

Black Feminism in a Twentieth-Century British Play

Dina Abd EL Naby Mohamed

Ph.D. Researcher

English teacher

dinaabdelnaby@yahoo.com

Abstract

This paper attempts to explore black women in search of identity in Winsome Pinnock's play *Leave Taking* (1986). Winsome Pinnock is a playwright who was born in London to parents who are both migrants from Jamaica. The play traces the lives of a mother, Enid and her two daughters, Del and Viv, who have migrated from the Caribbean to England for an improved existence. These women characters are signifiers of second generation immigrants; they are stereotypical migrants in psychological exile, disconnected transplants attempting to re-root. Black feminism in Britain sheds light on the rejection of old constructions, as womanhood/motherhood, laid on women's life, and establishing equal rights for black women. The search for self-identity and the struggle to gain equality with the whites or to obtain access to positions of power is the main issue the paper articulates. The black women suffer in the domestic sphere where the white women claim their dominance over them. They treat the black women as passive, voiceless victims and the portrayal of white women as modern, educated and empowered. The black women suffer from the double colonization which not only against their race, but also their gender. As a result of this harsh and oppressed treatment, the black women express their own experiences of marginalization and empowered black identity in the white society. However, black Feminist playwrights want to build a new world where everyone would be free from the bonds of race and oppression. It discusses also the meaning of home in the context of location and dislocation, migration and identity, belonging and displacement. In this respect, the paper aims to shed light on the black women who contemplate to establish a certain black identity questioning the place of the black characters within British society in addition to documenting their struggle to empower their black identity.

Key Words: Black Feminism, Personal Identity, Black British plays, empowerment, Double Colonization

مستخلص عربي:

تحاول هذه الورقة تقديم النساء السود باحثات عن الهوية في البلدان الغربية. سيتم الإشارة إلى ذلك في المسرحية التالية: "القيام بأجازة" لوينسم بينوك (١٩٨٦). وينسم بينوك هي كاتبة مسرحية ولدت في لندن لابوين من جامايكا. تتتبع المسرحية حياة أم ، إنيد وابنتيها ، ديل وفيف، اللتين هاجرتا من منطقة البحر الكاريبي إلى إنجلترا من أجل حياة أفضل. الشخصيات النسائية لها دلالات على انهن مهاجرات من الجيل الثاني. إنهن مهاجرات نمطيات في المنفى غير مترابطات بأصولهن تحاولن ان يعدن الاتصال بجذورهن. تسلط النسوية السوداء في بريطانيا الأضواء على إزالة الاعراف القديمة، مثل الأنوثة / الأمومة، التي توضع على حياة النساء، وانشاء المساواة في الحقوق للنساء السود. إن البحث عن الهوية الذاتية والنضال من أجل تحقيق المساواة مع الرجل أو الوصول إلى مواقع السلطة هو سمة أساسية يظهرها هذا البحث. تعاني النساء السود من تكريس حياتهن للحياه المنزليه حيث يشعرن بهيمنة النساء البيض عليهن. يعاملن النساء البيض النساء السود على انهن سلبيات لا صوت لهن. وتصوير النساء البيض على انهن حديثات و متعلمات وذوات صلاحيات. تعاني النساء السود من الاستعمار المزدوج الذي ليس فقط ضد عرقهن ولكن أيضاً ضد جنسهن. نتيجة لهذه المعاملة القاسية والمضطهدة، تعبر النساء السوداوات عن تجاربهن الخاصة في التهميش وتمكين هويتهم السوداء في المجتمع الأبيض. وبالرغم من ذلك تريد الكاتبات السوداوات بناء عالم جديد يكون فيه الجميع متحررات من روابط الذكوريه والنقالييد. كما تناقش هذه الورقة ايضا معنى البيت في سياق الموقع والتشرد والهجرة والهوية والانتماء والشئات. في هذا الصدد، تهدف الورقة إلى تسليط الضوء على النساء السود اللواتي يفكرن في إنشاء هوية سوداء معينة تتساءل عن مكانة الشخصيات السوداء في المجتمع البريطاني بالإضافة إلى توثيق نضالهن من أجل تمكين هويتهم السوداء .

الكلمات المفتاحية: النسوية السوداء ، الهوية الشخصية ، المسرحيات البريطانية السوداء ، اعتماد على الذات (التمكين) ، الاستعمار المزدوج

Black Feminism has experienced different perspectives in Africa, Britain, and America. Within African cultural traditions, beliefs and practices such as an equality of women with men, the domestic role of women, and the exclusion of females from certain rituals, have marginalized women and devaluated them as second-class citizens. The domestic sphere of a woman which limits her is part of their cultural traditions. Therefore, black women travel to Britain to search for their personal identity and independence. They imagine that Britain is a desired country where they can travel to collect money, get a good education, good opportunities, and live a decent life. However, it is unreal image about Britain and they find out that they can get their empowerment by returning to their homeland. Winsome Pinnock's play *Leave Taking* sheds light on unreal image that the black women perceive during their travel to Britain where they imagine falsely they can achieve their personal identity there.

Black women in Britain have no place in the constructions of gender, race, and class. Black British Feminism places gender at the core of the new working class. Amina Mama's article *Black Women, The Economic Crisis and The British State* remarks that "the crisis and the strategies have both political, ideological and economic manifestation, and that these amount to a regrouping, reformulation and restructuring by Forces that have a history of domestic and international exploitation in the interests of capital"(25). Black women compared to the white women are excessively employed in low-paid, low-status work. They have no place in the promoted positions. "The pervasive image of the invisible or passive black woman was interrupted by the labor struggles that exploded in the 1970s and exposed the world of British sweatshops" (23). They hold lower positions in the white community. They are oppressed because of their race that hinders their position and experience. They are held in a position of servitude and weakness. Even black women often prefer to be homemakers, though poverty pushes many of them back into the workforce.

Black British women playwrights who advocate for the problems of women and prefer being described as writing from women's perspective, have the opportunity of "transforming the gendered rhetoric of belonging in new ways" (May, 111). The main issues, which are discussed by the black playwrights, are mainly concerned with the identity and belonging, location and dislocation, migration and exile, in spite of the fact that they address male subjectivity regardless female one. Thus, black British women playwrights "created their own vanguard in relation to mainstream theatres" (Peacock, 226) and aimed at expressing their dissatisfaction with the genre they perform as the main acts of black women are about man domination and sex ideas. They seek to come out of being mere women who are specialized in the role of sexual pleasure, wives, mothers, and caretakers for their husbands. As Lynnette Goddard points out, following Bell Hook's ideas on the crucial role that the mass media plays a vital role in shaping the representation of black female identities,

the key to changing views about black humanity therefore lies within the power afforded by the representation of ideas [which] have to first be presented in our imaginations before they can be present in our lives, which is particularly crucial for representations of the 'other' that need to work towards decolonising institutionalised ideas about race, gender and sexuality and imagine new ways of seeing. (Goddard, 5)

Accordingly, Black British feminist movement begins to be questioned by the black women themselves. The search for personal identity has turned to be the center of their analysis. They advocate their rights to feel at home in the Western countries and to feel freer from sex, race, gender and class. In the space opened up by the discourse on Post-Colonial identity and difference, black women succeed in building a new world where everyone can achieve empowerment and would be free from the bonds of patriarchy and traditions of Western community.

The Black British feminist movement plays a vital role in the life of black women. It is used to claim the supremacy of the whites over the blacks in the Western communities. This leads them to search for their personal identity in the white society. It provides the black women with political positions in Britain and somehow they exceed the white dominance. The concept of double colonization, in which the black women are not only oppressed by their gender, but also by their race, is very linked to the concepts of hybridity and diaspora. The black women struggle against power, identity, and political positions that are involved in the discourses of transformation. They succeed in gaining the full rights and privileges of being an American citizenship.

The main ideas of writings in collections such as *Black British Feminism: A Reader*, edited by Hazel V. Carby and Heidi Safia Mirza, are orientated around issues of identity and difference, exemplifying new directions within critical black British feminist theory. Black feminist scholars explore issues as diverse as mixed-race identity, lone motherhood, popular culture, literature, art and media representations. They challenge theories of racism and nationalism through their writings on citizenship and belonging, hybridity, diaspora, religion, culture, and sexuality (89).

They develop a new powerful and independent self, personal understanding and a positive self-image. They replace the role of domesticity, as what has been in African country, with the perception of the women as empowered.

By placing the “self” and the body at the center of their theorizing on power and patriarchy, black British feminists are challenging fixed ideas of racial difference (i.e., essentialism) by rethinking “black” and Asian identity as fluid, complex and fragmented in nature. Through a variety of methodologies—such as the oral traditions of storytelling, life histories, and autobiography, and reworking sociological and

psychological theory—black British feminists have demonstrated the critical creativity engendered by the “marginal” or “third” space they occupy (Carby and Heidi , 90).

Contemporary Black British women playwrights decide to remark their personal identity as the result of a process of hybridization and focus their attention on the third generation young immigrants and their positions within the Western community. They seek to integrate themselves into the white community. They challenge the deep rooted concepts about the Africans by rethinking the blacks as American citizens who have the same privileges and rights of the whites. From the civilized lifestyle, musical culture, potent subcultures are emerged and are considered “a way of continuing an open sense of black collectivity in the shifting, changing beat of the present” (Peacock, 49). However, this also leads to represent a major characteristic of black feminism in Post-colonial era which is the role of violence. Despite the obstacles in making their voice heard, contemporary Black British women playwrights have increasingly overcome silence and have been able to place audience directly with the most uncomfortable side of racism in Britain.

At the same time, contemporary black British playwrights seek to “communicate an interest in the future and a sense that they stand at the beginning of a history yet to be written rather than at the end of one that has been discredited” (Kritzer, 96). Black British women playwrights such as Winsome Pinnock, Valerie Mason-John, Jacqueline Rudet and Trish Cooke have all at some point discussed the obstacles of black women's cultural identity at the center of their plays. Stuart Hall argues that "identities are produced within representation, which validates certain ideas about humanity as plausible and positions from which identities are remade in culture rather than thinking about representation as something that reflects a pre-existing reality"(88). Hall summarizes that the notions about what is real are constructed through representational discourses, which includes science, and

media, as well as fictional discourses are key ideas about humanity which are promoted through their repeated portrayal, and they therefore are greatly important to the structuring of human identities, where they can be used to reaffirm or build certain ideas about humanity.

Most black feminists support the idea of establishing a common collective identity and defend it in front of the white ideology. Many black feminists articulate discourses on the importance of black experience. This is the case of Bell hooks, an iconic black feminist, who argued that “there is a radical difference between a repudiation of the idea that there is a black ‘essence’ and recognition of the way black identity has been specifically constituted in the experience of exile and struggle” (Birt, 50).

Tsagarousianou argues, by stressing the importance of a homeland to diasporas, that:

Diasporas should better be seen as depending not so much on displacement, but on connectivity, or on the complex nexus of linkages that contemporary transnational dynamics make possible and sustain. (52-55).

When the black women travel to Britain to seek a new life, they feel at the same time their longing for their homeland. They want to return, but their belief that they may find a decent life in the Western community, tightens them to the point that they abandon the idea at once. This is why they are dispersed in Britain.

Among Black British dramatists who contribute to the development of Black British drama, is Winsome Pinnock defined by Deirdre Osborne as “the godmother of black British playwrights” (*Leave Taking*, Intro, V). Pinnock is a significant playwright who begins her career in the 1980s and continues to write plays for mixed cultures (both black and white actors and actress) which reflect the changes in British society. Winsome Pinnock is one of Britain’s best-known black female playwrights. She was born to Jamaican

parents in 1961 in Islington, London. She writes neither as a contemporary Jamaican playwright nor as a British playwright. She writes as Jamaican in Britain. In this sense, Pinnock's plays are not just examples of staging intertextuality. They are about mixing one context into a new one. They are about contextuality. Pinnock's first trip to Jamaica is a turning point in her life. Jamaica makes her accept herself as one speaking with various voices, and raises inside her the desire to write about this new identity, this new Englishness. She is convinced that any kind of nostalgic homesickness would be a false salvation (Klooss, 212).

Winsome Pinnock's play *Leave Taking* is set in North Britain. The play is about Enid Matthews is a hard-working black woman who has arrived in London from Jamaica. She is abandoned by her husband and struggles to bring up their two teenage daughters, Viv and Del. Del is a rebellious and difficult daughter. She enjoys life. Del resents her mother's subservience in her job. She indulges in whatever England has to offer gets herself pregnant, and becomes a witch. Viv, on the other hand, her sister, is serious, ambitious and a successful student who lives up to her mother's orders. Both Del and Viv feel alienated. The play elucidates how Enid is eventually forced to confront her Jamaican past and her emotional vulnerability. Her two daughters deviate from life pattern speak as their mother hops they would when she comes to England, but at the same time, lose much of their Jamaican culture. There is a great conflict inside her; the conflict between her longing to her homeland and the desire to live better life in the western country. In that sense, she is an independent woman who wants to achieve a personal identity in whites 'country. She fosters her daughters to live better than her. She wants to give them opportunities she never owns. She is ignorant and she comes from a poor family. She travels abroad, work day and night in order to comfort her daughters' life. Such play exemplifies the efforts of black British playwrights to gain visibility and to be included as part of the wider notion of British culture by putting at the important issues such as multiculturalism, belonging and identity, racial tensions and diaspora.

Pinnock writes about what she calls "the new individual", a woman who is a mixture of different cultures, and a woman who likes herself, has a Caribbean soul, and does not feel completely preoccupied with Britain. Pinnock's *Leave Taking* comes from her experience in London. Obviously, she prefers to speak in this voice: "I have always loved the theatre since I was very young, but I felt I didn't exist in the theatre. I wanted to bring my world into existence there"(Accessed on 6 January 2010). She discusses the notion of migration as Black women's experience in her play. Enid comes to England as an escape of poverty and achieving better life for her and her daughters. This is greatly illustrated in the following words:

Enid: You don't know what it like out there. You don't understand what poverty do to people. The last time I went out there they beg me for this, beg me for that, go through my suitcase when I outta the house, steal my clothes (Pinnock, 1, 3, 47).

She uses the word " beg " as a symbol of pity which the African people suffer from. This is why the African people immigrate to Britain imagining they will gain wealth and richness. They come to Britain with no intention to stay on a permanent basis. They think that after saving for a few years they would happily go home. However, due to poor wages, some do not manage to buy a ticket to visit home, let alone return home after several years of employment in Britain.

Enid recalls the great contrast between her present life in Britain and her previous life in Jamaica: "When I was a girl you kill a cow, you share it up, everybody in the district get a piece. Here, you poor an' you by yourself. Nobody cares" (Pinnock, 1, 7, 76). Her displacement is strengthened by a sense of alienation from the present harsh reality. Her village that defines her rural society in Jamaica is replaced by the cold nature of urban life in Britain.

As she arrives in England, Enid goes through the trauma of geographical, emotional, cultural and social displacement. She travels to search for her husband who has abandoned her for another woman. In that sense, she decides to search for her own identity. She wants to find a new job opportunity to live a better life in England. In that sense, Pinnock presents her characters as African people who are greatly influenced by the British culture. The following dialogue sheds lights on how far the Africans are proud of being part of the English culture:

Enid: You come here, you try to fit in. Stick to the rules.

England been good to me.

I proud a English girls.

Brod: You teaching these children all wrong. They going forget where they come from. These girls ain't English like them newsreader who got English stamp on them like the letters on a stick a rock, right through English. These girls got Caribbean souls.

Viv: Don't you mean African souls?

Enid: Don't talk foolish.

Brod: Girl, you an "A"- class student...

Enid: Tell him who you are

Viv (stand, recites)

"A dust whom England bore, shaped, made aware...

A body of England's, breathing English air, washed by the rivers, blest by the suns of home."

Enid: you see "Breathing English air... English". (Pinnock, 1, 2, 31)

In *the Heart of the Race*, Bryan, Dadzie Stella and Suzanne Scafe observe that "right across the curriculum at every level, the schools' textbooks confirmed that Black people had no valid contribution to make to the society, other than to service its more menial requirements" (98). Children are presented with a world view in which blackness represented everything that is ugly, uncivilized and underdeveloped. However, when her mother asks Viv who she herself is, she hastens to quote from Rupert Brook's poem : "dust

whom England bore, shaped, made aware ...A body of England's breathing English air, washed by the rivers, blest by the suns of home" (Pinnock, 1,2,34). In the course of the play, she points out this uneasiness with her cultural alienation:

I knew all the answers. I'm like a machine - pat me on the head and they all come tumbling out. Rely on me to say exactly what the examiners want to hear. It doesn't change anything. I sometimes feel like I need another language to express myself. (Pinnock, 1, 6, 72)

Just as important as the language is the fact that Viv compares herself to a machine. She needs another language to express herself. In his article *The Journey Back*, Tuku Mukherjee explains one of the causes of this self-alienation in asserting that "there is a suggestion that she seeks recognition in England in the same way that she used to be approved by examiners; namely by treating the search for identity as a test, the mechanistic work of an automaton, rather than as human discovery"(213).

Pinnock portrays her character Enid as a first-generation migrant, who follows her husband from the Caribbean to Britain, only to discover that he has ignored her for a white woman. She becomes a single mother finding suddenly herself responsible for her two daughters. Typically for first generation migrants of her period, her basic concern is to integrate into English society, and for her daughters to do the same. This includes a denial of one's background which comes to haunt the children of first-generation migrants as they try to search for their own identity between their parents' country of origins to which they may have little or no connection, and Britain that treats them as inferior.

Enid's exhortations to her daughters are often repeated to do everything to integrate them into the western society. She does that to lead her daughters speak English properly, to avoid getting pregnant early as the same as in her

culture, and to get them well education, map her values and aspirations but do not coincide with her daughters' experiences and desires. The play draws attention to the double imagination between the blacks and the whites. Enid's predicament- the plight of many immigrants regardless of where they come from- is caught between two worlds reaching out for life in a new country, is haunted by memories of what she has left behind. For the blacks, they imagine everyone, who travelled to the Western countries, is rich. However, they are mistreated by the white society. This is greatly exposed in the following dialogue between Enid and her daughter Viv:

Enid: You don't know what it like out there. You don't understand what poverty do to people. The last time I went out there they beg me for this, beg me for that, go through my suitcase when I outta the house, steal my clothes. They think we have so much. They don't imagine how we live here.

Viv: mum please.

Enid: Is paradise for rich American tourist. But for the rest of us... Go to university. Forget about Jamaica. (Pinnock, 1, 5, 66)

On the surface, Pinnock uses language as an instrument for articulating the characters' cultural location and the lack of education that the blacks are exposed to. Language is quite significant to exemplify the racial discrimination that the blacks suffer from in the western countries. Gilbert and Tompkins assert that "when a playwright chooses an indigenous language in the play, she refuses to submit to the dominance of the imposed standard language and to subscribe to the reality it sustains"(169). This is greatly marked in the dialogue between Mai and Enid:

Mai: plenty black women over here does come see me 'about man': how to catch him, how to get rid of him, how to get him back. Mostly they does want to get him back. So man at those women lef' lonely on them own. Some a them gone mad over man. They think I can work miracles.

Enid: My husband' long gone, yes. But I don't want him back. I bring up those two girls on me own. (Pinnock, 1, 1, 15)

The use of language is greatly significant in the construction of the play. Pinnock uses brilliantly language to articulate her theme which is the search of identity in western society. Throughout language, she reveals the low standards of blacks who come to Britain for better prosperities. The characters use wrong words and non-agreement sentences. They use "lef" instead of "live", "me" instead of "my", "on me" instead of "by myself" to articulate the characters' lack of education. She even uses some grammatical mistakes, such as subject verb disagreement "women does" which supposed to be "women do", to assure that this language is not their mother language. She stresses the difference between two cultures through language to articulate the gap between the blacks and the whites. They immigrate to Britain to be well educated and speak English well. This is why Enid insists on educating her daughters.

In the play, the protagonists are all black who suffer from racial discrimination in the western society. They search for their own identity in Britain. Enid's daughter Del is a rebellious and difficult daughter. She enjoys life. Del resents her mother's subservience in her job. She indulges in whatever England has to offer, gets herself pregnant, and becomes an obeah woman after she fails to keep her job. Viv, on the other hand, her sister, is serious, ambitious and a successful student who lives her life in the service of her mother's orders. Both Del and Viv feel alienated. The play elucidates how Enid is eventually forced to confront her Jamaican past and her emotional sensitivity. Her two daughters deviate from life pattern speak as their mother hopes they would when she comes to England, but at the same time, lose much of their Jamaican culture. There is a great conflict inside her; the conflict between her longing to her homeland and the desire to live better life in the western country. In that sense, she is an independent woman who wants to achieve a personal identity in the western countries. Through Enid's

immigration to England, she offers an improved existence for her daughters. She seeks to give them opportunities she never reaches. She is ignorant and she comes from a poor family. She travels abroad, work day and night in order to comfort her daughters' life. This is greatly represented here:

Enid. Oh yes, I did escape didn't I? Lucky me. You know where I come from? I come from the dirt. I come from the poorest family in the whole Jamaica. People used to laugh at us, pick on us. And we still use to walk around like we were something. (Pinnock1, 4, 50)

This conversation shows the miserable life that Enid was exposed to. She has traveled to England to help her daughters get good education. She is hoping that her daughters' life would be better than her life. An interview with the playwright sheds light on the previous dialogue:

We need to honour these journeys that are so old hundreds of years old. We must honour the sacrifices made by my parents, but also by our great, great, great, great grandparents. There is a link with this country that goes back generations, she says, referring to slavery. We deserve opportunities and access because our history and sense of being is part of this country's history. It's important not to forget that, because our history is one of being overlooked and silenced. It's a continuing cycle and unless it's broken there can be no progress. You can't get away from the fact that we have been oppressed (Gardner, Accessed on wed 23 May 2018).

One of the most significant themes of the play is migration. The characters travel to Britain to achieve better life and wealth. Enid wants her daughters to be well-educated and live happily. However, the daughters refuse all the prosperities of western life at the end of the play for the sake of yearning to their home land. This is indicated in the following dialogue between Del and Viv:

Viv: I want to go to Africa. It's not all white sandy beaches, you know. Uncle Brod says you do't know who you are 'less you've been there.

Del: I already know who I am. (Pinnock, 1, 1, 17)

The characters' yearning to their homeland is clear. They want to return to their country. They feel diasporic in the western country. They are signifiers of migratory displacement; they are black migrants prisoned in their psychological exile, trying to re root themselves to their home land. Therefore, Pinnock succeeds in linking her characters with the body of postcolonial black feminism concerned with the meaning of home in the context of location and dislocation, migration and exile, belonging and displacement.

Homi Bhabha states in his book *How Newness Enters the World*:

Migration in *Leave Taking* by Winsome Pinnock engages a central way. It has dual settings that move-physically and metaphorically-between England and the Caribbean. Embracing an ideology of return, Pinnock charts and navigates her own ritualistic return home within her writing and creative process, imaginatively performing diaspora (301).

Throughout her characters, Pinnock attempts to discuss hybridity and diaspora through corrupting a sense of displacement between England and homeland. In this way, Pinnock's drama is considered to be a ritual migration, a way of returning home. "With each performance, a return home is navigated; the play becomes a performance of passage, a mode of journey home, of conjuring a sense of homeland and belonging" (Bhabha, 302).

Enid intends to achieve her own dreams through her daughters. However, the daughters refuse to achieve their mother's dreams. They decide to achieve their own dreams of living the life they demand. They find their own identity in what they attempt to do. Viv, the educated girl, escapes to her mother's homeland without attending exams. Therefore, she finds her own identity when she decides to return to her homeland. Del decides to be

an obeah woman performing magic. It can be argued that Del makes something with cards which resemble magical power. She becomes obeah woman to support herself with wealth she strives for. She imagines magic is a clue for the decent life. In the African country, obeahs are believed to be endowed with mystical power which differentiates them from other women. Pinnock applies Del as an obeah woman in order to impart her gift as a healer to her mother Enid. In short, obeah women are believed to have special powers to understand the troubles of Black women, a concept that second-generation migrants such as Del slowly begins to grasp when they seek such interventions in their time of need.

As for the obeah elements in *Leave Taking*, Pinnock thinks that, when writing about identity, she has to embrace aspects of her own cultural identity, make a statement about their legitimacy, and explore the richness of that culture. Moreover, there is also the aspect of presenting some of that culture through writing: "there is so little known about black people in England that I think it's of interest to everybody to know something of our traditions" (*Leave Taking*, Intro, XII). And for this reason she places the obeah woman at the center of her play. Therefore, she finds her own identity in achieving what she hopes for. Thus, both daughters are empowered when they decide to achieve their own dreams regardless of their mother's dream. This is greatly illustrated in the following lines:

Del: Oh, wonderful and bountiful Goddess of Harmony. Bring me money and prosperity. Shine you radiant and benevolent face down on my finances today. Bring me all the riches I desire today. Thank you Vesta for your generous help. (*Pinnock*, 1, 8, 84)

Del struggles to be herself, free from the social prejudices and historical burdens of her race. Del's attitude can be explained with what Parekh emphasizes in *Rethinking Multiculturalism: Cultural Diversity and Political Theory* that "Although human beings are shaped by their culture, they are not constituted or determined by it in the sense of being unable to take a critical

view of it or rise above its constitutive beliefs and practices and reach out to other cultures” (157).

In contrast to the hopes of Enid, her daughters are stuck within their black identity due to the oppression from the western society. Enid feels that everything is turned upside down. All her dreams of living a prominent life in England are failed. Therefore, she is shocked and this is what leads her to say the following words to her daughter Del:

Enid: Nobody see you, nobody hear you. You could work fifty years with people and they don't know you name. People walk through you like you not there, push you out the way. All the time you screaming, you screaming inside but nobody come. You don't exist. How you going teach your children that they don't exist? You got to show them how life hard. Mooma never like me. I was everything she never want to be: I was too black, my hair too dry, everything that make you invisible in the world. All the try I Try I could never do anything right for her. Even the last time I go home on visit everybody come round say how I look sharp, call me. I come from the dirt. I come from the poorest family in the whole Jamaica. (Pinnock, 1, 8, 94)

Enid is only an instrument to exemplify the experience of a black woman, abandoned by her husband, who continues to suffer socially in a white society due to the perception of her blackness in line with the history of the blacks as immigrants in Britain. Enid greatly states that “sometimes I feel like a cat chasing him own tail. Going round and round and getting nowhere but dizzy” (Pinnock, 1, 5, 64). However, she frequently reminds herself of the “Promised Land,” England, is the best place for her to raise her daughters” (Pinnock, 1, 5, 59). Geraldine Cousin, in her book *Women in Dramatic Place and Time*, accurately confirms how significant place configures within Pinnock’s drama. Cousin insists that “[p]lace, in a number of its attributes: birthplace, home, making a place for oneself, feeling

displaced, and also the problems of survival in an inhospitable place is primary when considering *Leave Taking*" (66).

Pinnock deals with the issues of Black diaspora such as displacement, hybrid identity of immigrants and discrimination as Helen Thomas indicates in her article " The Social and Political Context of Black British Theatre: 1950s- 80s":

The creative practice by black dramatists during the 1950s-80s focused specifically upon discrimination and/or individual, familial and cultural fragmentation within the context of postcolonial Britain. Many highlighted the difficulties of self-articulation and realisation at the margins and within the parameters defined by historical, cultural and racial discourse. (29)

The play does not present a fixed or stable black identity to perceive and juxtapose with a white identity. However, it presents black immigrants searching for their own identity in Western country hoping to find wealth, power, and prosperity. Sakellaridou, in this respect, clarifies in her article "Winsome Pinnock" that "*Leave Taking* is a conclusion and a farewell to the tormenting memories of the African history of migration and an opening to a new, wider understanding of the problems of contemporary multicultural societies and global capitalism" (389-390). In this sense, the characters of the play accentuate what Stuart Hall argues about understanding racial identities in Western communities. He states, in his article *New Ethnicities*, that:

Race is a discursive, not a biological category. That is to say, it is the organizing category of those ways of speaking, systems of representation, and social practices (discourses) which utilize a loose, often unspecified set of differences in physical characteristics – skin color, hair texture, physical and bodily features, etc. – as symbolic markers in order to differentiate one group socially from another. (443)

Rather than a fixed definition of black and white, the play displays the perception and fluidity of racial identities. As it can be observed in the case of Del, besides having a black skin which asserts her race, she performs a certain folk magic which accentuates her blackness. Viv, on the other hand, shows a milder approach towards her blackness. She leaves her studies for the sake of yearning for her home land Jamaica. Consequently, in *Leave Taking*, Pinnock challenges the perception of racial identities by exemplifying the fact that identities are plural and unfixed; thus, she introduces racially ambiguous characters.

However, Enid fails to achieve her dreams. She is disempowered by her daughter's desertion. Viv decides to return to her homeland and achieve her own empowerment. She refuses to be a mere doll to her mother's wishes. She finds her own identity in returning to homeland. On other hand, Del refuses to return to her country deciding to be an obeah woman. She decides to achieve wealth through magic folk. She achieves her own identity in deciding what she wants to do for her own self.

The last scene of the play articulates the sufferings of Enid during her whole life. It exposes Enid and Del's beginning scene when they are reading the magic papers. It shows the empowerment of the two daughters in choosing their own future by themselves not by their mother's. Enid looks down at her feet saying:

Enid: I never know say daughter a mine would turn obeah woman.
(*Del puts the pile on the table and indicates for Enid to cut the deck. Enid does so. Del shuffles again then lays seven cards face up on the table. She examines the cards.*)

Enid: Nobody see you, no body hear you. You could work fifty years with people and they don't know you name. People walk through you like you not there, push you out the way. All the time you screaming

inside but nobody come. You don't exist. How you going teach children that they don't exist? You got to show them how life hard. Mooma never like me. (Pinnock, 1,8, 95)

This conversation is one of the most important ones of the play. It reveals mother-daughter relationship. It represents how Enid's mother treats her and how far this mistreatment has greatly influenced Enid's character. She seeks her mother's love, care and support. However, she only gets her mother's coldness. She also points to her race through the word "black". It symbolizes the racial discrimination that the blacks have suffered. She points out the physical aspects of the blacks which make them inferior to the whites such as, skin, colour, and hair. She indicates also that even when she becomes an English woman, her mother does not move or be proud of her. Pinnock here supports audience with the negative consequences of Enid's background to reveal diaspora that the protagonist feels within the white community. Her failure to negotiate the past causes her inability to move on as she remains imprisoned by that past and becomes permanently paralysed in her psychotic state.

To conclude, this paper highlights how moving from their home land to England has a significant impact on the characters' self-understanding. For the first generation, adapting to their new circumstances in Britain represents an opportunity for self-identity. However, Enid is deserted by her husband and fails to gain her empowerment. She cannot reach what she dreamed of. Moreover, the act of raising her daughters on her own in a new community, contributes to a self-reflexive process of self-identity. The second-generation character Viv is re-connected with her roots either by returning to her homeland and reuniting with relatives left behind or by embracing her maternal cultural heritage or by attempting to recover a heroic past initiated by her female ancestors. This metaphoric and physical homecoming influences the character's present in that it helps in strengthening her personal identity, rehabilitate her unsettled self and give affirmation to a positive, t

image of blackness. On the other hand, Del decides to stay in Britain achieving another version of empowerment. She decides to be an obeah woman, a kind of folk magic which comes from African traditions, achieving her dreams through magic. Every one of the daughters finds her personal identity in a different way, but at the end they achieve empowerment. In this respect, it can be further claimed that this play aims to establish a certain black identity questioning the place of the black characters within British society in addition to documenting their struggle to reach a black identity.

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