. As a result of these events, the communities are divided into two groups which are some speak of parallel lives, and others use the word “apartheid” which were created by adopting some racial housing practices in the past, but unfortunately these practices have now solidify into some self-segregated enclaves. (Ibid)

Playing with fire can be considered as an exploration of shifting political ideologies and racial tensions in Britain during the period of post war. In which David Edgar explores big issues on stages of theatres in Britain. *Playing with fire* begins with Alex Clifton who belongs to the white middle class and works as an officer in the labour government and she has sent to Wyverdal (northern city in Britain)in order to solve the financial and social problems there. Meanwhile she met Howard Jones who is the leader of local labour council, and the struggle of language and values started between them because each one of them has his own strategic plans and policies agendas.

ALEX. OK. We had this joke about our tactics with the Council. We said, we'd try the Polish Strategy and if that didn't work we'd have to go for the Czechoslovak Option even if that risked the Indochina Syndrome, if not worse. But of course in all those cases we were talking about them - the Council - as a plucky little country, standing up what they saw as right against the threat of having what another country wanted dumped on them from a great height. So what did that make us? (Playing with Fire, p. 7)

Playing with fire provides readers and audiences with critical examination of the confrontation that inherent in fulfillment the multicultural policies, shedding light on how these policies are performed.(Billington,2005)

Edgar's Playing with fire displays a probing examination of multicultural society in contemporary Britain, set against the racial tensions ,political manipulation and social inequality. By describing the society of Wyverdale, David Edgar investigates the political ideologies surrounding rejection, assimilation, diversity and national identity.

LEENA. Well, diversity includes racism awareness, obviously, but you'd want to look at other things. For example, in your case, the staggeringly low number of black and minority ethnic people in the Council workforce. And as language plays a part in that, I rang your Human Resources department-I think you call it ' personnel'-and asked if there was anyone who spoke Punjabi. And they reacted as if I'd asked if they could put me through to the planet Zog. But then, when I popped into Housing, it was made crystal clear to me by a very friendly woman that I would be much happier not living on the Morrison estate, which may of course be true. And wouldn't it be nice-I don't know, a Mandela Street? Or

a grant to the Pakistani Welfare? Just something to acknowledge there's an ethnic population here at all?(Playing with fire,p.47)

David Edgar's *Playing with fire* has two functions, firstly it's a critique of unstable citizenship and multiculturalism in British society. Secondly it's a reflection on the tensions that may be formed when cultural diversity meets with economic marginalization. As a result a lot of contradictions and challenges will be inherent in such kind of societies what looks like a topical satire of contrasting attitudes between north and south, old and new labour that becomes a severe play about multicultural Britain, in which racial tensions are soar and good intentions have fatal consequences.(Edgar,2005)

Conclusion

In David Edgar's *Playing with Fire*, diversity is portrayed as a contentious and troublesome topic in modern-day Britain. Instead of providing easy solutions, the play makes viewers face the challenges of building a society that is really inclusive. David Edgar criticizes the shortcomings of government policies as well as the limitations of multiculturalism as a unifying national concept through its incisive political criticism and realistic depiction of ethnic and cultural problems. A variety of characters from David Edgar's *Playing with Fire* reflect various viewpoints on politics, diversity, and ethnicity. Every figure is designed to draw attention to the conflicts that exist in a varied society between ethnic identity, local administration, and a struggle for power. The play's characters exhibit a distinct viewpoint on multiculturalism. These include individuals trapped between several cultural identities, immigrant leaders who feel alienated from mainstream politics, and white politicians who find it difficult to comprehend the demands of diverse populations. David Edgar effectively conveys the annoyances of the ethnic minority, who believe they are being treated more like political puppets than like people with true agency, and

the white working class, who see themselves as losing their cultural domination.

One of the key confrontations in the play arises from the way political party exploits racial tensions in order to maintain power. Both white working-class communities, who feel excluded, and ethnic minority groups, who believe the policies are insufficient or dishonest, oppose the Labour government's efforts to advance diversity and inclusion. Using this, David Edgar attacks both left-wing populism and demonstrates how politicians exploit identity politics to further their own agendas rather than actually tackling social injustices.

This study examines at the political aspects of multiculturalism in Britain, emphasizing how party politics, popular opinion, and governmental policies have influenced the country's stance on cultural diversity. Multiculturalism has evolved over the past several decades from a hailed paradigm of inclusiveness to a contentious political issue that is frequently placed within larger debates about social integration, immigration, and national security. As well as this study shows how changing political environments, especially in the post of 9/11 and Brexit, have resulted in greater assimilationist language and practices, even if political support for diversity was initially intended to advance equality and representation for minority populations. Social cohesion, British values and national identity have become more and more important to mainstream political parties, often at the expense of cultural diversity. Nonetheless, multiculturalism continues to have a significant impact on civic life, governance, and political discussions in Britain. The difficulty of handling multiculturalism in a free democracy is highlighted by the conflict between fostering unity and honoring variety. In summary, political institutions' capacity to promote inclusive governance, alleviate systemic injustices, and thwart the politicization of identity will determine the future of multiculturalism in

Britain. Therefore maintaining social cohesion in a varied and changing society requires a complex and progressive political strategy.

This study focusses on David Edgar's use of a variety of techniques to create his dramatic journey and the political discourse he intends to engage with his audience, as well as his use of *Playing with fire* to raise questions about the status of the nation. This play effectively participates in British public discussions around race, citizenship, and identity. This study also looks at how David Edgar modified the social realism theatrical style to deal with the conflicts, difficulties, and nuances of language, religion, and lifestyle in multicultural Britain. A society's culture is its own way of thinking and living. Multiculturalism, on the other hand, is exemplified by the blending of two or more cultures inside a single society, where they all share the experience of cultural discovery, resulting in the development of a third space with a distinct cultural identity .

The constraints of “multiculturalism” and struggle among "old" , "new" jobs which appear such a battle among local and federal governments are two significant political concerns that are resolved in *Playing with Fire*. The last scene in the first act employed the tone. When the Holocaust memorial service became unsightly a few months later, Alex, a white woman in her thirties, deals with a male working committee (which only has two non-white members) and uses logical arguments and crafty plans to promote change. This first part of the old song is mildly ironic. public was notified that UK had used young Asians in an event that resulted in the death of a young white man. These kinds of incidents are recalled in Edgar's *Playing with Fire* in order to highlight the limitations of multiculturalism and immigration restrictions. As a result, one may view these events as a prelude to "The Brexit," or Britain's exit from the European Union, which will surely have a detrimental impact on immigrants' present and future. Many immigrants have left Europe,

including Britain, for a variety of reasons, most notably political, cultural, and economic ones .

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