



Ain Shams University
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Literature

**Diaspora and the Re-evaluation of the Black Identity in
Postcolonial Britain
in Selected Plays by Winsome Pinnock**

MA Thesis

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Preface

This thesis seeks to bridge the gap between representation and reality, or between the stereotypical old conception of identity and the new one that has undergone many changes due to the influence of diaspora on postcolonial identity. Accordingly, the aim of this thesis is to explore black British diasporic identity with a particular emphasis on black females in a postcolonial context in four plays by black British female playwright Winsome Pinnock.

By looking into Pinnock's selected plays, namely, *Leave Taking* (1988), *A Hero's Welcome* (1989), *A Rock in Water* (1989), and *Mules* (1996), it should be brought to attention that a special emphasis has been laid on the double-marginalization of black British females of Caribbean origin and their negotiation of their cultural identity in a racist and hostile British context. Such a negotiation can only be achieved through a maintenance of their cultural heritage and across generations' female bonds.

In addition, in its analysis of the above-mentioned plays, this thesis has employed different research tools such as: postcolonial diaspora theory, identity, and postcolonial feminism. By doing so, it has followed the views of postcolonial theorists on diaspora, identity, and hybridity, such as: James Clifford, William Safran, the Boyrans, Frantz Fanon, Stuart Hall, Albert Memmi, Paul Gilroy, Homi

Bhabha, Avtar Brah, and others. It has also been in support of postcolonial feminists such as: Lynette Goddard, Hazel Carby, Gabriel Griffin, Carole Boyce Davies, Lizbeth Goodman, bell hooks, Heidi Safia Mirza, Partibah Parmar, and others.

Winsome Pinnock emerges amongst second-generation black British playwrights as the most prominent and high-profile as a result of her plays being recognized and celebrated by the main stream. She has also been commended for not focusing on venting the anger of black women due to their double- marginalization in racist Britain. Instead, Pinnock puts more emphasis on finding solutions for black diaspora people, in general, and black women in particular, in order to reclaim the loss of their cultural identity in the host country. That's why, her plays focus on the negotiation of the cultural identity of black diaspora people represented by the females on whom diaspora has taken its toll due to their gender and race. Such a negotiation, in Pinnock's plays, can be achieved by reclaiming their past heritage and forming female alliances across first and second generations that would, in turn, help preserve and transmit the culture of their familial home

The four plays discussed in Chapter Two and Three, namely, *Leave Taking* (1988), *A Hero's Welcome* (1989), *A Rock in Water* (1989), and *Mules* (1996) are chosen for their alignment with black

females' sufferings and exploitation in the diaspora and how this reshapes their identities in the host country, Britain.

The thesis is composed of three chapters and a conclusion, and each chapter paves the way for the following one, leading to the thesis final part or the conclusion. Chapter One, *Diaspora and Postcolonial Black Britain*, devotes attention to the postcolonial diaspora, migration of postcolonial subjects to Britain, and the latter's reaction towards the existence of black Caribbean immigrants in Britain. Chapter Two, *Diaspora: Dreams, Dislocation, and Disillusionment* employs, Pinnock's *Leave Taking*, *A Hero's Welcome*, and *Mules*, in order to look into the relationship between colonization and the migration of ex-colonial subjects from the periphery, the Caribbean, to the centre, Britain. It also highlights black females' contemplation of migration and their subsequent alienation, double-marginalization, and exploitation upon their arrival in Britain. Chapter Three: *Diaspora and Black Female Identity* uses Pinnock's *Leave Taking*, *A Hero's Welcome*, *Mules*, and *A Rock in Water* to highlight the effects of diaspora on black identity, in general, and black female identity, in particular, and their subsequent double-marginalization and alienation in Britain due to their race and gender. The conclusion section summarizes and concludes what has been discussed across the three chapters of the thesis.

Chapter One

Diaspora and Black Britain

Chapter Two

**Diaspora: Dreams, Dislocation,
and Disillusionment**

Chapter Three

Diaspora and Black Female Identity

Conclusion

Endnotes

Works Cited

Preface

Chapter One

Diaspora and Black Britain

The term ‘diaspora’ has its origin in the Greek verb ‘diasperio’ which means ‘I scatter’. Therefore, ‘diaspora’ “seems to be as old as history itself” (Bhat, 6). It was originally used to signify the exile of the Jews from Palestine by the Babylonians and their settlement in other countries. It is also pointed out by William Safran that diaspora was basically about “the exile of the Jews from their historic homeland and their dispersion throughout many lands” (83), and as a result they suffered from “oppression and moral degradation” (81).

However, Chariandy warns that, “by privileging one particular historical conception of diaspora we threaten to directly or indirectly make all other conceptualizations of diaspora derivative or secondary, or illegitimate” (5). In relation to this, Clifford emphasizes the need “to recognize the strong entailment of Jewish history on the language of diaspora without making that history a definitive model”, and that Jewish diaspora can be taken as “nonnormative [sic] starting points for a discourse that is travelling or hybridizing in new global conditions” (306). In the same vein, but from a broader perspective, Tölölian believes that, “the term that

once described Jewish, Greek, and Armenian dispersion now shares meaning with a larger semantic domain that includes words like immigrant, expatriate, refugee, guest-worker, exile community, ethnic community”, in addition, diasporas are “ the exemplary communities of the transnational moment” (4-5). Henceforth, postcolonial studies of diaspora have taken the Jewish experience as a starting point in defining the characteristics of ‘diaspora’ focusing more on the nature and motives of the diasporic journey, rather than on its historical origin as highlighted by Brah in her book *Cartographies of Disapora: Contesting Identities* (1996):

At the heart of the notion of diaspora is the image of the journey. Yet not every journey can be understood as diaspora. Diasporas are clearly not the same as casual travel. Nor do they normatively refer to temporary sojourns. Paradoxically, diasporic journeys are essentially about settling down, about putting roots ‘elsewhere’. The question is not simply *who travels* but *when, how, and under what circumstances?* [sic]”. (182)

Clifford maintains that Safran describes “a variety of collective experiences in terms of their similarity and difference from a defining model” (304) which the latter has devised in terms of: