

Black Experiences in Drury's *Fairview*: Identity and Racial Tensions

¹Redha Sultan Kareem, ²Latifa Ismaeel Jabboury

^{1,2} Department of English Language and Literature, College of Arts, University of Mustansiriyah, Baghdad, Iraq.

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Corresponding author:

reda_sultan@uomustansiriyah.edu.iq

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Abstract

This paper considers how black experiences are formed by identity and racial tensions reflected in the play "*Fairview*" by Jackie Sibblies Drury. The concept of identity will be the starting point of the discussion in relation to membership of social groups. The paper thereafter turns to the question of identity, mainly with respect to ethnicity, gender, and race, showing how the whole understanding of African-American culture and literature has been couched within the question of identity because of historical segregation and oppression. The study is built on three axis; the first axe shows the necessity for white people to deal with racism. The second axe concerns the power complexities with white viewership and the need for white creatives to realize their blind spot. The third axis examines the meta-theatrical elements of the play that present a critique toward traditional theatrical representations of black experiences. The paper will then turn to an examination of the multifaceted themes of identity and racial tensions in the play: what exactly is the difficulty that the characters have in reconciling real and perceived identities, and just how far Keisha goes in asking her audience to switch racial roles. The paper brings out the minute details of the rich complexities surrounding identity and racial dynamics expounded in the play.

Keywords: Identity, Drury, racial tensions, black experiences, *Fairview*

Introduction

This paper discusses how *Jackie Sibblies Drury's* critically acclaimed play *Fairview* represents identity and racial tensions through the deconstruction of layered notions of sameness and difference. The analysis examines the ways in which the play engages with whiteness, spectatorship, and the meta-theatrical portrayal of black experiences, focusing on how racial identity is socially constructed and contested. Through its characters' struggle to reconcile their authentic selves, *Fairview* reveals the fluidity of identity while examining the intersections of race, class, and power for new insights into identity politics and systemic oppression. The play challenges traditional notions of spectatorship by implicating audiences in the machinery of racial surveillance and forcing them to confront their biases, leaving viewers to grapple with deep questions about selfhood in a twenty first century context. Ultimately, this analysis will demonstrate that *Fairview* is a provocative exploration of representation and belonging, pushing forward important dialogues on race and identity in contemporary society.

The word 'identity' comes from the Latin idiom, meaning "the same." This term has a twofold meaning and has come to represent both similarity and difference. Fundamentally, identity is what tells one member apart from others. Besides, the term 'identity' refers to membership in a particular social group. There are therefore many forms of identity, such as national identity, cultural identity, and gender identity, among others, all relating to shared characteristics among people (Buckingham, 2007, p.1).

Identity concept usually associates to the studies about ethnicity, gender, and race. However, it was not discovered before 1950 although the German psychoanalyst *Erik H. Erikson* (1902- 1994) first opened up the thought after the concept careerist got hold of the idea. Erikson defined 'identity' in his 1950 book *Childhood and Society* as consideration of identity only crops up when there is a crisis in society. This takes place in a nation that desires to establish a collective identity from its varied diversified immigrant backgrounds (Petersen, 1982, p.57).

Identity has certainly become a generic concept that defines a wide range of trains of thoughts in contemporary settings, more so in the light of the effects of globalization on society. As *Suman Gupta* puts it, the term 'identity' is indeed in wide use in academic, media, and other discourses for a vast range of implied meaning that has not been explored before. The issue of identity raises concerns in some groups (Gupta, 2012, p.142).

Identity and racism have a complicated and nuanced relationship. A person's sense of identity can be profoundly impacted by racism, especially for those who are the targets of racist beliefs and actions. Racism can affect how people view themselves and their role in society by causing psychological distress, inferiority complexes, and feelings of alienation (Shalan, 2020, pp.69,70). Additionally, it can influence the cultural, social, and historical narratives of oppressed people, so forming their collective identity. Furthermore, because people may experience bias, discrimination, and stereotypes that negatively impact their self-esteem and general well-being, racism can obstruct the development of a positive and affirming identity. Essentially, racism has the power to significantly impact how both individual and community identities are formed, expressed, and experienced.

The understanding of African-American culture and literature has always revolved around the issue of identity. This has been greatly due to the historical segregation and oppression of the black community as a whole. That is, typically speaking, this search for a hazy sense of self is characterized by feelings of displacement, non-belonging, and a legitimate grappling with identity crisis. In turn, African-American playwrights men and women alike have an agenda: through their work, they wish to engender a sense of belonging and strong connection to black identity. This sense of belonging has been described as connected to the development of racial identity attitudes, a process sometimes referred to as psychological nigrescence (Garcia, 2007, p.114).

Black people suffered and were exploited as a result of slavery, which was portrayed in several literary works as an ideologically structured system of oppression that was maintained by white masters and mistresses (Hassan, 2022, p.46). The impact of slavery on the Black community's identity and fight for independence is illuminated by narratives that question social norms and reflect opposition to white nations' aggressiveness (Hassan, 2022, pp. 47,52). Slavery and racism have a complicated and oppressive relationship that has influenced Black people's identities and lives.

From the writings of *W.E.B. Du Bois*, in *The Souls of Black Folk* in (1903), obviously pervading discourse about the black race has been in the mainstream American discourse. In this seminal text, as *Du Bois* wrote a sense of contemporariness for blacks, especially with his astute contention that indeed the

greatest problem of the twentieth century would be that of racial oppression (Du Bois, 2015, p.15).

Materials And Methods

Themes of Identity and Racial Tensions Reflected in *Fairview*

In his article, "*Making Whiteness Visible and Felt in Fairview*, (2021) Michael Pearce delves to the root of the play written by Drury, solely *Fairview*. The core idea thus rotates around how the play arouses whiteness feelings in white viewers, consequent actions that come with anti-racist movements. Pearce places the play within the Black Lives Matter movement, examines Drury's theatre practice, and explores how white members of the audience responded to the 2019/2020 production at London's Young Vic Theatre. By incorporating critical whiteness scholarship with personal reflection, Pearce imbues the play with space for its impact on white viewers, while further investigating the complexities of white accountability struggles within the theater in speaking back to racism, and the opening for transformation. That is to say, the emotional and intellectual aspects of *Fairview* are brought sharply into view in this article, thereby going a long way toward furthering the already rich discussion about race, theater, and anti-racism activism (Pearce, 2021, pp.6,9).

In Drury's *Fairview*, Damon Krometis provides a thought-provoking examination of the issues and paradoxes that accrue in relation to white viewership in his 2022 article entitled "*Sitting on the Couch: The Dilemma of Spectatorship in Jackie Sibblies Drury's Fairview*". A white academic and director, he reflexively dissects his own interactions with three different productions of *Fairview*, reflecting on how these experiences unsettled his assumptions about authority in the theatre. In this political act, then, Krometis remains attuned to the possibility of an imbalanced power dynamic within his discourse. He further highlights the need for white creatives to recognize their blind spots and self-reflect amidst the culture of supremacy by whites. The article elaborates more on the subjective nature of the author's experiences and the complexities that come with racial identity. Krometis concludes by underscoring the need for further research into racial effect, racial surveillance, and racial viewership, insisting that the dismantling of the white gaze be initiated by whites themselves. Logically, the author provides a thought-provoking, reflective review of the play *Fairview*, which offers a richly informative insight into challenges and responsibilities connected with white viewers, and

complex power dynamics that the theater has structured around race(Krometis ,2022, pp.79,83).

In this article "*Persistence in and Persistence of Contemporary African American Drama*, 2021," *Raphaëlle Tchamitchian* closely examines *Jackie Sibblies Drury's Fairview*. The point of this analysis is that, from the beginning, while the play desires to seem traditional, well-structured, and oriented around a family dinner with the typical personages of a family, slowly it deconstructs all set trends, uncovering concealed complications. *Tchamitchian* also elaborates on the metatheatricity of this play, by which attention is paid to the performative nature of blackness, and a critique of the forms of classic theatricality for the representations they offer about black experiences. One key moment in the play is when there is an intervention in the set of relations between observer and object: the white audience is asked to stand up and change places with black actors, therefore reversing the existing power dynamic. The scene is very engaging to the audience and arouses critical thinking. *Tchamitchian* looks into the details regarding the structure, themes, and meta-theatrical elements of the play, and he does give a comprehensive review on *Fairview*. (Tchamitchian, 2021, pp.4,6).

Mack is totally feels there is a disconnection between his real identity and how others perceive him. He thinks some people perceive him as uninteresting and mundane, blind to the depth and complexity of his inner self. He feels his real essence-being bold, brave, and adventurous-is throttled by a façade of dullness and predictability. Though wanting to unleash their wild side, they cannot do anything because society holds them back with its expectations and constraints. This struggle is ultimately based on the fear of being judged, having limited opportunities of expressing themselves, or personal inhibitions that protect them from fully being themselves. It is very easy to imagine that this inner turbulence of their dynamic inner life in juxtaposition with their external image must cause them much distress. They want to bring these opposites together into wholeness and self-actualization. At their core, they feel misunderstood and so long to be validated as whom they really are without any need to compromise on any part of their being: " *Mack :Sometimes I think people think I'm boring, but actually, like my true self is this like wild person.*" (Act 2, p.44) He is therefore revealing the discrepancy between the real self and the expectation in other people's eyes. The concept of *Persona* refers to the external identity individuals present to society. Shaped by cultural norm and social expectations. This constructed identity does not always align with a person's true self . *Persona* describes the outer presentation of identity based on societal

norms and expectations. This outer presentation does not solely represent personal preference, but it also represents the negotiated identities within a specific cultural context. This means that one's persona is thus not an individual choice but also driven by pressures from the outside and the urge to fit into roles within society. In a nutshell, the persona symbolizes the deep interaction between personal expression and societal expectation, since people never stop readjusting their public image according to the influence from the other around them. It is fluid and dynamic, subject to changes through cultural turns of events, personal experiences, and the need for social approval.

The ability to view the concept of a person as flexible and multifaceted makes an understanding of the delicate balance between the individual freedom and the social harmony in shaping one's sense of self. The overall idea of persona is one that places much emphasis on the performative aspect of identity formation, whereby one is supposed to tread the fine line between authenticity and the need for social belonging (Noufi, 2023, p.2). A qualitative research study involving in-depth interviews with participants explored the perceived gap between their internal identity and external self presentation. They spoke of how sometimes they had to cover an angry feeling with a professional attitude on outside places. This struggle of real feelings versus societal demands was a common concern among participants which led them into troubled authentic self-expression. This, in turn, was frustrating and irritating, since it was hard to balance one's inner feelings with social and professional norms. However, participants acknowledged that conforming to certain social and professional norms was necessary, even if it restricted their authentic self expression . The negative implications this disconnection was having on their minds and relationships were also realized by them. That is, the participants frequently hid their feelings to show a 'face value' in society, repeatedly betraying their feelings by the pretension of openness and transparency in their behavior. This constant prevarication in emotional expression made them mentally weary, and they felt that in interacting with others, they were not being true to themselves.

Thus, they describe experiencing emotional strain as they wrestled with internal conflicts and their impact on overall well being . Despite these challenges , remained hopeful about their ability to navigate these complexities and build more meaningful relationships they . The participants responded with the different ways by which they work to make these internal feelings more comparable to the external manifestations, like mindfulness and self-actualization. They reiterated the importance of self-care and emotional regulation in dealing with this internal conflict. Maybe by obtaining greater

control over their feelings and their expression, they would somehow be able to close the gap between who they were and who they are today, outside versus inside.

Participants reflected that it was authenticity and vulnerability that gave them a real, genuine connect with others. They described wrestling internally with the conflict they experienced and its effects on general well-being but were hopeful about the ability to navigate these complexities in creating more meaningful relationships. Participants described how they had managed to feel empowered throughout this journey toward authentic alignment of inner and outer selfhood by seeking help and support from others and talking openly about feelings. The feeling of disconnection was influenced as a mixture of the societal norms and the environment in which one found him/herself. Indeed, this disconnection was neither a mistake nor an accident but was rather willful in changing the tone and character of speech to express one's thinking—underscoring with this action a strong sense of self-awareness and purpose (Noufi, 2023, p.5). The modality of one's verbal communication may indicate the background and skills an individual possesses, since most of the time there exist socially constructed biases about a person's gender, ethnicity, nationality, etc.

Tone, pitch, accent, and use of language are some of the factors that go into forming an impression about a person's abilities and background from the verbal style of a person. It is common in society to judge a person by their speech, making assumptions about intelligence, education level, or social class. It is expected to be more prevalent in areas where stereotypes associated with speaking styles or voice characteristics are more common. For example, women are expected to have shrill voices and speak in low tones, while men are expected to have low-pitched voices filled with confidence and energy. In relation to ethnicity, different people belonging to different cultural backgrounds are bound to be treated differently in terms of how they speak and sound. For example, if a person has a foreign accent, he / she is seen as less able or less intelligent simply because of the quality of the voice. Likewise, his or her voice can be perceived based on his or her nationality, since particular stereotypes or prejudices are attached with some accents. The impact of these predisposed biases goes as far as into the life of a person from seeking employment opportunities to even leading a social life, self-respect, and confidence. It thus becomes very important to realize and challenge these stereotypes in order that we may fashion a society that is inclusive and fair—the one in which people are judged for their skills and other qualifications, not shallow characteristics like the voice. As we embrace diversity and celebrate the differences that each individual contributes to society, we nurture a more tolerant and accepting

atmosphere. At the very least, everybody should be heard and acknowledged regardless of his / her pitch or other descriptive characteristics. Let us work to abolish these limiting stereotypes so that every person's voice is recognized and valued for its uniqueness and diversity (Noufi, 2023, p.6).

Keisha then proposed switching sides to gain a better understanding of each other's racial point of view. She challenges issues of static identity by proposing, "So what if I asked you to switch?". It begs the question then: Is race an inherent and natural factor? Keisha adds a creative suggestion to have the audience get up and take her family's place, thereby challenging the conventional view of race as a fixed identity. This demonstration shows race as performative—that which is changeable. Keisha purports the idea of exchanging roles between audience and character based on race, which initiates reflections on how cultural conditioning shapes our perceptions of ourselves and others. Briefly taking on a different racial role, she wonders if this could begin to break open some of those hard-wired assumptions and societal hierarchies. Keisha is bold enough to take risks in challenging norms of identity and asking for proof of their genuineness, which means her view of race is far more pliable than we typically consider. Indeed, she is readily prepared to put just everything in trial to see how much it can take :

“KEISHA: Do you think I can ask them that anyway?

SUZE: Ask them what?

KEISHA: To switch?

SUZE: To switch what?

KEISHA: Do you think that I could—

What if I could?

*But if I could ask the folks who call themselves white to come up here,
do you think they would?*

*Could I ask them to come up in here,
so that we could go down out there?*

*Do you think I could ask the folks who call themselves white to do that?
To switch for a little while?*

How should I ask them,

if I could?

Could I say,

Hi,

white people.

Come here,

white people.

Come on up here.

If you're physically able to. “ (Act 3, p.100)

Keisha explores intricate and subtle lines of identity in this search. One's identity is multidimensional and subjective. It keeps on changing and molding itself vis-à-vis different factors continuously. Our sense of identity, be it towards our nationality, race, or culture, does not remain fixed; it is adaptable and changes as we move through time in a changing social landscape. Social-scientific studies abound to show that our identity is not strictly defined and is capable of determination by external factors such as social norms, economic conditions, and ideology (Wong, 2016, p.2). One such example where an individual's racial identity could undertake a lifespan process of change and growth is when the influences from society are combined with those key life events to work in changing the person (Wong, 2016, pp.3,4). Moreover, racially deep-seated prejudices and norms may affect the way by which individuals view themselves and others; this constitutes what gives personal identity complexity. Basically, racial identity isn't a fixed thing but dynamic and modifiable by external circumstances, internal reflections, and even experiences in the natural journey of life. One's racial identity is dynamic; it does not mean it is a fixed concept but fluid and always reacting to many variables that become applicable during a lifetime. One must, therefore, consider the impact of societal pressures, cultural norms, and personal experiences that come together to create one's feelings about racial background and a sense of belonging in the world. With a sense of the complexity of racial identity, we will be better able to understand how it changes over time, mapping the intricacies of human interactions and self-perception.

Essentially, an individual's racial identity is the confluence of influence and experience that defines how an individual understands himself and his place in society, really being a nuanced and interwoven process of personal identity formation. Much through the journey of life, one goes through situations and experiences which challenge the self-defined identity of race and continues to redefine it, giving way to an ongoing process of self-discovery and growth in understanding. The complexities identified above therefore, celebrate a lifelong journey of inquiry and self-reflection that an individual undertakes in the pursuit of self-actualization and growth. After all, the process of change in racial identity is a

strictly personal and individual formative process, influenced by the diversity of factors through which the notion of self and its place within the larger scheme of things is molded. It means that people are aware of how their racial identity has evolved and changed over time by introspection and reflection, an insight into themselves and their positioning within society.

The process—placement of oneself within a hermeneutic lived experience—allows for self-reflective investigation that opens up the layers of forces that make up an individual's racial identity and will allow them to take pride in and be authentic to their heritage, culture, and uniqueness. Knowing that racial identity is transformative mean that individuals should get actively involved in the continually changing process of getting to know their real self and, in return, learn how to accept themselves, hence being led closer toward their true sense of self and cultural identity. During learning and development, there is constant redefinition and reshaping of racial identity in ways that reflect personal values, beliefs, and experiences, hence increased self-awareness and acceptance. Upon having gone through this process of self-discovery and development, one is better placed to appreciate the complexity of racial identity and confidently embrace their heritage (Wong, 2016, pp.4,5).

The fluidity of identity runs deep into the roots of economic disparities, political movements, and social activism within society. Identities have to be understood and acknowledged for changing and transforming with time in order to decipher the depths of interactions that exist within society and issues and experiences of people at a personal level. Understanding this helps us find our way through the complexity of human relationships and through the different ways that various people choose to lead their lives. Understanding fluidity in identity, therefore, is a necessity if one is going to gain a full comprehension of the complex dynamics that exist within society and the personal stories that people have (Wong, 2016, p.5).

The concept of identity is complex and multi-faceted, as the various theories defining the term imply different meanings that at times may be confusing. There are multiple layers of abstractions implied by identity, therefore, it cannot be reduced merely into acts of playing a role, for it can be psychologically laden with the assumption of roles (De Levita, 1965, p.3). The identity is multifaceted, and it not only involves a person's perception of self but also his relation with others. This aspect of a personality also involves the aspect of introspection and an element

of comparison to others and analysis in the light of others' personalities or evaluating oneself in the light of others' behavior (De Levita, 1965, p.107). This complexity of identity goes on further to the issue of creating roles and how they are represented in the mind, something which varies from person to person and situation to situation (De Levita, 1965, p.201).

In the play, the character of Bets gives a critical insight into the overwhelming emphasis that most identity discussions place on racial categories at the expense of deliberating on the finer details pertaining to class dynamics. According to the character Bets in the play, American society tends to emphasize issues regarding race at the expense of issues pertaining to class. In her view, an exclusive focus on race cannot effectively handle huge economic disparities that exist. Furthermore, according to Bets, American society has developed a tendency to underestimate the contribution of class to the identity of its subjects, though it is one of the main factors affecting access to resources, opportunities, political influence, and in general, life chances comparable with that of race and gender. Bets stresses the interrelation of race, class, gender, and sexuality, arguing that all these components determine the power relationships in society. By simply pointing out the tendency to overlook class considerations at the benefit of racial discourse, Bets suggests that it is those in power who ultimately benefit from this analytical gap. She argues that any comprehensive understanding of identity politics has to be holistic; one needs to look at class along with race, ethnicity, and gender. Bets tries to support an intersectional perspective by insisting that analyses without all of these identities crossing into each other cannot understand the complexity of the social structure and power dynamics : "*In America you are obsessed with race, and you never never never think about class*" (Act 2, p.58). In this context, Bets is trying to say that White people are greatly preoccupied with the idea of race, thereby exhibiting an obsession common among this group of people. It also gives the impression that a person's identity is related to structures of power, such as race and class. The quote categorically suggests a relationship between one's identity and structures of power, such as race and class. It points out the idea of the political undertaking involved in the processes of forming one's identity, where naming, categorizing, and performing are at play. Moreover, this work will chart the way in which these processes are entangled with power dynamics, as illustrated by Agius (Agius, 2018, p.2). Sociologists have largely agreed on the idea that the development of a person's identity is something that constantly develops through interaction and communication within different social and cultural contexts (Agius,

2018, p.5). One must understand how factors like gender, race, sexuality, and other identity markers overlap with SES to consider the complex ways in which identity formation actually works in relation to power (Agius, 2018, p.2). Moreover, in respect to such discourses, one will find prominent mentions of racialized identities in regard to security, highlighting the roles of environments and boundaries in shaping such identities to further outline belonging and behaviors of individuals (Agius, 2018, p.75). Ultimately, an identity is not an independent creation of personal experience or characteristic but is intertwined with greater structures of power and control.

Identity intersects in very complex ways with other power structures, such as race and class, in the convoluted intersections of culture, the social, and the political. Identity politics is the strategic deployment and claiming of specific identities, especially those identities grounded in race and class that are recognized within constituted power relations (Bernstein, 2005, p.68). This recognition thus in turn makes the difference in provisions for social welfare benefits, political mobilization and just distribution of rights across countries (Bernstein, 2005, p.69). Moreover, this complex interaction between identity and power structures is multi-dimensional and has implications for understanding the ways in which the social movements are organized and how the collective action is linked with notions of power and cultural construction of representations (Bernstein, 2005, pp.48,59).

This play gives one the idea of which people of race would rather prefer if given the opportunity, thus going on to interrogate deeper the construction of racial identities and perceptions. Though race seems fluid according to this play, the characters' response to the site implied that it is often fixed by society. Surface-level beliefs about race flow into their connections with harmful stereotypes. The scenario is used to dig deep into the characters' own racial identity and experiences as they talk about it, coming to learn that there is more to the concept than what had been perceived. Each character wrestles to define their racial identity because each realizes the problem of embracing a race imposed on him or her. The words of the characters raise questions concerning how race is understood and valued both individually and societally. It points out to the audiences the need to initiate a process of reviewing how we classify ourselves and others based on physical appearance and origin, and how, through words and actions, we further racial prejudices. It makes one reflect on whether we need to challenge such societal constructs and assumptions. At a deeper level, the play explores whether racial identity is a personal choice or it is cultivated by society; thereby making racial

identification an extremely complex phenomenon: "*JIMBO: Like, if you could choose to be a different race, what race would you choose?*"(act 2, p .38). The play reveals the nuanced ways in which human beings create identities through such conversations. Identities are not inherent and are constructed through interactions within which one throws out bits of themselves to see how they can be and where they might belong, establishing what matters (Delahunty, 2012, p.1). This complex process takes place in the choices that are made in conversation, the social interplay between individuals, and the very words that are utilized when communicating with one another (Delahunty, 2012, pp.1,3). Text-based language is the focus for online discussion boards and it becomes the hub on which the life of the community is centered of the virtual group for it allows for individuals to express their identity (Delahunty, 2012, p.2). During these interactions, individuals complicate the process of making sense of themselves and forming relationships with others while negotiating their sense of self in the conversational setting. Multiple identity formation is socially constructed and intricately linked to language as a means of construction and delivery (Delahunty, 2012, pp.2,3).

The process of creating identities through communication is influenced by various factors, that include application of situation-specific self-descriptive credentials, the context, and the choice of speech acts and also their reception as noted by Tracy (Tracy, 2013, pp.254,271). In addition, individuals' styles and meanings of communication differ depending on their personal and interactional identities like age, gender, and regional affiliations among others that are brought into the conversation to establish identities in relation (Tracy, 2013, p.281). While the view from rhetoric emphasizes each person's decisions about communication create their unique identity, the cultural perspective holds that identities are relatively stable entities that pre-exist particular moments of conversation and are transported into them, as Tracy suggested in (Tracy, 2013, p.281). These different views give important insights into the ways through which everyday conversations play in the formation of our identities.

Keisha is reclaiming her power to label others, a power normally held by those in authority. In Keisha's mind, Suze has always been characterized as tender and pedagogic, someone who assists Keisha in giving meaning to things and herself. However, this labeling is resisted by Keisha in the play as she refers to Suze as "white" and not "grandma," which is a metaphor expressing that Keisha would like to break free from all labels put on her and her family from the outside world. Keisha, in claiming her right to construct what people see with the question "Do

you mind that?", disputes Suze's assumptions and asserts her different identity. She is not going to take someone else labeling her passively. With the indication of the constructedness of whiteness and claiming Suze's whiteness, Keisha equalizes the ground of identity. This seemingly small act serves to symbolize Keisha's struggle toward a self-concept that is independent of others. She starts taking back her life's story and moves away from others defining it. Keisha embarks on her journey through a process of empowerment in a world that, for so long, has taken that possibility from her: *"I'd call you white. Yes. Do you mind that?"* (Act 3, p.100). The final alterity that Keisha retrieves on this journey to the autonomy of defining the identities of others is one haunted by its own complex process that combines a certain amount of internal reflection with an external influence. So much goes into the act of defining someone else's identity that it becomes an intricate dance between personal beliefs and societal expectations. Whenever one individual or set of individuals define another, it becomes imbibed into the net of social relationships and many times leads to life changes in the defined ones. And the process isn't carried out in a vacuum, but requires a certain extent of authority or influence over the ones requiring it to be done effectively in order to bring about changes in their lives of others. The internal and external definition is a blurred line, for it is intimately interwoven with everyday social interactions (Jenkins, 1994, p.199). The essence of molding other people's identities in return is molded by the power dynamics, social bond, and constant interplay between the internal belief and external influences.

The process of classifying individuals by their racial identity is a complex interaction of social categorization, power relations, and historical context. Racial identity is not always a biological or cultural distinction but a historically constructed phenomenon shaped by processes and institutional forces (Jenkins, 1994, p.208). Throughout history, powerful groups have built racial categories in order to establish and maintain power relations—either in colonial racial hierarchies, segregationist laws, or contemporary systemic inequalities. For instance, during colonialism, European nations compelled racial classification to legitimate economic exploitation and social hierarchy. Similarly, in America, Jim Crow laws rendered racial identity as a basis for institutionalizing white supremacist ideology.

Discussions and Results

The statement brings out how the junction of wealth, social status, and racial identity shapes an individual's experiences in society. While money can certainly fix some things, it does not get rid of the condition of being a minority race. For the blacks who are affluent, their racial identity could affect the perception and treatment accorded in that, even with their high bank accounts, they may be profiled and discriminated against. This association between identity and class cannot be separated from systemic racism and the history of its impacts on black communities. To grow up black in America is to grow up amidst legacies of oppression and discrimination. Attainment of wealth, by itself, does not discount the social and historical elements which have defined race. It is wrong to say that material affluence will blot out one's racial heritage and all the experiences that go with it. Even wealthy black individuals cannot get around the fact that their race influences how they interact and the experiences they have, because they are still socialized against and have to deal with structural inequalities. Their economic position may insulate them against some issues, but not against their racial background. One's identity is not reduced to financial standing alone but is actually shaped by a myriad of forces, which include race, culture, and history:

JIMBO: But I wouldn't want to be a rich black person.

You know?

It wouldn't be ... very authentic.

I'm just thinking critically about it and,
don't you think that once a person has enough money,
their race just kind of disappears and they're just rich?

Like,

if I'm going to be black,

I'd want to be a normal black person,

to like have that experience,

of like going to da club, you know?

Gettin' rowdy. (Act 2, p.57)

The quotation offers an insight into the controversy over the performance and the appropriation of Black identity without really knowing the nature of the complexity of the larger systemic issues at stake. It brings into prominence the

postmodern experience of multiplicity and the nature of the fluidity of identity and experience.

The process of negotiation of numerous, at times contradictory, identities is what is at the centre of the argument (Frie, 2011, p. 46). Cultural customs and day-to-day lives also play important roles in creating identity and relationship, often in complex ways. By these lives, pre-reflective self-understanding is fostered in a sociocultural context (Frie, 2011, pp. 48, 59). Although such practices assist in creating a sense of coherence and continuity to identity, they are also contested sites of practice that reinforce and curtail the power of an individual to think and act upon their identity. Lived experiences and cultural practices, ultimately, not only constitute individual identity and relations but also train and complicate continuous identity and multiplicity negotiations (Frie, 2011, p. 59).

The statements of the character illustrate a critical point of interaction between race, gender, and modes of self-expression. They state how they were asked to cover different parts of their being amidst systemic racism and for the sake of unreasonable expectations, particularly for black women. Black women would only be acceptable if they were quiet and submissive. A confident or proud woman would be too bold and will not sit well along the prescribed white norms. It means they don't allow their feelings and thoughts to be hijacked into a corner of marginalization and invisibility. Some people feel threatened by the person who allows themselves to be full, talented, and strong. This threat gives way to fear and resistance to the true self. Moving within society can be challenging if the accepted norms of narrow-minded expectations aren't accepting of one's identity. By owning their real selves, individuals stand against the pressure to conform and dim themselves for the comfort of others. Bets describes facing pressure to dim their authentic self-expression due to racist expectations that people of color remain meek, submissive and non-threatening. It joins suppression of identity with systemic racism:

BETS: Thank you.

Yes.

As the black woman, the world tell me: shhh.

Don't be so proud.

Don't be so sexy.

MACK: (Snaps)

BETS: The world tell me that I am too much.

Too loud.
Too aggressive.
Always.
Too sassy.
Always.
They fear me because I feel too much.
I think too much. But you know what?
MACK: You tell 'em, honey.
BETS: I am too much. (Act 3, p.90)

Systemic racism plays a profound role in shaping the identity of African American adolescents through exposing them to biased social messages and negative stereotypes. These corrosive messages undermine their attempts at building a positive and solid self-image. For example, Black youth are repeatedly exposed to media portrayals of Blackness as associated with criminality or inferiority, reinforcing internalized self-doubt. This repeated exposure occurs at a susceptible time of self-searching, and it is difficult to forge a secure and consolidated sense of self. Additionally, systemic racism is embedded in institutions such as schools, where African American adolescents can expect to receive lower teacher expectations, more punitive discipline, and less access to academic enrichment opportunities. These experiences confirm feelings of inadequacy and limit their ability to develop a healthy racial identity. As a result, self-esteem is a prevalent issue for many Black adolescents as they wonder about their value in a society that repeatedly marginalizes them.

Shortage of positive representation in prevailing discourses subsequently contributes to the intricacies. If Black children barely observe themselves being presented as successful, strong, and multifaceted characters in books, films, and seats of power, they might develop internalized self-worth of being unworthy. Such deficiency further contributes to how difficult it becomes to establish a real and empowered self-concept, confining them to internalized oppression and self-doubt. In the worldly context, African American adolescents would thus feel marginalized and invalidated in trying to forge secure, overtly positive identity development. The very pervasive nature of systemic racism can chip away at the confidence and self-value in African American teenagers, placing huge growth and well-being barriers in their way. Therefore, many African American adolescents receive persistent messages and stereotyping that breed self-loathing and inadequacy, hampering their ability to grow a positive and strong sense of self.

All such forms of systemic discrimination are serious and long-lasting on the mental and emotional levels with regard to African American teenagers. They affect their relationships, aspirations, and quality of life in general. Such struggles to form a coherent and positive self-identity within the context of racism would be largely negative on mental and self-esteem aspects for African American adolescents and go on to provide the lead for the perpetuation of doubt and insecurity all through life. Peters, 2015 work would be to think about recognizing and encouraging the tenacity and fortitude of the African American adolescents who are faced constantly with systemic racism, with a view to developing strategies for empowering them in their journey of self-acceptance and self-empowerment (Peters, 2015, pp.2,21,22). This becomes a greater challenge due to the fact that with the prevalence of micro-aggressions and social identity threats, these processes result in the translation of thoughts into suppressing positive racial identity and self-esteem, as has been opined by Peters (Peters, 2015, pp.44, 55).

This quote brings out the sense of struggle that racial minorities go through in places dominated by the majority, as well as the feelings of acceptance and freedom one experiences within one's own community. As for lights, their role in this case is not to light up the environment but to make a person visible to others. Such white-dominated environments usually take away the very humanness of black and brown individuals, making them objects that can only be looked at, labeled, and judged through whiteness. The never-ending room for scrutiny of black lives is denied and not allowed to burst into full human light, kept blurred by only a glimpse of the limited vision provided by the whites. Being in the company of others with similar backgrounds and experiences lifts some weight off the shoulders and offers some liberation or protection from such oppressive stereotypes. This quote below illustrates that the burden of extended surveillance is taken away by the community support of the genuine self—an identity whose truth a community holds and reads. It bespeaks the released weight and freedom of being truly realized and recognized by one's own community:

*They're bright aren't they?
Should I tell them that the lights are there to help people see them,
not to help them see anything?
So I could be out down here with all my people of color?
With all my colorful people?
And we could be all of us together alone?
And if I were to be out here with my colorful people, (Act 3, p.103).*

This clearly highlights the contrast between the isolating feeling of being a racial outsider in a dominant environment and the sense of belonging, ease, and opportunity for self-expression within one's own community; the contrasting feeling of belonging, ease, and self-expression within one's own community. Isolation feels very strong due to racial segregation, whereby an individual is caught in between the identity of them being Black/ brown/ dark and the complete rebuke for the suggestion of Afro descendant or racial minority unity. This gives rise to feelings of alienation, disconnection, and detachment from racism instances (Hunter, 2023, p.129).

The alienation felt by people of African origin in predominantly white populations usually stems from feelings of not being understood and being overlooked. Being excluded causes the individual to reject a portion of his/her own heritage as he/she attempts to be assimilated, thus feeling internalized conflict between cultural expectation and self. When Black individuals have to fit themselves into the norms of mainstream cultures that fail to represent their people, they tend to get locked between worlds and develop an identity crisis. Dissonance would hinder self-acceptance as well as self-expression, and they would hardly be able to accept and own their race and celebrate their blackness.

Being invisible or misrepresented in society adds complexity to the battle. Black individuals may struggle with a sense of belonging if they are constantly being racially stereotyped or left out entirely. This erasure can isolate and disconnect them from their cultural identity, making them feel less affiliated with their heritage. The loss of this sense of attachment causes emotional hurt as the individual struggles with a fractured sense of self. Therefore, the freedom to publicly express one's racial and cultural identity without the risk of discrimination is most important. By claiming and embracing one's heritage, Black individuals can find pride and affirm themselves, with positive community relations which provide them with support and validation in contrast to system exclusion.

Overcoming adversity within society and struggling for equal representation necessitate a conscious acceptance of one's racial identity. Instead of yielding to external pressures, Black people can reclaim their rightful position in society by embracing their identity and repudiating damaging stereotypes that aim to strip them of their humanness. Accepting and appreciating their heritage allows them to promote solidarity within the Black community, establishing spaces of empowerment and mutual strength.

By becoming aware of the value of their culture, Black individuals can fight racial biases that perpetuate systemic oppression. People in power expect marginalized groups to live up to unreal expectations, but self-awareness and pride in culture allow them to resist these expectations. Being heard and counted among their own gives Black individuals more power to survive in a world that works to silence them. True racial acceptance not only solidifies personal identity but also cross-cultural relations. By accepting and sharing their cultural heritage, people foster inclusivity, resist discrimination, and contribute to a society where various voices are heard and celebrated (Hunter, 2023, pp. 133-134).

Conclusion

The interrogation of Drury's play "*Fairview*," in-depth, lays bare all the multiple levels of complications associated with identity and the racial tensions in American society today. It is through the play that conventional ideas of fixed racial identities are put at stake since these are made observable/dynamic and socially produced, greatly related in their constitution with power structures.

It is a play deeply invested in giving a voice to the internal conflicts and the external force that determines how an individual resolves his or her sense of identity. Keisha's bold move of having the audience switch racial roles challenges assumptions of race as something innate further, provoking further reflection on how these categories are performed and policed.

However, more significantly, the play appreciates how race, class, and power are interconnected in the role they may play in social hierarchy. In other words, Bets' swipes at an American obsession with race to the exclusion of class considerations argue for far greater conjunctive and intersectional insight with regard to identity politics.

Ultimately, "*Fairview*" comes out as a strong work of theatre that disavows any easy answers but leaves an audience wrestling with the subtle, sometimes uncomfortable realities of identity in the 21st century. Its lasting power becomes the ability to ignite critical discussions related to race, representation, and the fundamentals behind selves.

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تجارب السود في مسرحية (نظرة عادلة) لدروبي: الهوية والتوترات العرقية

ارضا سلطان كريم,² لطيفة اسماعيل جبوري

الجامعة المستنصرية, كلية الآداب, قسم اللغة الانكليزية, بغداد, العراق

المستخلص

يتناول هذا البحث كيف تتشكل تجارب السود من خلال الهوية والتوترات العرقية التي تنعكس في مسرحية "نظرة عادلة" لجاكي سبيليز دروبي، وسيكون مفهوم الهوية نقطة البداية للمناقشة فيما يتعلق بأفراد المجموعات الاجتماعية، بعد ذلك ينتقل البحث إلى مسألة الهوية لاسيما في ما يتعلق بالعرق والجنس، موضحا كيف تم صياغة الفهم الكامل للثقافة والأدب الأمريكي الأفريقي في إطار مسألة الهوية بسبب الفصل العنصري والقمع التاريخي، وتعتمد الدراسة على ثلاثة محاور اذ يوضح المحور الأول ضرورة تعامل البيض مع العنصرية، ويتعلق المحور الثاني بتعقيدات السلطة المتعلقة بالمشاهدين البيض، والحاجة إلى أن يدرك المبدعون البيض نقاط ضعفهم، ويتناول المحور الثالث العناصر المسرحية التي تقدم نقداً للتمثيلات المسرحية التقليدية لتجارب السود، ثم ينتقل البحث إلى فحص موضوعات متعددة الجوانب ومتعلقة بالهوية والتوترات العرقية في المسرحية مثل: ما هي الصعوبة التي تواجهها الشخصيات في التوفيق بين الهويات الحقيقية والمتصورة؟ وإلى أي مدى تذهب كيشا في مطالبة جمهورها بتبديل الأدوار العرقية؟ ويسلط البحث الضوء على التفاصيل الدقيقة للتعقيدات الكبيرة المحيطة بالهوية والديناميكيات العرقية التي تم طرحها في المسرحية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الهوية، دروبي، التوترات العنصرية، تجارب السود، نظرة عادلة.