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Protest in Black Poetry of Linton Kwesi Johnson and John Agard

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الاحتجاج في شعر السود لدى لينتون كويزي جونسون و جون أغارد

م. م نجلاء مقداد سعيد

وزارة التربية/ الكلية التربوية المفتوحة/ مركز الكرخ الدراسي

Abstract

Linton Kwesi Johnson and John Agard are two notable Caribbean poets. They are prominent representatives of Black racial issues, segregation, and oppression in British society. The exclusion policies practiced by Whites cause real physical and psychological harm to Black people. As minorities living in England, Blacks do not have equal power to fight back against the White establishment. Consequently, Black poets utilize their poetic talent and writing as a weapon for resistance. The poetry of Johnson and Agard serves as an effective medium through which these poets express their protest and indignation against White ideology.The aim of this paper is to study the poetry of Linton Kwesi Johnson and John Agard as part of Black British protest poetry. This paper provides a close study of selected poems, examined in detail to demonstrate the protest inherent in Black British poetry. The paper is divided into two sections and a conclusion. The first section is devoted to the study of Linton Kwesi Johnson's poetry, whereas the second section analyzes the poetry of John Agard. The conclusion sums up the findings of the study.**Keywords:** Black protest, White, exclusion, Creole dialect, dub poetry.

المستخلص

يعد لينتون كويزي جونسون وجون أغارد قامتين شعرية من منطقة الكاريبي، فهما يمثلان بشكل جلي قضايا السود العرقية، والتمييز، والاضطهاد في المجتمع البريطاني.حيث تتسبب سياسة الإقصاء التي يتبعها البيض في إلحاق ضرر حقيقي بالسود جسدياً ونفسياً. وبما أنهم أقليات تعيش في إنجلترا، لذلك لا يملك السود قوة متكافئة لمواجهة البيض؛ وعليه يستخدم هؤلاء الشعراء موهبتهم الشعرية وكتاباتهم كسلاح للمقاومة. ويعد شعر جونسون وأغارد وسيلة فعالة يعبر من خلالها هؤلاء الشعراء عن احتجاجهم وغضبهم تجاه أيديولوجية البيض.يهدف هذا البحث إلى دراسة شعر لينتون كويزي جونسون وجون أغارد بوصفه شعراً احتجاجياً للسود في بريطانيا. يمثل البحث دراسة مفصلة لقصائد مختارة سيتم تحليلها لإثبات صبغة الاحتجاج في الشعر البريطاني للسود. ينقسم البحث إلى قسمين وخاتمة؛ خُصص القسم الأول لدراسة شعر لينتون كويزي جونسون، بينما خُصص القسم الثاني لتحليل شعر جون أغارد، وتلخص الخاتمة نتائج الدراسة.**الكلمات المفتاحية** :احتجاج السود، البيض، الإقصاء، اللهجة الكريولية، شعر الدبلجة.

The First Section: Linton Kwesi Johnson

Linton Kwesi Johnson is a Jamaican dub poet (1952-) who immigrated with his family to Britain. They settled in Brixton, a district where many Blacks lived. However, the racial attitude that Johnson witnessed at school and in life in Britain affected him; it leads him to be a rebel. Thus, he writes about such issues in his poetry to reflect the suffering of his people. Johnson adopts "Dub poetry" as a medium to convey his anger and protest against racism and discrimination of the White towards his Black folk. Dub poetry is "a form of performance poetry of West Indian origin, written to be spoken out loud against a backdrop of reggae music" (Habekost, 1986, p. 37). This kind of poetry is of "socio-political orientation… [and carried] anticolonial messages" (Dorchin, 2017, p. 160). Thus, it is used to serve the political aim of its creator. Accordingly, it is the most powerful "militant voice" of Black folk (Sole, 2008, p. 2).As a dub poet, Linton Kwesi Johnson is Black's militant voice who believes in violence, so he calls his people to adopt it as a mean to defend themselves. Thus, violence is the medium through

which Johnson delivers his protest. In his "Di Great Insohreckshan," the poet deals with the themes of oppression, injustice, and violence.

"Di Great Insohreckshan"

In this poem, the poet deals with themes of injustice, oppression, and violence. The poet narrates the bloody confrontation between Black and White due to the unjust experience of Black life in Britain. The confrontation happens as a reaction to the oppressive tactics of Brixton police toward Blacks. As a protest to such violence, the poet uses his Jamaican Creole as a method of attracting attention to his folk. Because, Jamaican Creole "establish a new way of interacting with the reader. When creating rupture in written language, the poet demands less passive behavior from the receptor so as to decode the message" (Franca Junior, 2009, p. 13).The poet starts by mentioning the setting of the Brixton Uprising saying that:"it was April, nineteen…eighty one / down'n on dee ghetto of Brix-ton" (Johnson, 1984, lines 1-2).Writing the date with words other than numbers is a technique to put emphasis on it and attracts attention to it. The use of dots between "nineteen…eighty one" is another technique that gives authenticity to the date, since it shows a spontaneity in writing it and how the poet recalls it naturally. In addition, the poem is written in lines not stanzas and are varying in their length, to reflect the chaotic situation of that day and the arbitrarily way of dealing with Blacks' anger. Hence, showing the inhumanity and injustice of the White.The poet reveals that oppression is the main cause of the Uprising: "Babylon dem cause such a fric-tion" (Johnson, 1984, line 11). Alluding to "Babylon" is of a particular significance because another notable feature of dub music lyrics is the mentioning of "Babylon." This is due to the fact that "[i]n Rastafari religion, the African equivalent to the Jewish diaspora are the exiles living in Babylon, i.e, Western world" (Singh, 2010, p. 20). Thus, Blacks compare themselves to Jewish "and their biggest desire is to liberate themselves from oppression tearing down the walls of Babylon" (Johnson, 2002, p. 401). So, the "Babylon" enslavement leads to "fric-tion" that was responsible enough to "bring about a GREAT insohreck-shun / And it spread all over deh nay-shun" (Johnson, 1984, lines 12-13).The poet celebrates such "historical occas-sion" that displays the resolution of his Black fellow, thus, it becomes part and parcel of Black's history of protest against British injustice. That's why he wishes that he had witnessed "historical occas-sion" and participated in it: "an I wish I ad been dere" (Johnson, 1984, line 21). The poet proudly recalls how Blacks "run riot all over Brixton" violently that they:MASH up plenty police van MASH up the wicked one plan and we MASH up the Swamp 81 (Johnson, 1984, lines 24-26)The capitalized "Mash" expresses the poet's anger and protest; he capitalizes it to emphasize how pressurized the Blacks are and that the way of "mashing" things is a way of letting their anger out. After expressing his anger, the poet questions "fi what?" to follow it by the answer:"Fi make deh rule of dem understand / Dat we NAH take no more of dem oppression" (Johnson, 1984, lines 34-35).His answer mirrors years of pain, oppression, and segregation that they explode all of a sudden as a bomb. The power of describing the event raises a sense of sympathy towards Black's suffering and discrimination in a society they were brought to by force. So, they are double victimized; first by uprooting them from their land and culture, second, by putting them in a totally new land and social milieu and preventing them from integrating in it. Thus, they are rendered as "other" due to the White standard and their strategy of exclusion.The poet reports the way of White police in maintaining their "power and glory," in addition to the way the Whites portrayed the Black's riot:Dem ah talk bout deh power and deh glory Dem ah talk bout deh burning and the looting Dem ah talk bout deh smashing and the grabbing Dem ah tell me bout deh vanquish and deh victree (Johnson, 1984, lines 36-39)Whites view Blacks as a source of corruption due to their "looting, smashing and grabbing." But the portrayal of Blacks by Johnson tells something else. They are portrayed as people who try to protect themselves from the aggression of Brixton police who, in their turn, apply an iron grip whether appropriate for such a case or not. So, White causes Blacks to be violent in nature; they dehumanize Black's human senses by dealing with them as if Blacks are unhuman. Consequently, the violence turns out to be not only an act of calling for rights and justice, but an act of victory, protest, and glory as well. It might be the official language of Blacks through which they communicate with their oppressors, who in turn leave Blacks no other way to contact. Thus, the poet says such violence is natural in "war."In this poem, Linton Kwesi Johnson shows real evidence of the discriminated environment in which Blacks live. He visualizes how his people face oppression and injustice in British society. Thus, the poet announces himself as a voice to his folk:My initial impetus to write was political—from the very beginning—it Wasn't a need to clear things of my chest or to, in any way, express any profound, deep inner emotion or anything like that. From the very beginning I saw myself as giving voice to, and documenting, the experience of my generation. (Caesar, 1996, pp. 66-7)Whites accuse Blacks of not only opposing the head of State but also destroying Britain by breaking its laws through riots and fighting: "Dem say we burn down deh George we

coulda burn da landlord" (Johnson, 1984, line 48). However, the poet defends Blacks, saying that they are not destroyers, and if they were to destroy something, then it would be the head of the State, which means that their problem is not with the land but with the regime: "We burn down deh George we never burn da landlord" (Johnson, 1984, line 49). So, Blacks' violence is not a destructive one as described by Whites; it is a justifiable one since it is a scream of protest that intends not to destroy the land, but to call for rights and address people in charge:We burn down deh George we never burn da landlord When we run riot all over Brixton When we MASH up plenty police van When we MASH up the wicked one When we MASH up the Swamp 81 (Johnson, 1984, lines 52-56)Moreover, Whites accuse them of accumulating "ammunition" yet being afraid of confrontation:Dem say we commendear car and we gather ammunition We build wif barricade and deh wicked catch afraid We sen out wi scout fog oh fine dem whereabout (Johnson, 1984, lines 57-59)The poet says that Whites have run down the plan "call to action" and kill Blacks with "plastic bullets," but these 'bullets' cannot stop nor silence the protest of the Black since, for them, they are 'plastic.' This shows that Blacks continue in their call and protest since they are "forces of viktry," so they will "bring a BLAM BLAM." This dub poem, which celebrates resistance as its title suggests, has "inspired black Britons and other minorities in England to stand up against police brutality and fight for their rights... [thus] dub poetry turns into strategy of resistance and weapon of liberation" (Franca Junior, 2009, p. 9). In addition, Johnson's choice of title is important as it is enthusiastic and pushes Blacks to fight to gain liberation. So, Johnson's protest is well reflected through the poem's title that means "The Great Protest."

"Forces of Viktry"

In his other dub poem, "Forces of Viktry," Johnson portrays the victory of Blacks in defeating White police who waged violence against Blacks to close their carnival in the years 1976-1977. So, the poet deals with the themes of protest, resistance, and Black identity. The poet starts with an enthusiastic, protesting, and challenging Black voice. He announces the marching of the Black crowd whom he describes as "forces of viktry" to engage in fighting with the forces of defeat, if we allow to call Whites as such since their opponents are victorious. Those "forces of viktry" are strong-willed and talented since they "know what you're gonna do," which means they are resolute enough to face, fight, and endure the violence of the armed White. This bloody engagement happens due to the fact that the carnival is of particular importance for Blacks. Through such a traditional carnival, Blacks have a chance to practice their tradition through which they can connect to their original culture. Thus, ending such a significant event means excluding Black's culture and hence imposing that of the White. So, the poem is an outraged protest against racism and racial elimination of Blacks.The speaker explains how Blacks protest: "we mek a likkle beat in 1978" (Johnson, 1979, line 9). This sentence carries two meanings. It either means that the protesters make their beat figuratively, with words, or it means that Blacks make their beat literally by fighting Whites. Blacks are resolute enough that "they fight and they fight / And they feed the state" (Johnson, 1979, lines 11-12). These lines show the fighting directed toward the State of White, Britain, and of course for racial and discriminatory issues that mostly take the form of brutal violence toward those "others." By announcing the Black fight, the poet voices the anger of those subordinated Blacks and protests against their segregation and the mass killing practiced against them. So, the poem can be viewed as "a blending patterns [of] aesthetics and politics [that] are used to depict public spaces. In such milieus everyday facts of life are surrounded by common people suffering from shortage of employment, police violence, segregation…et cetera" (Franca Junior, 2009, p. 14)."Forces of victry" are stepping forward without stopping to "knock 'pon the gate." Thus, White police, with whom Blacks are engaging, are "hollering" as they know that they are facing "forces of victry." So, when Black reached, they found "there's nothing at the gate." The poet, through such a description, celebrates Black identity as a victorious one and, on the other hand, condemns the White as defeated. So, the scream of protest is accompanied by a feeling of pride, thus the poem is the poet's protest and celebration of Black's determination that is indicated by the refrain:Yeah, the Forces of Viktry And we're coming right thru Yeah the forces of victry Know what you're gonna do (Johnson, 1979, lines 1-4)Blacks make up their minds and are decisive to protest and gain their right to live peacefully and with dignity in White society. That's why Blacks "dressed in red / and [are] feeling dread." The red color symbolizes Black's anger and resolution in making their voice heard and their existence, as equal humans, seen. In addition, the image of colors refers to the multiplicity of minorities' attitudes toward White's racism. Fusion of colors visualizes the protest that includes all segregated minorities of Britain, i.e., it is not specified for the Caribbean only:We dressed in red And we're feelin' dread We dressed in green And we're feelin' mean We dressed in purple And we're dressed in Yellow We dressed in Blue And we're coming right thru (Johnson, 1979, lines 25-32)Now the poet shifts to visualize the reaction of Whites

and their attitude toward Blacks. Whites are "coming with their army…their bodies" to stop such resistance and to "mek their rounds." Whites are violent in their meeting with "forces of viktry" in that they fight Blacks with "tanks" and "bombs." By describing the violence that is waged against Blacks, the poet implicitly hints at the savage nature of the White due to their inhuman way of suppressing Black riots and protests.The poet mocks the White army's reaction to the injuries among them: "when ya call a physician / say dem hold position / Them got no ammunition" (Johnson, 1979, lines 40-42). These lines carry different meanings; they may mean the army suffers a lack in the sources of logistic warfare, thus Whites have "got no ammunition." Or ammunition has another meaning than the literal one; it denotes the lack of humanity, courage, unity, and resolution. So, the Whites barely have such ammunition; they are "shape without shade." So, the poet celebrates the solidarity, resolution, strong-will and, above all, the identity of Blacks in opposition to the fragility, inhumanity, and snobbery attitude of the White:When ya call a physician Say them hold position When ya call a physician Them no got no ammunition And them got no position When ya call a physician Them a poor position Them got no ammunition And them got no position (Johnson, 1979, lines 40-48)Thus, Johnson's poem "exhibited the tensions of period of upheaval seen through the eyes of black British-born generation in the 1970s and their attempt to free themselves from the forces of law and order" (Lorenzo, 2012, p. 38). As a result of such tension, Blacks gather themselves to resist and protest. Thus, the poet praises and encourages their protest by calling them "Forces of Viktry."

"It Dread Inna Inglan"

In this poem, Linton discusses themes of racism, protest, and violence. The poem is mainly a reaction against the imprisonment of the West Indian activist George Lindo from Bradford: "Dem frame up George Lindo up in Bradford town / But de Bradford blaks dem a rally round" (Johnson, 1978, lines 1-2). The poet immediately repeats the same two lines with "me seh" to emphasize the segregation of the Blacks and express his anger and protest. The poem goes on to take a confrontational mood between "Maggi Tatcha" and "Bradford Blacks." Linton fights Thatcherism, racism, and the exclusion policy practiced against Black minorities in Britain. The poet voices the determination of Caribbean, Asian, and African communities to be included in British society and gain British citizenship:Maggi Tatcha on di go Wid a racist show But a she haffi go Kaw, Right now, African Asian West Indian An' Black British Stan firm inna Inglan Inna disya time yah. (Johnson, 1978, lines 10-20)So, Linton uses his poetic voice as a resistance weapon to fight back against racism, defend his people, and above all, report the status of Black minorities and their experience in Britain:I have said before that I came to poetry through politics. As a teenager in the late sixties I was swept along in the tidal wave of black consciousness that came in the wake of the civil rights movement in the USA. I joined the British Black Panther movement and discovered black literature. (Johnson, 2010, p. 56)The poet declares that he goes on in protesting and "noh mattah wat dey, [British], say," because all what he is concerned about is "to stay Inna Inglan / Inna disya time yah." So, Johnson is "a dread poet… within the dread history of Jamaica… [he is] capturing a spirit of resistance and subaltern politics" in his poetry (Austin, 2018, p. 52). The last stanza is devoted to George Lindo, the imprisoned Black man, to defend himself and convey a sympathetic image of a Black man being jailed for doing nothing. All his guilt is that he is Black, thus, unwanted and hence segregated. The man protests saying that:George Lindo - I'm is a workin man George Lindo - I'm is a famili man George Lindo - He never do no wrong George Lindo - Di innocent wan George Lindo - I'm nuh carri do dagger George Lindo - I'm is not no robber George Lindo - Dem haffi let I'm goh George Lindo - Dem betta free I'm now ! (Johnson, 1978, lines 35-42)Repeating the name in each line is a method for emphasizing the injustice occurring to this "working, innocent and famili man." And at the same time, the repeating method is an indirect tool of protesting against the racial policy of the White. Thus, Linton's poem is an outraged scream of minorities being subordinated and victimized on the basis of their color. Austin claims that the message in "It Dread Inna Inglan" is clear: "[Linton] is a political poet and his poetry only has meaning in so far as it gives voice to struggle for freedom" (2018, p. 84). Here, the struggle for freedom is foreshadowed in the title of the poem which is very suggestive, since it tells what kind of society Blacks live in.

The Second Section: John Agard

John Agard is a Guyanese poet (1949–). Agard's poetry is marked by anger and protest against the ideology of Britain towards the Black. Britain tries to eliminate the Black's culture by forcing its own identity. As a protest, the poet coins the term "Poetsonian," which is derivative of a "calypsonian"—the musical administrator of the popular tradition of tropical calypso. Agard wishes the term to be a signal to people that "a poet is not just a person dishing out a cerebral pain for the sake of it" (Junior, 2009, p. 49). Then the poet's job, for Agard, is to

maintain his Caribbean heritage that has been colored by the British one, which grants the latter a hybrid identity. Agard uses Creole dialect as a medium to protest on one hand, and on the other, to revive and protect his origin by using his mother tongue. Because language is the tongue of its culture and people's identity and belonging, Agard's resilient language and tone are but a mirror of his anger and of other Black poets as well."Listen Mr. Oxford Don"With "Listen Mr. Oxford Don," Agard protests, in a humorous way, against racial and immigrant issues, in addition to his protest against Standard English language. The poem falls into nine short stanzas. It is written in Creole dialect to denote the verbal protest of the poet against White's superior attitude toward immigrants. So, the poem revolves around the contradiction of Black and White in the form of Mr. Oxford Don, the mighty, and an immigrant, the "other." The immigrant speaker introduces himself by mentioning his place and status:"me simple immigrant / from Clapham Common / I didn't graduate / I immigrate" (Agard, 1985, lines 1-4).Clapham Common is a district in London where mixed races lived. Thus, its mentioning is significant since it shows that such an area in London is racially treated.The base struggle between Mr. Oxford Don and the immigrant is language. Mr. Oxford Don is a representative of the formal English dictionary of Oxford. In this case, language is personified for the sake of addressing and mocking its limited thinking explicitly while criticizing Whites implicitly, and also expressing Black's agony whose segregation reaches to the use of White's language. The speaker says that people like him are viewed as "dangerous" and criminals despite the fact that he does not have "gun, knife" neither any weapon. Whites view the speaker as such because they believe that "the colonized is [to be] elevated above his jungle status" (Fanon, 1968, p. 18) when "mugging de Queen's English." So, his crime is his "mugging de Queen's English," which means that language is sacred and it is violated by the improper grammar, spelling, and pronunciation of the Blacks; thus, language is offended.The speaker is aware of the sanity of language, commenting that he does not need "axe to split up syntax / to smash up grammar," because his use for language in that broken way is natural for a man who is uprooted from his land and started in a new one under the pressure of a colonizer to leave his mother tongue and adopt the colonizer's one. And the "adopt[ion of] a language different from that of the group into which [a person is] born is evidence of a dislocation and separation" (Fanon, 1968, p. 25). So, the poet reminds the British, represented by Oxford, that they are responsible for such "dislocation and separation" and hence the break in the English language. Yet, they insist upon blaming the "simple immigrant" for such a break despite his fall in the gap of double consciousness for being unable to master the colonizer's language nor allowed to use his own.The poet is "warning Mr. Oxford [that he] is a dangerous one," which means he is angry and protesting against such an accusation of "assult[ing] de Oxford dictionary." The speaker's protest appears by reminding that he is a "peaceful man" who is not "violent" yet "dangerous" due to his "human breath" that is regarded as a "dangerous weapon." The breath is a symbol of resistance, anger, and the fight for Black's right and humanity in a society where they were forced to come to. So, the long breath is a "dangerous weapon" that causes "riots" which go against colonizer policy.The poet's anger reaches a point of attacking language explicitly by announcing that "no jail sentences" will be imposed on him. He is going to break rules of grammar by "slashing suffix" and mixing "future with present tense" for the sake of:"self-defense," i.e, using White's language to fight White back. Not only that, the speaker is ready for "making de Queen's English accessory / to [his] /offence." (Agard, 1985, lines 40-44)By using a slash before "offence," the speaker wants to assure that he is ready to ridicule and offend the official language for the sake of defending his own issue of identity and culture. So, due to White's "manners of classifying [the Black], imprisoning him, primitivizing him, decivilizing him," the Black gets angry and thus protests (Fanon, 1968, p. 32). Manners of classification of Blacks are reflected from the choice of the poem's title that classifies Whites as highly educated; hence Blacks are the primitives and savages of Britain."Half-Caste"Agard presents the plight of hybrid identity as a theme for his "Half-Caste." Thus, the poet opens his poem with an odd image of a man "standing on one leg," justifying that he is "half-caste;" thus, he is seeking society to "excuse him." This image is black humor of a man whose identity is marked by hybridity. However, his original identity is not welcomed in society, neither is his hybrid one because he is a Black 'savage' colonized. So, the poet mocks such a society that was responsible for mixing his identity, yet viewing him as "half-caste," as if the Black race contaminated the White one; thus, he should be excluded. Thus, Agard, in this poem, exposes "the contiguous displacement of his Caribbean identity" (Hall, 1990, p. 234).As a protest against such a racist perspective, the poet uses his own language to conform his identity. Moreover, the poet is proud of his mixed identity, seeing it as a unique symphony that has to be played with Black and White keys. This means that Black is as important as White; otherwise, the White alone is worthless:Sit down at dah pino An mix a black key Wid a white key Is a half-caste symphony? (Agard, 1996, lines 20-23)Black is as beautiful as a masterpiece portrayal being created

by Picasso: “when yu say half-caste / yu mean when Picasso mix red and green is a half-caste canvas.” So, praising his own hybrid identity means condemning the White’s snobbery on the other hand. Thus, the language said has a double meaning: explicitly, he celebrates his identity while implicitly, he is reproaching the Whites. The White subordinates Blacks to the extent of regarding them as a “shadow.” So, the poet tries to illustrate “the complexities entailed in the process of trying to [eliminate] a diverse people with a diverse history through [prioritizing] a single, hegemonic identity” that is of the White (Hall, 1990, p. 235).Agard protests through the manipulation of language that tells that Blacks are not shadows; on the contrary, they are the ‘sun’ that the White tries to hide in the same way the cloud does to the sun. Thus, the poet subordinates the White by giving this image of cloudy weather which is true of London. So, as long as the cloud is unable to hide the sun, the White is also unable to eliminate the presence of Blacks:Explain yuself Wha yu mean When yu say half-caste Yu mean when light an shadow Mix in de sky Is a half-caste weather Well in dat case england weather nearly always half-cast (Agard, 1996, lines 30-38)By insisting that Blacks are half-caste, this means that England itself is a half-caste country because its constant weather is a mixture of “light and shadow.” So, the poet adopts White’s mentality to “fite dem back” and defend his own folk.The poet's usage of black humor is clear in telling a funny description of the way the Whites view the Blacks. By seeing Agard as “half-caste,” this means that everything in him, even his attitude and behavior, is “half-caste.” Thus, when he “sleep[s] at night [he] close[s] one eye / when dream [he] dream[s] half-dream.” The agony and the blackness of humor is that he is dehumanized; he is looked upon as half-human which means he is less than being human; in White’s terminology, he is a ‘primitive savage’ Black. While the White is perfect in every sense whether physically, “eye and ear,” or mentally, “whole of yu mind.” However, the tale of segregation and subordination is never finished since the speaker is willing to “tell de other half of the story.” This means that “Otherness” and racism are a forever process moving in a circular manner.In addition to the use of black humor, and through Creole dialect, the poet breaks the rules of Standard English by the use of loose punctuation and capital letters, as in writing England with a small “e” to belittle its status. Also, repetition of phrases, like ‘explain yu self wha yu mean when yu say half-caste’, is but a reinforcement for the poet’s agony and a method of forcing his own problem and identity. Thus, Agard, in this poem, presents “a space of collective belonging; to draw together poet and audience in a relationship of engagement and exchange” (Gilmour, 2014, p. 346). Because the poet is willing to end the policy of exclusion which Agard refers to, in the poem’s title, as “half-caste.”“Checking Out Me History”Gates, a theorist, states that “the black tradition is ‘double-voiced’… this means to speak both the language of the dominant culture and the subordinate culture” (Aldoory, ٢٠١٦, p. 2). This ‘double-voicedness’ renders Black’s literature richer due to the combination of the dominant and subordinate voices. The mixed language is a true feature of John Agard’s “Checking Out Me History,” through which the poet uses the ‘double-voiced’ starting with his vernacular, subordinate, then moving to the standard, dominant:Dem tell me Dem tell me Wha dem want to tell me… Nanny See-far woman Of mountain dream Fire-woman struggle hopeful stream To freedom river (Agard, 2007, lines 1-3, 26-31)Agard uses Creole dialect, that is shown through the spelling based on phonetics, to show that his mother language is an inseparable part of his identity since it mirrors his linguistic heritage. He avoids using pure Standard English as it is, for Africans, a symbol of colonization. Thus, Agard expresses his belonging to the African heritage and his avoidance of dominant language through using coded language, i.e., “vernacular mode” (Aldoory, 2016, p. 2).Whites are willing to “bandage up [his] eye with [his] own history” for the sake of imposing the Whites’ one. By doing so, Whites are able to “blind [him] to [his] own identity,” hence keep enslaving him. Agard speaks on the behalf of the Blacks so as to convey their suppression and segregation. The White’s excluding strategy outrages the poet who protests against such exclusion. His protest takes the form of juxtaposing what the White tells him and what they do not tell. This technique is but an attempt of Agard to reinforce his own history and thus his identity. Thus, the poet goes on telling that Whites are determined in telling him about their history by referring to the battle of Hastings that occurred in 1066, and also about the English conqueror and politician Dick Whittington. But they never tell Blacks about “Toussaint L’Ouverture,” the African slave who was able to defeat Napoleon. Thus, Whites are doing their best to impose their own history and consequently their identity:Dem tell me about 1066 and al dat Dem tell me about Dick Whittington and he cat But Toussaint L’Ouverture No dem never tell me about dat (Agard, 2007, lines 10-13)So, the poet juxtaposes events from White and Black history through which he celebrates his culture, and informs the reader about the achievement of his culture which the dominant culture tries to diminish by omitting it from the poet’s formal education. However, Agard illustrates that the manipulation of history is an effective tool for affecting, negatively, views of Black people of themselves and their potential power. The elimination of the subordinate

culture is a political weapon used for the continuity of Black's enslavement and hence the supremacy of the Whites:Dem tell me about de man who discovers de ballon and de cow who jump over de moon dem tell me about de dish ran away with de spoon but dem never tell me about Nanny de Mroon… but dem never tell me about Mary Seacole… but dem never tell me about de great Zulu… (Agard, 2007, lines 20-25, 32, 45)Names (Nanny de Mroon, Mary Seacole, Zulu) are African rebellious leaders and helping figures whom the poet juxtaposes with White figures (Christopher Columbus and Florence Nightingale) to mock White culture that starts in 1492 with the discovery of the American Continent. Also, he celebrates the courage of his indigenous people and condemns the cowardice of the White. By alluding to historical events like that of 1492, Agard, indirectly, means that White culture is composed of hypothetical tales such as these of Robin Hood and Florence Nightingale, and this contradicts the authenticity of African culture, that is as old as history, which the Whites try to hide (Dickson, 2001, p. 43):Dem tell me wha dem want to tell me Dem tell me about Columbus and 1492 Dem tell me about Florence Nightingale And how Robin Hood used to camp (Agard, 2007, lines 40-44)As a result of White's ideology, the poet is agonized by his double consciousness. Double consciousness is, as defined by Du Bois, a sense of having "two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. A sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. Thus, [the Black] simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows" (Du Bois, 1999, pp. 2-3). But the poet was courageous enough, like his ancestors, to search for his true identity and wear it. By doing so, Agard emerges victorious as he pushes the oppressive ideology and forces his own:Dem tell me wha dem want to tell me But now I checking out me own history I carving out me identity. (Agard, 2007, lines 48-50)

Conclusion

Blacks are subjects for racism, oppression, and segregation in British society. They are always looked upon as "other" for "Other;" thus, Blacks used to be subjects for violence and dehumanization. Such issues agitate Blacks, lead them to be angry, and finally protest. Blacks protest literally and metaphorically. The literal engagement with White police of Brixton and Clapham Common is conveyed directly in the poetry of Linton Kwesi Johnson. Johnson is the angry militant voice of Blacks whose poetry is an anger howl in the face of the White. He believes in violence as a medium of expressing protest and gaining rights. Thus, his poetry is an embodiment of violent protest against the exclusion policy of the White.Unlike Johnson, John Agard adopts black humor as a tool for attacking White's racial attitude toward Blacks. He uses his poetry as a cold weapon to fight White back. In addition, Agard uses juxtaposition as a technique for his protest and as a means for attacking the White ideology of eliminating Black culture. Both poets use Creole dialect as a form of protest and as a way to maintain their Caribbean culture. Thus, it is a form of protest by means of breaking the sanity of the colonizer's language, because the first thing the colonizer does is to make the colonized speak the language of the dominant. As a protest, the colonized breaks the rules of that language by making it a mixture of two languages that is of the colonizer and colonized. And this is very true of the poetry of Agard and Johnson. Thus, protest in Black British poetry is well presented in the poetry of Linton Kwesi Johnson and John Agard.

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