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Towards A Black British Fiction of Memory: Narrating the Peripheral Space of English Identity in Andrea Levy 'Small Island

قراءة في الأدب الإنجليزي المعاصر :

علاقة الذاكرة الجماعية بالهوية الإنجليزية المنفتحة في رواية "الجزيرة الصغيرة" للكاتبة أندريا ليفي.

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Abstract :

The present paper aims at exploring how English identity is reconstructed through the narrative of memory in *Small Island* by the Black British writer Andrea Levy. It is argued that the narrative of this latter carries in its seeds a transnational memory that crosses the exclusive boundary of post-war identity that Britain underwent during the 1940s. This form of aesthetics has genuinely grounded the diasporic experience in the British cultural memory so that it became a warm home for the Caribbean immigrants of the Windrush Generation. Being written in the first decade of the twenty-first century, the novel highly contributes to enlighten contemporary multicultural Britain by creating multiracial sites of memory that function as new markers of British identity.

Keywords : Black representation, Collective memory, English identity, Black British Fiction.

ملخص :

إن استعمال لوحة القيادة كأداة لمراقبة التسيير بدأ ينتشر مؤخرا في كثير من المؤسسات نظر لبساطتها وسهولتها. وما بلغت النظر للوحة القيادة أنها تعتمد على مجموعة من المؤشرات المهمة والمعلومات الأساسية المتعلقة بنشاط المؤسسة، والتي تسمح بشكل أساسي باتخاذ القرارات الرشيدة وتحقيق الأهداف المسطرة. وفي إطار التنمية المستدامة تعد لوحات القيادة من الأهمية بمكان سيما فيما يتعلق بقياس الأداء، لذا كان من الواجب تكيف هذه الأداة مع مبادئ التنمية المستدامة، لينتقل دورها من مجرد قياس الأداء المالي إلى قياس الأداء الشامل بأبعاده الثلاث: الاقتصادي، الاجتماعي والبيئي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: نظام لوحات القيادة،

التنمية المستدامة، الأداء المستدام.

Introduction :

Scholars of various academic investigations and inquiry have thoroughly considered fiction as a vivid space. Its textuality may reflect the historicity of its enunciating time as it may generate a new ground for creating a new socio-economic reality that would shape the identity of the reader/narrator. In this respect, contemporary British fiction appears to be utterly influenced by the immense contribution of Black British writers who stepped from the alienating phase of diaspora into a new phase of recognition by forming through their writings a sort of British identity that bypassed the rigidity of essentialism (Hall, 1996, p165). Doubtless, the trajectory of this latter has genuinely evolved to include all sort of races and origins. This fact has definitely paved the way towards what is known as British multiculturalism.

The present paper seeks to examine one of the outstanding novels produced by Andrea Levy whose iconic imagination seemed to be related directly with the moments of exploring what it is like to be Black in Britain. In this regard, *Small Island* has been chosen as a novel for study for many reasons. First of all, it has been considered by scholars as a novel of transformation in the sense that it echoes the psychological development of the British and Black characters motivated by the first encounter during the second world war and the second encounter, which was animated by the rise of Black immigration towards Britain during the post-war moment (Stein, 2004 and Haapanen, 2007). Second, the novel under study has been perceived by the researcher as a focal attempt to restore the collective memory about the first wave of the Black diaspora who metaphorically considered the British Empire as their "mother country" which in reality was nothing more than a delusion. This latter has clearly been communicated in the novel through the means of racial prejudice that the English had about the Black subjects. Third, the novel seems to question any utopian appeals that surround the concept of multiculturalism today and proves that this concept is the outcome of a tremendous struggle that the first wave of Black immigrants has undergone in order to become British.

The present study is significant in the sense that it provides the novel with a different reading from the previous ones. It does not center its analysis on the racial prejudice that took place between the English and the Black during the first wave of immigration (Haapanen, 2007). It does not trace the psychological development that the major characters of the novel have come through across the story or identify the diasporic aspects in its narrative (Krkova, 2013). However, it definitely approaches the novel from a different perspective that centers its analysis on how post-war British identity is formed/perceived in the novel and how this latter functions as an effective collective memory for contemporary multicultural Britain. In other words, the research paper tackles the following research question: How does Black British Female Fiction of the twenty-first century construct the controversial

collective memory of the post-war moment so that it evokes an identity of fluidity rather than an essential identity of exclusion?

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. The Question of Identity Formation and Ethnicity:

Identity is a complex concept that is genuinely related to more than one field of research. Numerous sociological, psychological, literary and philosophical scholars have considered the question of identity for long from different perspectives and towards various ends. Within this general scope, the concept of identity might be categorized under two levels: personal identity or individuation which is the center of the theories of Erik Erikson and James Marcia who defined the stages of identity that the individual comes across in order to achieve his/her own identity (Kroger and Marcia, 2011). On the other hand, identity is perceived from a collective perspective as a shared sense of affiliation that a particular group has developed due to given shared features or social codes. This type has been defined by Tajfel as:

- that part of an individual's self-concept, which derives from his
- knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups)

together with the value and emotional significance, attached to that membership (Tajfel, 1978, p63).

To demonstrate, one may refer to the different types of social identity that are related to group association. For instance, national identity is a sort of identification where the individual affiliates oneself to a given group on the terms of national belonging. Another type is the ethnic identity where the person associates oneself under the label of a given ethnicity. Not to mention cultural identity or religious identity in which the individual defines his/her sense of affiliation according to the cultural or religious product that his/her group adopt. In this sense, the concept of "social identity" functions through three processes: categorization, identification, and comparison. According to Tajfel and Turner, they construct the individual's perception within a broad collective entity that is defined under such label and characterized with particular social codes.

In this respect, it is highly important to notice that the British identity is connected to the category of collective or social identity, which seems to encompass traits of cultural, national and ethnic identity. In order to explore this phenomenon, one needs to rely on the cultural studies that started in the 1970s so that to debunk its constructing components during and after the age of the British Empire. Within this scope, the Black British cultural theorist Stuart Hall has clearly responded to the silence that took place during the first wave of cultural studies in the 1950s about the issues of colonialism, imperialism and their impact on the construction of Englishness. In this respect, he argued that the concept of identity is defined according to two different paradigms. Initially and from the modern model, cultural identity is considered as an already fixed "one true self" that essentially existed within

the group of people that share a common "history and ancestry". (Hall, 1994, p223)

Accordingly, identity in being essentially constructed is regarded as an absolute entity that seems to reduce all forms of human variety to nothing but a powerful homogeneity that based its vital existence upon excluding all what does not belong to it. In this respect, this model of identity processes the individual through two phases; either a state of belongingness or otherness. Furthermore, this sort of social construction is dangerous in the sense that it functions based on the denominator of race or ethnicity which falsely perceived as a type of national/cultural identity. Subsequently, English identity has totally been criticized to fall in this category during the nineteenth and twentieth century due to various motives.

Stuart Hall has deconstructed these motives in his article "the Local and the Global" by exploring the formation of Englishness as a cultural identity form that co-existed with the era of Empire and imperialism. In this respect, he demonstrated how British identity has managed to associate itself narrowly with the ethnic construct of Englishness in order to map the superior exclusive boundaries of the royal mission in leading the world in trade and industry at the expense of non-English inferior other. In other words, British identity is constituted in an ideological apparatus that relies on a binary system of representation that justifies the practices of British imperialism as a noble civil mission. However, as Stuart noted:

- The regimes of representation...were placed in their otherness, in their marginality, by the nature of the "English eye," the all encompassing "English eye." The "English eye" sees everything else but is not so good at recognizing that it is itself actually looking at something ... That is to say, it is strongly centered; knowing where it is, what it is, it places everything else. And the thing which is wonderful about English identity is that it didn't only place the colonized other, it placed *everybody* else. (Hall, 1997, p20-1)

Doubtless to say that during the imperial era, English identity conspicuously formed its sense of identification by absorbing all the difference that the British people have in terms of class, race, gender, and region. In doing so, it creates a unique unitary model of identity. This latter is regarded by Stuart Hall as a typical "masculine" middle-class English ethnicity. No wonder, Englishness is an ethnically constructed type of identity that has ironically represented those who live in the British Isles and their colonies for centuries.

The aforementioned cultural criticism towards the totalitarian form of identity that the modern model constructed has definitely paved the way to a postmodern rejection of its discursive closure. Inspired by Michael Foucault and Derrida, Stuart Hall has introduced the second model of identity which deconstructs any sort of absolute essentialism. In this respect, he asserts that any identity is fluid in its nature because:

- Identities are never unified and, in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions. (Hall, 1996, p4)

A tremendous shift has been marked in the sense of approaching identities. Initially, its primordial source that existed across history has finally been denied and replaced by a discursive construction within which the individual or a given group "position" themselves. In this respect, the individual "becomes" what he/she chose to position oneself with rather than being what he/she "essentially" is.

Furthermore, cultural identity is grounded within the frames of representation rather than being independent as a non-textual entity and it exists in the "imaginary" rather than the real. The postmodern interpretation of identities has therefore clearly debunked the ideological assumptions that construct its exclusive/ inclusive hegemony. Additionally, this fluid interpretation has brought about a gigantic interest in investing the efforts to see how fiction offers a space of narrated identity that the reader positions oneself with. A space that is considered as a "third space" where identities of white English characters and Black British or diasporic characters seem to negotiate their existence and agency (Bhabha, 1994; Soja, 1996).

2.2. "The Burden" of Representing Black British Identity in Fiction:

Given the fact that identity is discursive in its nature as it exists within the frames of narrativity and representation and that it has a powerful act of absorption or exclusion (Hall, 1996, p5). This would definitely pave the way for fiction to display a very focal role in creating a space which reflects how English and Black British identities are shaped/constituted within the textuality of their authors. Not only fiction can come up with thematic concerns about socio-economic conditions that surround its production, but it also genuinely mediates the position within which the author/narrator associates oneself with in order to identify what he/she becomes. It also evokes the vested interest to repress the otherness of the identity that it seeks to represent. In this regard, the act of narration definitely becomes a powerful act of representing oneself at the expense of the other.

Within this scope, Stuart Hall has argued that Black British cultural politics has undertaken three fundamental phases since the end of the Second World War in search of recognition via the right of self-representation. The first wave has started during the first decades of the post-war moment where Blackness has been represented as an "object" rather than a subject, be it in film, art or fiction. To demonstrate, it is highly valuable to consider the works of black writers and artists of this phase who were born "in the 1920s and 1930s in the far-flung corners of the British Empire" and came to settle in Britain during 1950s and 1960s (Hall, 1996, p166). The first writers of the black diaspora have deeply identified their thematic and artistic concerns with

the fabric of their homeland. As an example, one may refer to Roy Heath who in spite of being a British resident for more than forty years, his writings were directly addressed to his Guyanese people (Bronwyn 1999, web).

This silence on the Black experience in Britain has deeply left a huge impact on the issue of representation. It is conspicuously evident that it effectively offered a gigantic space for the essential identification of Englishness to narrate blackness as an objectified other. Out of its narrow ethnic categorization, it managed to exclude all Black and Asian subjects as inferior others. Thus, this first wave of representation has clearly witnessed the repressive practice of white English hegemony that created poetics and politics of oppression in one hand. On the other hand, it echoed the passive role that the first wave of diasporic writers had because of their engagement with the myth of return narrative.

The second phase, however, has started to be categorized under the label of "the burden of representation" (Hall, 1996, p166). It is doubtless to notice that this latter has echoed the rise of social awareness of all non-English subjects to unite under the social label of Blackness to resist against the English hegemony for the sake of redefining the British construct. In so doing, West Indies, Chinese and Indians have participated in representing themselves under the imaginary Black identification within the boundaries of Britain. Thus, this fact has genuinely created Black British identity as a counter-hegemonic ideology that seeks to open a contesting space that recognizes its affiliation to the British map. For instance, despite the fact that they have different origins, writers such as Selman Rushdie, Caryl Phillips, and Hanif Kureishi have deeply united to defend and represent Black Britishness in their writings. In this respect, Stuart Hall has pointed out that during this phase "Black artists and cultural workers" created a formative representation that constructed the Black British agency and gave it a voice as a formative subject (Hall, 1996, p166).

The third phase has continuously been regarded as a post-ethnic representation of identity. It shows that Black representation has equally imitated the essentially constructed and exclusive mode of identity that the English invented during the era of empire (Hall, 2006, p13). In this way, it seeks to absorb all sorts of diversity that immigrants have; be they from West Indies, India, China and Pakistan and so on. Not to mention, the characteristics of gender, class and religion that this hegemonic mode has already erased. In this regard, Stuart Hall and many other black British writers have decided to go for the politics of difference rather than sticking with the politics of hegemony. Therefore, identities must be deconstructed in a new space of narrativity that must be aware of all the differences that the Black British construct has already excluded in search of representation. It is within this scope of representation, that mixed-race writers such as Zadie Smith, Bernardine Evaristo and the Black British writer Andrea Levy have invested

their creative imagination to celebrate a new British identity that is fluid enough to encompass all its different subjects.

3. Research Gap and Method of Analysis

As it has already mentioned above, representing identity has thoroughly become a matter of social awareness around the variables that shape its construction within a given narrative form. In this regard, Black Britishness has continued its legacy under the artistic works of brilliant writers who successfully highlighted the weaknesses of essentializing an exclusive identity. It is by demonstrating Stuart Hall's cultural conclusion that each identity is constructed within a particular narrative of history, identity narrative has profoundly provided the audience with a poetic form that reflects the genuine backbone of British multiculturalism.

Andrea Levy is among those Black British writers who have artistically articulated the voice of plurality and fluidity of Britishness in contemporary literature because of her diasporic origin. She was born in North London in 1956 to Jamaican immigrants who arrived on the Empire Windrush in 1948. In an interview, she stated that "writing has always been a journey of discovery about my past and my family. All my books look at what it is to be black and British, trying to make the invisible visible" (Interview with Andrea Levy, 2006, p 540). This duality of identity has been thoroughly explored in all her literary works. To such extent, the critic Mark Stein has classified her among the Black British writers who are bold to remap their existence within the British boundaries. It is prominent, therefore, to refer to her decisive engagement of reshaping Britishness and Englishness as she stated: "If Englishness does not define me, then redefine Englishness" (Arana, 2004, p21).

Her novel *Small Island* like all her literary works are deeply engaged with the former decisive redefinition of Englishness as well as Britishness. Its setting tackles the first encounter of the Jamaican subject with its "mother country" during the war and its aftermath. In a polyvocal narration, Andrea tried to tell the story from the English perspective of Bernard and Queenie and the diasporic reflection of Gilbert and Hortense who sailed to Britain on the Empire Windrush in 1948. In this respect, it is very important to consider the research papers that have addressed the novel under study from the perspective of identity narrative in order to highlight the gap and the contribution that this paper aims to accomplish.

It is worth noticing that literature that tackled the novel under study might be categorized under two levels. The first level is structural in nature since it seeks to question the genre of the novel. In this respect, one may refer to Mark Stein who argued that the novel under study belongs to the Bildungsroman or what is known as the novel of transformation since it depicts how characters from England and Jamaica have evolved psychologically to have an awakening experience because of the journey that they had (25). On the other hand, many researchers and scholars have approached the novel from a

thematic concern by trying to depict the tragic outcome of the first encounter between the Black subject and the English host during the aftermath of the Second World War. In this regard, it is noteworthy to refer to the works of Irene Pérez Fernandez (2009) and Ilona Haapanen (2007) which reveal the negative impact of essential exclusive Englishness; this latter has a burden upon the Black immigrants of Windrush generation. At this level, diasporic identity has been represented as a victimized object due to the tragic issues of racial prejudice and otherness that are depicted as the main common seeds of Britain during the 1950s. With this in mind, the focus of this paper aligns itself with the thematic concern, yet it seeks to evoke the concept of collective memory to see how it has successfully implemented to suppress the essentialism of English identity and offer another space of fluidity and difference.

The method of textual analysis is inscribed in the constructivist approach that aims at deconstructing the representative codes that the text reveals. In this sense, the study is interpretative in its essence since it is concerned with how the text represents the evolution of British identity through the implementation of strategies that construct the concept of collective memory and make it criticize and refute any sort of enclosure and essentialism. It is significant to trace how cultural/collective memory has been shaped to constitute a British identity that is fluid in its nature. Else, it is very important to rely on the method of close reading in order to select quotes and scenes which are structured around how the concept of collective memory interacts with the fact of representing identities within the text.

4. British Identity in *Small Island* between being essential and becoming fluid:

As it has already argued by numerous scholars the concept of collective memory has an interdisciplinary nature since it has three levels that make it related to different areas. The social, the material/medial and the cognitive (Nünning, 2008, p4-5). With regard to this latter, it interacts at two levels: The first one is clearly depicted in the "biological memory" that designates literally the individual who deals with and influenced by the "socio-cultural contexts". In so doing, the past is constructed selectively according to "the present knowledge and needs". Since cultural memory and identity are deeply related as the former is effectively intervened in re/constructing the latter, it is the task of the researcher to uncover the strategies that are employed by the author to deeply (re)construct the British identity under the umbrella of multiculturalism. Although "essential identity" has been denied and rejected back to days of the critical advocacy of John Locke who considered identities as pure constructions of "acts of memory" as the "past Self" is aligned with "the present Self", still it appeared as a clear reality in the British setting where post-war identities are depicted as essential and challenging one another (5-6).

This fact has certainly led Andrea Levy to rely on the fluidity of collective memory in order to revive its process of openness and (re)formation.

4.1. Finding Home for the Windrush Generation:

Small Island is inscribed in the fiction of memory that meditates through its narrative the markers of the British identity. Fredrick Bartlett has noticed that any act of remembering is "primarily concerned with how the past is constructed in the present to serve the needs of whatever actions we currently engaged in" (Nünning, 2008, p213). The novel has opened up its space with an act of commemorating the British Empire Exhibition in 1924 as the character Queenie has witnessed the first encounter with the African continent. The author has genuinely reflected how the "sites of memory" has been employed to mark the identity of exclusion in Britain. All British subjects from the colonies are depicted as inferior other: "Australia smelt of apples...Hong Kong smelt of drains, and India was full of women brightly dressed in strange long colorful fabrics". As for Africans, they were depicted as "black as the ink" who cannot understand English because they are not civilized and the only thing that they can grasp is "drums"(Levy, 2006, p5). In this respect, Andrea Levy has depicted how sites of memory can ideologically turn to construct an essential identity. This latter represents an act of closure where the English identity must exist upon the shades of its otherness.

Thus, this stereotypical representation has a minimalist hue. On the one hand, it offers a symbol of "the empire in little" and on the other one, it justifies the English superiority by claiming ownership of British colonies. No wonder, this site of memory is racially constructed to constitute a hegemonic English identity who acts upon the inferior other. To that end, the prologue engaged the reader in an act of remembering how the institutions of the nation-state might turn out into an ideological apparatus that mark the frontiers of the essential identity of Englishness.

This site of memory does not only construct the black subject as an inferior other, but it paved the way to the rise of racial prejudice in the English society during and after the second world war. As an example, Bernard and his neighbour have continuously expressed their hostility towards the presence of Black people in England. By referring to stereotypical representation that seems equivocal to the one depicted in the exhibition. Again, the words "darkie" and "colie" have been utilized as modes of excluding and rejecting the diasporic subject be they from India or West Indies. As a demonstration, Hortense has been rejected to be a teacher because of her skin (454), Gilbert was not acceptable to have a job, not because of his abilities but because of his dark colour as well (215/313). Even the neighbour of Queenie has blamed this latter for accepting to providing the Black immigrants with a lodger in her house (200). Not to mention how blackness is depicted as exotic and threatening as an English child run away when he saw Hortness saying "you are black" (463).

In this respect, English identity has been depicted as an ethnic construction that formed its identification by excluding all people that belong to the interior space of otherness. Furthermore, this binary duality has been commemorated ideologically through the institutional apparatus of the nation-state such as: the Empire exhibition and the cinema. That is to say, that otherness is designed ideologically as a marker of an essential identity and it institutionally inclined to act and to turn out to violence as it excludes all sorts of difference. Andrea has strategically narrated the racial function that an institution like the cinema might display as Gilbert was forced to sit in the back seats where all the black people must stay. By resisting the racial segregation, the cinema turns into a chaotic scene costing the life of Bernard's father who was mistakenly shot in the mob (184).

The boundaries of the essential identity have been clearly shown in the final encounter between Bernard, who served the war and holds racial prejudice against non-English people, and Gilbert, who has a Caribbean origin and also served the Second World War, is tragically depicted through the imagery of blood (486-7). Coupled with the fantasy of belonging, both fought the war for a better Britain; then again none has his wish and space granted. Bernard has partially lost his memory and lost his father and his house in the war, while Gilbert has felt a sense of disillusionment to find out that the myth of the mother country is nothing more than self-delusion. Both Gilbert and Hortness have been covered with blood. As Queenie gave birth to her child in the room assisted by Hortness, Bernard attacked Gilbert when he found out that the baby's face is black thinking mistakenly that he is the one to be blamed. As a tragic consequence, the mixed-race baby is forced to leave his English mother Queenie and live with the Caribbean couple because of his dark skin. Queenie believed that her child will have a better life as he lives among "his own kind" skipping any sort of xenophobia and racial prejudice that he may encounter by Bernard. This would bear to the mind Helena's argument about how many mixed-raced children were forced to leave their English mothers simply due to the petals of racism and essentialism (2005, p78-79).

Furthermore, the author seems to engage the English weather in a metaphorical way in order to depict the extent of alienation and exclusion that the Caribbean characters have experienced in their Mother Country. Else, the old house of Queenie has seemed like a symbol for the toughness and the conservative nature of the English society. Firstly, Hortness was shocked to find out that Gilbert is living in a very old room in England, she stated her moments of distress questioning the way the English live: "Is this way the English live" and he justified: "There been a war here and everyone lives like this". Secondly, as Hortness found out that she is not qualified to teach in England because she is a "darkie", she realized how fake it is the fantasy that she constructed about "the mother country". When she was asked by a boy

about the weather, she responded sadly: "I have found that this is a very cold country" (Levy, 2005, p466). The state of coldness is figuratively depicted how the dreams and ambitions of the first wave of the Caribbean diaspora were buried because of the policy of exclusion that hindered their integration. In this respect, England has been symbolically represented as a cold old house. To put it another way, the author has genuinely reflected the experience of displacement and its tragic upcoming on the Caribbean subjects. Thus, the narrative aims at integrating the story of the Windrush generation in the collective memory of Britain and demonstrating the negative impact of essentialism.

Not only England was depicted as a cold old house, but the narrator also continues to exert a metaphorical display that depicts the tragic consequences of essentialism and racism via the use of personification. Accordingly, Lima Maria Helena has argued that Queenie stands as an Allegory to Post-war Britain which is depicted as a white mother who is immature and she abandoned her child (Levy, 2005, p79). The metaphor of motherhood in the story has depicted how Queenie was ready to reject her child by begging Hortness and Gilbert to adopt him so that he will be able to live with "his kind" (Levy, 2005, p522). This metaphorical equation has deeply depicted the sense of alienation and estrangement that the Caribbean subjects have undertaken. In one sense, they were exposed to a colonial education that educates them about the British Empire and communicates to them the sense of being her children. Then again, the Empire itself has rejected to welcome them at their home. In this way, Queenie personified the English society as it rejected the Caribbean immigrants.

By contrast, the novel does not seem to victimize the dislocation and mobility of the Caribbean immigrants towards England. It does not only explore and demonstrate the tragic consequences of the encounter of essential identities based on racial identifications, but it also seeks to redefine the British identity by proposing a fluid model. By following the proposed model of identity that Stuart Hall has theorized, the British identity seems to experience a thorough change in its construction. Andrea Levy has relied on a polyvocal narrative as she juxtaposed the plot of the novel with stories from a different background. Where Queenie and Bernard tell their story from an English perspective, Hortness and Gilbert counter the aforementioned discourse by telling theirs from a Black lens.

In this regard, the myth of "the small island" or "the Empire in little" has been deconstructed. In one hand, the landscapes of both Jamaica and India have completely been narrated to reflect the transnational space that the British Empire has. On the other hand, it evokes to the reader's mind that the stories of the empire and its subjects must be commemorated as British site of memory. In this regard, the Caribbean subject has definitely the right to include their stories and memories as a part of the British Collective memory.

That is to say, the narrative aims to delineate the multiracial markers for redefining Britishness/Englishness so that it would have a space for the Caribbean Diaspora. The end of the novel has clearly meditated this issue as Hortness and Gilbert has finally succeeded to find a new house in England. This mobility is a clear sign of change and a metaphorical explanation for finding one's own home in "the mother country". In this respect, Naz Rassol has interpreted the act of finding a home in the host country as:

- A journey of learning to understand the past experiences in order to clarify the present – and from that position of knowledge to find a voice – and, more importantly, to define a future (1997, p190).

Conclusion:

Finally and by taking everything into consideration, it seems reasonable to assume that Andrea Levy *'Small Island'* belongs to the fiction of memory. Notably, it offers a type of narrative that deconstructs the ideological markers of essential identities where races contest to survive alienating spaces and captive boundaries. Following the theoretical stance of Birgit Neumann, it certainly rejects the "pre-existing cultural discourse" of racism and essentialism (Nünning, 2008, p335). With this in mind, it continuously subscribes to "the negation of cultural memory" that is exclusive and alienating in its nature where it provides the reader and the community with an imaginative alternative that empowers the marginalized Caribbean immigrants by giving them a voice and a space of belonging via constructing new sites of memory. In this regard, Andrea Levy *'Small Island'* has creatively integrated the story of the Windrush generation in the collective memory of Britain. As a result, Britishness/Englishness has been redefined to offer a space of identification for the diasporic subject.

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