

DIASPORA IN TWO CARIBBEAN NOVELS: LEVY'S *SMALL ISLAND* AND PHILLIPS'S *A STATE OF INDEPENDENCE*

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- RESUMO: Analisam-se os romances *Small Place*, de Andréa Levy, e *A State of Independence*, de Caryl Phillips, publicados em 2004 e 1986 respectivamente. Como a diáspora transnacional de caribenhos migrando à Inglaterra é o tema dos dois romances, discutem-se os problemas pós-coloniais dos conceitos envolvendo o lar e a identidade nos sujeitos coloniais e problematiza-se a formação do agente diaspórico. Os resultados mostram que a subjetividade do transmigrante colonial é construída ou através de interverções na sociedade racista ou através da subversão contra os dirigentes nativos que querem preservar egoisticamente a situação colonial.
- PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Diáspora; identidade. Pós-colonialismo; romance caribenho; sujeito; transnacionalidade.

Whereto Postcolonial Literature?!

During the last forty years or so postcolonial literature and theory have become important landmarks in Cultural Studies but have created a wide gap between the study of the

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text produced by a postcolonial author and political activism that opens the way for interventions in the subjectification of the ex-colonial and in the re-inauguration of identity in peoples through their political, social, economical and cultural transformations. Frequently postcolonial theory and literature have developed a highly critical stance on past and present oppressive ideologies but have barely touched the political interventionist issue and its representation, although the territory of postcolonial literature is not the development of revolutions and coup d'états. African, Caribbean and Indian authors have been conspicuous in the unmasking of European strategies of domination and othering and they cannot always be charged with towing Eurocentric ideologies and parameters in their critical analyses. Nor can they be berated because of their emphasis on textualism rather than on intervention since the ensuing intervention has been significant, albeit not political in the narrow sense.

Politically interventionist issues are currently debated because of a "new" phenomenon in postcolonial literatures: a reassessment of the term diaspora within the context of globalization. The term diaspora, originally restricted to certain historical events, has recently triggered challenging concepts such as frontiers, place, transculturation, power relationships, multicultural communities, south-north migration phenomena, racialism. It has actually opened new paths in the representation of non-European peoples within a globalized society and provoked an engagement with identity formation.

In recent times, several postcolonial authors have been engaged with the diaspora problem and its racial, gender and identity repercussions. In *Indigo* (1992) Marina Warner has shown the colonial scars in the diasporic characters of Caribbean families; Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* (2000) reports on cultural interactions of diasporic individuals of Bengali, Jamaican and British extraction; Kittitian Caryl Phillips's novels are practically all on the African diaspora; Guyanese Pauline Melville's *The Ventriloquist's Tale* (1998) reveals the multicultural interventions between a South American Indian community and several Eurocentric people; Sudanese Leila Aboulela's *The Translator* (1999) reveals the deep sense of estrangement of female Muslim characters in Scotland; in *The*

Pickup (2001) Nadine Gordimer is engaged with the diaspora of an excluded Arab young man. Presently, the insistence on the diaspora theme by contemporary authors constitutes a metonymy of problems raised by globalization, multiculturalism, intervention and neocolonialism in current literatures in English.

Although Brazil is a largely hybrid and multicultural country, the fictional representation of the pre-transnational African diaspora has never been central in Brazilian literature. Few novels deal with European immigrants or their descendants in Brazil, the most notable being Mario de Andrade (in *Amar, verbo intransitivo*), Graça Aranha (in *Canaã*), Lima Barreto (in *Triste fim de Policarpo Quaresma*), Alcântara Machado (in *Novelas paulistanas*), Moacyr Scliar (in *Max e os felinos* and *O centauro no jardim*) and Samuel Rawet (in *Contos do imigrante*), Milton Hatoum (in *Relato de um certo oriente* and *Dois irmãos*) and Raduan Nassar (in *Lavoura arcaica*) and practically none (except perhaps Sonia Nolasco Ferreira's *Moreno como vocês*) on Brazilian post-transnational diaspora involving Brazilians seeking political exile, work and study abroad. Further, few debates within Brazilian Literary Theory on diaspora and multiculturalism have been forthcoming.

The aim of our research is to analyze the novels *Small Island* (2004), by Andrea Levy, and *A State of Independence* (1986), by Caryl Phillips, within the diasporic context. The choice of these two novels may be justified because the former, highlighting events in post-war Britain, shows the estrangement brought about by the diaspora in the life of a Jamaican couple in Britain. Although race-borne exclusion problems are shown to be landmarks in a white society that uses the colonies and their people to defend it while cutting them off from its benefits, diasporic people intervene in community-building and in subjectification processes. The second novel shows the return situation of a diasporic Caribbean to his home island on the eve of its Independence from Britain. It will reveal not merely the reactions of the people who stayed but the impact Western civilization wrought in the postcolonial situation and the protagonist's attempt to intervene in the process. After problematizing and discussing the diaspora in postcolonial theory, the two above-mentioned novels by Levy and Phillips will be analyzed with regard to the diaspora themes they reveal

and the intervention they provoke in the fictional societies where the events take place.

Diaspora

The term *diaspora* (Greek, *dia* = afar + *speirein* = spread) is a translation of the Hebrew word *galuth* (exile) and until recently has been restricted to the dispersion of Jews throughout the ancient world and was not applied to similar experiences of uprooting and geographical dispersions of other peoples till the 17th century. The term is currently applied to (1) the forced migration of eleven million Africans to the Americas from the late 15th century to late 19th century; (b) the "confinement" of American Indians by Jesuit missionaries to villages; (c) migration of Indian and Asiatic peoples to the Caribbean as indentured labour; (d) "voluntary" migration of European and Asians to the Americas, Australia, Canada and South Africa at the end of the 19th century and during the 20th century; (e) shifting of whole populations in Africa, Europe and South America due to colonial and civil wars; (f) the migrations of Africans, South Americans, Caribbeans and Asians to industrialized countries in search of jobs and more comfortable living. Since only the last two categories fall within the Post-transnational diaspora (Spivak, 1996), our research on the two novels is restricted to this periodization.

The common features of the diaspora have been analyzed by several authors (Clifford, 1997; Cohen, 1997), while Safran's (1991) list may be summarized accordingly: (1) dispersal from an original "centre" or "centres" to a foreign region or regions; (2) the survival of a collective memory, vision or myth about the erstwhile homeland; (3) the production of a ghetto or the acquisition of an isolation mentality; (4) the idealization of the home of their ancestors; (5) the belief that all descendants must remain somehow linked to the original homeland; (6) a strong ethnic mentality based on distinctness. Needless to say, all six criteria are not required at any one time to characterize a group as diasporic.

Since contemporary diaspora is analyzed from a postcolonial perspective, current research discusses Late-

modern diaspora within the issues of globalization and transnationalism, following Castles; Miller (1998), Laguerre (1998), Van Hear (1998), Mittelman (2001) and Cornwell and Stoddard (2001). Nevertheless, this does not mean that international migration is an "invention of the late twentieth century. Migrations have been part of human history from the earliest times. However, international migration has grown in volume and significance since 1945, and most particularly since the mid-1980s" (Castles; Miller, 1998, p. 4). The Late-modern diaspora is thus characterized by more complex, diverse and global massive population shifts of people who either leave of their own free will (work, study, comfort), such as Nadine Gordimer's *The Pickup* (2001), or as a result of traumatic events (wars, famine, political pressure), such as Caryl Phillips's *A Distant Shore* (2003).

Taking exclusively Contemporary or Late-modern Diaspora, its traits are dislocation and fragmentation without a permanent rupture from the homeland, a characteristic practically inexistent in the case of African slave diaspora. Actually, Late-modern diaspora and globalization are simultaneous events since the latter has "created the conditions for increased cross-border communication and exchange, and, therefore, laid the basis for an expansion of economic transactions among states on a global scale" (HALL; BENN, 2000, p. 24). In fact, technological advances (transport, technology, communications), especially "mediascapes" (APPADURAI, 2003), have provided close ties between home and the host countries.

The opportunity-seeking diaspora should be analyzed within globalization. Different from the persecution, civil wars, famine diasporas, the opportunity-seeking diaspora is a displacement which arises from situations which are not *dramatically* traumatic, albeit linked to economic forces in the mother country. Different from the famine-caused internal traumatic diaspora of Brazilian *retirantes* from the northeastern region to more prosperous cities, in fact, a major theme in Brazilian literature, the present external diaspora of Brazilian jobless workers to North America, Japan and Europe is a diasporic event facilitated by the globalizing process. The Caribbean and Latin America, sites of double-lane diasporic

movements, have been recently conspicuous in diaspora studies due to the strong identity of the diasporic groups and their impact on First World communities. These diasporic groups form *transnations* with a "specific ideological link to a putative place of origin but [are] otherwise [...] thoroughly diasporic collectivities" (APPADURAI, 1996, p. 423).

The new terminology (*transnation*, *transmigrant*) has replaced the concepts of immigrant and migrant with their "images of permanent rupture, of the uprooted, the abandonment of the old patterns and the painful learning of a new language and culture" (GLICK-SCHILLER; FOURON, 2001, p. 130). It seems that a new diasporic subject is being formed characterized by a limited local affiliation, great mobility and a working acquaintance with cultures worldwide. Various authors suggest a different name for the same cultural phenomenon: "cosmopolitan culture" (HANNERZ, 1996); "transnational culture" (SMITH, 1991); "unitary global culture" (TENBRUCK, 1990); "translocal mélange cultures" (PIETERSE, 1994); "hyphenated identities" (LIPMAN, 1995); "hybrid cultures" (GILROY, 1993; BHABHA, 1994; HALL, 2003a,b). Needless to say, identity within a hybrid culture is consequently a highly problematized term. In fact, a hyphenated identity may comprise unstable formations and sites of differences within power relations. Identity, constantly negotiated and constructed, is thus intimately linked to globalization, poised as it is between global patterns and local conditions (HALL, 2003a).

The identity of the diasporic transmigrant is also linked to the "nation", "national consciousness" and "national identity". However, in this case, one should go beyond "the shared image of the nation and the mutual awareness of its members who participate in that image" (SHILS, 1995, p. 107) because of its excessive territorialization, and also beyond the sense of pride in what distinguishes one's own from other people's (PLAMENATZ, 1976). Perhaps "imagined communities" (ANDERSON, 1983) describes best this concept within the context of current research. Nations are imagined since "in the minds of each lives the image of their communion. [...] Regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, ho-

horizontal comradeship" (ANDERSON, 1983, p. 15). Since individuals know that they are similar and, at the same time, different, national identity includes both national consciousness and identification.

However, from a diasporic perspective translocalities form conflict zones and hyphenated identities produce split subjects. Belonging to deterritorialized nations means a necessary dialogue with other diaspora issues; belonging itself becomes displaceable and frequently a non-belonging. Hall (2002) insists that Western cultures should abandon the "colonial fantasy" that peripheral societies are closed and culturally traditional societies. Since peripheral and diasporic societies have always been open to the influences of Western cultures, Hall (2002) qualifies them as interpellating Western, white, economic and political power centres. Moreover, in the wake of globalization, diasporic communities are liable to intensify their self-defining mechanisms through deeper exchanges with the different cultural paradigms of their old and new myths of origin and through interactivities with other diasporic groups. Globalization has, in fact, a "pluralizing effect on identities, producing a variety of possibilities and new identity positions; identities become more political, more plural and diverse; less fixed, unified or trans-historical" (HALL, 2002, p. 87). It will even change the concept of diaspora as a closed community of expatriates. The diaspora will shed the fixed ethnic stance and the idea of a single founding myth, and will provide new, provisional and movable diasporic possibilities.

The fabula of *Small Island* and *A State of Independence*

The themes of diaspora, racist encounters and identity of ex-colonials in the mother country and in their homeland are involved in these novels. *Small Island* (2004) is the fourth novel by Andrea Levy, born of Jamaican parents, in London in 1956. It narrates the story of two couples, the English and white Victoria (Queenie) Buxton and her husband Bernard Bligh, and the Jamaican and black Hortense Roberts and Gilbert Joseph, residing in the same house in post-war England. These are practically the four characters in the story and each narrates

in the first person his/her own course of past events in flashback and the contemporary ones in the present.

As a young Jamaican girl Hortense prepares herself for the teaching profession whereas Jamaican Gilbert Joseph, her future husband, serves as an airman in war-stricken England. When Gilbert returns to Jamaica, he hurriedly marries Hortense, now a school teacher, and returns to England to find work. He promises Hortense to send for her as soon as possible. He is lodged in a house run by a former acquaintance called Queenie Buxton whose husband, a soldier posted in India, fails to return after the war. After six months Hortense arrives in London and joins Gilbert to start a new life in the mother country. Hortense tries to find work as a teacher but because of her skin colour and supposedly deficient training in the colonies is rejected by the headmistress. Two years after the war Bernard appears and is disgusted that his wife is lodging coloured people. When he discovers that Hortense gives birth to a black baby, he immediately suspects Gilbert but Queenie confesses that the baby is actually the son of another Jamaican whom she had lodged during the war. Unable to imagine how she could possibly bring up an English black child in 1948 England, Queenie gives him away to Hortense. Owing to Queenie and Bernard's racial bias, Hortense and Gilbert find another house in London and try to make a living in a racist country.

Contrastingly, *A State of Independence* (1983) deals with the diasporic Caribbean Bertram Francis who goes to England on a scholarship, fails in the attempt and returns to his island home after a twenty-year absence. He arrives in the Caribbean island of his birth on the eve of its independence. However, the visit that Bertram Francis expects to be a nostalgic homecoming and a celebration of Third World nationhood turns sour. His old friends ignore him; his schoolmate Jackson Clayton, now in office, has become corrupted. Poverty is still rife; the island boasts a single tarmac road, only the capital city has been somehow cosmetically prepared for the celebrations; racism is everywhere; no true prospects exist for the new nation. In the last days of British rule, Bertram Francis slowly has to come to terms with the fact that he is now an outsider in the island he still considers to be home.

Interpellating the Empire

Transnationality is already on the way and modern diaspora an incipient, albeit strong, phenomenon within the conditions of the world represented in *Small Island* and *A State of Independence*. Both novels narrate events that reveal an increasing migration of labour and an impaired redistribution of wealth that make an impact on ex-colonials.

Small Island is introduced by white Queenie's reminiscences of a miniature representation of the British Empire. Similar to the 16th century custom in taking "samples" of American Indians to Europe and making a show of them in the city's square, in this reverse diaspora colonized native people and their artefacts were brought to Wembley in 1924 from the remotest regions of the British Empire. Although this type of diaspora does not fit in the categories listed by Safran (1991), it has all the aspects of a globalization stance where the colonized are exhibited. Actually, the range and span of colonies, some of them unknown or their geographic position ignored by the English man in the street, confirms not merely the centripetal movement with Britain as the hub of the world, but the self-consciousness of the Other produced by the establishment of the colonies. The greatest impact in this contact zone occurred when the culturally insensitive Queenie faced the Negro.

We were in the jungle. Huts made out of mud with pointy stick roofs all around us. And in a hut sitting on a dirt floor was a woman with skin as black as the ink that filled the inkwell in my school desk. A shadow came to life [...] But then suddenly there was a man. An African man. A black man who looked to be carved from melting chocolate. [...] A monkey man sweating a smell of mothballs. Blacker than when you smudge your face with sooty cork. His lips were brown, not pink like they should be, and they bulged with air like bicycle tires. His hair was woolly as a black shorn sheep. His nose, squashed flat, had two nostrils as train channels. And he was looking down at me [...] He could have swallowed me up, this big nigger man (LEVY, 2005, p. 04 - 05).

Even though supposedly welcome to the mother country,

the diasporic Negro interpellated the colonizer and his Eurocentric vision by his/her humanity and questioned strongly the latter's insensitivity. Queenie's and her family's otherness, revealed by their remarks (blackness of ink, unlit tunnels, sooty cork, black sheep) and by their jokes on the different physical characteristics of the Negro (skin, speech, body, cultural development) demonstrate their deep-rooted stereotypes. However, the Negro's attitudes in his encounter with his "kin" in the motherland disrupted the stereotypes. Queenie was baffled by the man's discourse, his good manners, his patience, his tact, his humanity. The little girl's reaction "I want to go" seems to mean the decentralizing of the tenets and the de-hinging of the superiority through which the other is seen. Actually, the diaspora Negro made the Other uneasy. The scene is an estrangement from the hierarchization and the objectification that the Other tries to maintain. Although there is a reaffirmation of Eurocentric views when Queenie's father remarked "Look around. You've got the whole world at your feet" (LEVY, 2005, p. 6), the day was won by the diasporic subject.

Further, the colonies exposed to the public view are reified and the absence of the human manufacturer or artist is significant. Burma, Malaya, Ceylon, Jamaica and Grenada are respectively represented by wood, big-game trophies, tea, coffee and chocolate. The settler colonies Canada, Australia and New Zealand are simply stereotyped by butter and apples. The colonial workers and the native farmers who produce the agricultural products and manufacture goods are not even mentioned. The colonizers' remark "'Makes you proud'" (LEVY, 2005, p. 3) suppresses the native and brings to the surface the exotic goods and utensils. Ingrained racism, underlying the white people's attitudes in *Small Place*, makes the colonial subject invisible, which may be another way of detecting, perhaps anachronically, an incipient financialization of the globe, even though labour migrancy is not implied at the moment. The event by which the muted native is brought to Britain in another different type of diaspora suppresses the possibility of any decolonization project and reaffirms the colonizing convictions of the Other. Similar to Coetzee's dumb Friday in *Foe*, the Negro woman at the loom seems to belie the world economic system that begins to delineate itself by the British

Commonwealth and which becomes worldwide later through neo-liberal policies. It heralds disruption, subversion and subjectification.

Shabbiness and squalor

If colonials, especially Africans, were exhibited as objects at Wembley, the Jamaican couple Gilbert Joseph and Hortense Roberts has a different diaspora experience. With many flashbacks, events in *Small Place* takes place in 1948, the year in which the ship *Empire Windrush* landed its first 500 odd Caribbean emigrants wishing to start a new life in Britain. Since there were no immigration restrictions from citizens of one part of the British Empire moving to another part, it actually inaugurated the birth of Afro-Caribbean diaspora (HALL, 2003b). As a result of the losses during World War II, the British government began encouraging mass immigration for the first time in order to fill shortages in the labour market. Citizens of the commonwealth countries, especially many West Indians, were attracted by better prospects in the “mother country”. While there was plenty of work in Britain, housing was in short supply, a fact that led to some of the first clashes with the white community. Clashes worsened in the 1950s with riots in London, Birmingham and Nottingham. As tensions rose, political pressure caused successive governments to restrict immigration. In the early 1970s black immigration eventually stopped.

When the Jamaican Gilbert was serving the “mother country” in the RAF during the war he befriended Queenie, “a blonde-haired, pink-cheeked Englishwoman” with blue eyes and slender lips. When he returned to Britain to work he took lodging on the premises run by Queenie who was letting rooms to Caribbean immigrants. After six months Hortense joined her husband and, a more refined person than her husband, was appalled by living conditions in England, especially the one-room toilet-less, kitchen-less flat she had to live in. Although Hortense was continually making the rhetorical question: “Is this the way the English live?”, Gilbert jokingly tells Hortense: “You will have to wash your plate, your vegetable and your

backside in that basin too. This room is where you will sleep, eat, cook, dress and write your mummy to tell her how the Mother Country is so fine" (LEVY, 2005, p. 27).

The treatment meted out to the diasporic Gilbert and Hortense in England comes very close to a representation of a new world order in which the citizen has diminished civil rights and no chance of being redressed. If Queenie's attitudes and her tenants represent the relationships between the two poles of the British macrocosm, then we have poor services for high prices, especially when "darkies" are in question. To make matters worse, the "richer" side tries to deny the diaspora migrant the opportunity for social redistribution of wealth. This occurs not only through high costs by living in the "mother country" but by asking from them free voluntary work as if it were their duty. "Hang on a minute, Gilbert, there's just one thing ... Come dig up the garden for me'. 'I must be off [to work], I tell her, presenting her with my back. [...] Discourteous it may be but I am gone" (LEVY, 2005, p. 185). The shabbiness of the place and the demands for unpaid domestic labour are a metonymy of the idea that the colonizer has of the transmigrant within a hierarchized relationship system caused by colonialism. On the other hand, when the colonized disregards the Other's order, he has already acquired the basis for the construction of a different civil society. Gilbert's symbolic retort does not merely show the birth of subjectification but a reversal of what had caused his diaspora, or rather, the colonial structures that have made impossible or thoroughly difficult the formation of civil society in the Caribbean.

Moreover, Hortense's rhetorical question, "Is this the way the English live?", is the start of a chain of awareness attitudes on identity. Although born out of wedlock, she had high expectations underpinned by the excellent English education she received in Jamaica. This boils down to the image she formed of the "mother country" based on discipline, assiduity, manners, superiority that she encountered in the white British teachers and headmistresses she had in the colonial school. Her question, therefore, interpellated and destabilized the "purity" she surely expected to find in British society as the colonizers had given her the impression how everybody was in England. In the process of constructing her "hybrid identity"

and the deeper the interactivity she was having with British society, the more Hortense was experiencing a pluralizing effect on her identity. The British were no more “pure” than Jamaicans or Caribbeans actually were. In fact, when at the end of the novel she accepted to adopt Queenie’s black child, her identity as a Caribbean was enhanced after a long process of disrupting the monolithic idea fabricated by the colonizers in the consciousness of the colonized. “I never dreamed England would be like this. Come, in what crazed reverie would a white Englishwoman be kneeling before me yearning for me to take her black child” (LEVY, 2005, p. 433). The mobility of peripheral societies challenged the fixedness of racial purity (and, thus, racism) which the Other thought fit to inscribe in itself as inherent to its power politics.

Vanished Utopia

British colonial subjects were instructed that they were part of a large family of nations with Britain as the mother country. In times of need the mother country would call her children to defend her and any threatened democratic cause. The characters’ flashbacks in *Small Island* abound with an ideology of a predominant (m)Other foregrounding the construction of the other’s identity. Due to her schooling in Jamaica Hortense knows the geography and history of the British Isles and canonical English literature without any counterpart knowledge of British schoolchildren on Jamaica or other “exotic” places within the British Empire. At the outbreak of war Gilbert felt himself duty bound to answer the Mother’s call and enrol himself in the RAF to defend “his country” – a logical and natural event for the colonial subject.

However, when Gilbert and Hortense became diasporic people they realized that the mother country was neither a mother nor their home. When Hortense stepped off the ship a white woman rushed towards her thinking that, since she was expecting a “nanny” from Jamaica, all black women on board must be servants coming to serve British families in Britain. Although she prided in her English pronunciation, the taxi driver would not understand her English and, humiliated, had to show him the address written on a piece of paper to be understood.

When they arrived at Gilbert's flat the un-obliging driver even asked the preposterous question: "You know about bells and knockers? You got them where you come from? Just go and ring the bell and someone'll come" (LEVY, 2005, p. 14). Moreover, English people thought it unjust that "so many coloured people were coming to this country" because of "teeth and glasses", symbols of the welfare state (LEVY, 2005, p. 93). Hostility towards the transmigrants became entrenched as may be seen by outrageous occurrences such as (1) the cinema episode when Gilbert, a RAF pilot, serving the Mother country during the war, received the order: "All coloureds up the back rows" (LEVY, 2005, p. 153), and disobeyed the covert apartheid rules; or (2) the teacher's application episode when Hortense, a trained teacher in Jamaica, was refused a teaching post in a British school, supposedly because of alleged deficient colonial preparation for the job, covertly because of her colour.

As the above samples and episodes show, *Small Island* teems with racial episodes that lead one to a questioning of the location of home in the diaspora. Every diaspora is a dislocation experience described by the term *unheimlichkeit* taken from Freud and Heidegger and adapted to post-colonial theory. If during the imperial period the Native was characterized as an objectified inferior and subaltern, the British colonizer, a native of Britain, contrasted him/herself against the natives. In many fictional works the British native living in the colonies is represented as the Other, by his/her Britishness. When the diasporic native or his/her descendants start living in Britain, they are never considered British natives. Either they are excluded from "nativeness" due to their foreign place of birth or because of different cultural traits shunned by the native British. They may live in Britain but do not belong to the Mother country which radically racializes them.

The narrator characterizes the diasporic Gilbert and Hortense as autonomous subjects in the West Indian colony with access to first-class schooling, friendship and freedom of movement, qualified according to colonial parameters. In fact, Hortense constructed her subjectivity as Jamaican through sheer effort and determination: she became a trained teacher prepared to educate the colony's offspring; Gilbert's identity was constructed through the offering of his services to Britain

and, consequently, to his country of birth. Othering of the Jamaican-born black native by the British ruling class and by Jamaican-born white natives, was, however, the rule, even though the exclusion process, especially within the community of native-born Jamaicans, was not so extensive. On the other hand, the native black Jamaican was thoroughly racialized in Britain and excluded from British society by every metropolitan native. In this case, Britain could never become a home for the ex-RAF pilot Gilbert and the qualified teacher Hortense. In fact, episodes ranging from the stereotyping on the pier to the adoption of Queenie's baby show a deep devaluation of the colonised by the very concept of the mother country that had been inculcated in the colonial subject's mind.

Is there a home for the diasporic Gilbert and Hortense? Home is imagined to be a mythical place of desire which, characteristic of the diaspora, has to be constructed through experience. It is thus linked to the inclusion and exclusion processes lived by the subject and to the sense of belonging produced under certain circumstances. Home is thus a dynamic and never a fixed essentialist concept. Although their colonial home provided them with a certain degree of subjectivity as the "Before" chapters narrating the characters' life in Jamaica show, certain circumstances, such as business failure and unemployment in the place of birth and excellent working opportunities in the metropolitan country, are determinant in the origin of the diaspora. Hortense's flashback is highly illustrative.

Returning to England was more than an ambition for Gilbert Joseph. It was a mission, a calling, even a duty. This man was so restless he could not stay still. Always in motion he was agitated, impatient – like a petulant boy waiting his turn at cricket. He told me opportunity ripened in England as abundant as a fruit on Jamaican trees. And he was going to be the man to pluck it (LEVY, 2005, p. 81).

Although Hortense and Gilbert's choice was to make England their "home", through dire experience both found out the impossibility of having Britain as their home. Exclusion of diasporic people and deep bias by the British impair the establishment of belonging. A tension exists between the concept of home and the idea of diaspora. Indeed, in the

circumstances given above, the possibility that diasporic Gilbert and Hortense feel "at home" in Britain is practically nil. However, the experience of social exclusion may inhabit the subjects to deal with the place as home (COHEN, 1992). It seems that Gilbert and Hortense have either to define themselves as Jamaican and affirm such an identity in the hostile mother country, or assert a black British identity within a highly mixed diasporic community in Britain.

The outcome of the above diasporic dilemma, although hard to guess or imagine, is actually not so important. Important clues on the diasporic home may be detected in Gilbert and Hortense's new home at Finsbury Park and their adopted black baby. Eager to see the "back of Mrs Queenie Bligh and all the confusion that resided there" (LEVY, 2005, p. 416), the Jamaican couple seems determined to give small importance to biased and racist people, stick out in the mother country as a legitimate right and make it their home. Hortense's encouraging talk constructs a discourse on the possibility in negotiating new economic, cultural and political realities.

'Gilbert, come, you no scared of a little hard work. I can help you'. She spun round in the room. 'With a little paint and some carpet.' She moved to the corner leaning over to spread out her arms and say 'And a table and a chair here,' before rushing to the fireplace with the suggestion, 'and two armchairs here in front of an open English fire. You will see - we will make it nice' (LEVY, 2005, p. 417).

This multi-placed home in the imaginary of diasporic people shows a real settlement attitude in diasporic place and an incipient attempt at "rootedness" in a foreign country. The restrictedness of who is British, fabricated by the British, is challenged by new identities formed in the mother country. In fact the diaspora complex opens the debate on the fixed homogeneous stance of British identity and foregrounds the in-process formation and plurality of identity.

It is in such a context that the black English baby seems to achieve any identity. Born in Britain the baby is British but no home is allotted to him. His lot is exclusion. The unborn baby is hidden in her womb and from the outside world by disguises; when the child is born Queenie keeps him in a bottom

drawer; she is eager to find a home for him. “He’s coloured, Bernard”. Although the racist Bernard says that the baby, albeit black, is welcome in his house, even though he is not the father, Queenie is anxious to find him a home. Her solution to get rid of him and make the Jamaican couple adopt him was successful, even though it is a well-known fact that, owing to his skin colour, this particular native British boy will never be at home in his own country. His only home will be the home of a diasporic black couple rejected since the very moment they set foot in the country. The indictment on the British racial policy against the diaspora and against their “coloured” ex-colonial subjects is summarized by Gilbert when he finally addressed Bernard:

‘You know what your trouble is, man?’ he said. Your white skin. You think it make you better than me. You think it gives you the right to lord it over a black man. But you know what it make you? You wan’ know what your white skin make you, man? It make you white. That is all, man. White. No better, no worse than me – just white.’ [...] After all we suffered together [in the war], you wan’ tell me I am worthless and you are not. Am I to be the servant and you the master for all time? No. Stop this, man. Stop it now. We can work together, Mr Blight (LEVY, 2005, p. 435).

Thus, it is in the solidarity manifested by Gilbert and Hortense to accept the black child Michael, diasporic in his own homeland, and in the cooperation proposed by Gilbert to Bernard that the diasporic self regains the subjectivity lost by colonisation. If the diaspora becomes first “a matrix of economic, political and cultural inter-relationships which construct the commonalty between the various components of a dispersed group” (BRAH, 2002, p. 196) within the familial microcosm, it will develop into a deeper inter-relationship across other diasporic groups and within the same group. This is perhaps the environment in which the diasporic self constructs its own identity and finds its “home”. At the very instant that Hortense is quitting Queenie’s flat, she reveals the havoc wrought in the centre of hegemonic power and reaffirms the construction of the diasporic self. “But I paid it no mind as I pulled my back up and straightened my coat against the cold”

(LEVY, 2005, p. 438). It is within this new political and cultural formation that people of the transnational diaspora challenge the diehard impulses of the dominant cultures and carve their "home" within the interstitial space.

Towards the metropolis

Conversely, Caryl Phillips's *A State of Independence* represents a pre-Independence transnational diaspora from the Caribbean to Britain and back again. Twenty years before his island home becomes independent from Britain, 19-year old Bertram Francis, prepared by Fr. Daniels, the English vicar, wins a scholarship and goes to England to study Law. Two themes may be discussed in the context of this "voluntary" diaspora: (1) the *comprador* mentality and (2) the imagined metropolitan community. The *comprador* mentality is acquired by diasporic people when metropolitan agents help young people to go abroad and prepare them in their studies for further responsibilities in the colony. Educating young people to perpetuate the colonial system by the very natives has been a common practice. Fr. Daniels actually desires Bertram's reliance on and identification with colonial power on the latter's return after taking the Law degree. Bertram would be so interested in the maintenance of the hierarchical structure within the colony and of neo-colonial cultural power that it would be practically impossible for him to engage in the cultural and political independence of his island home.

Although there is no overt manifestation of the above in Bertram's case, Fr. Daniels's insistence coupled to his brother Dominic's resistance and his own initial hesitation are clues of a diaspora rife with ambiguous motifs. "Bertram was filled with an inner conflict, unsure whether or not he should stand up to receive their congratulations" (PHILLIPS, 1995, p. 39). Another motif for his diaspora may have been the dull perspectives of sub-employment or even general unemployment that he would experience on the island during off-season periods of the year. Although he went to England to study and escape the misery of a tiny Third World country, he never graduated. "I just couldn't study the course so I took work and one thing led to another" (PHILLIPS, 1995, p. 85). On his returning he refers

to a considerable amount of money that he made during his 20-year stay.

For the Caribbean emigrant England has always been an imagined place and an idealized community. "He thought of how disciplined he would have to be in his study if he was to live up to what was expected of him. [...] These thoughts flashed backward and forward through the troubled cinema of his mind" (PHILLIPS, 1995, p. 41). He confesses, however, that, although initially impressed by the metropolis, the spell quickly vanished. Bertram tells a friend that in diasporic England, there were "plenty of black people so you never really getting out of touch" (PHILLIPS, 1995, p. 62). To his mother he says that "nothing happened to me in England, [...]. A big rich country like that don't seem to have make any impression on me. I might as well have left yesterday for I just waste off all that time. [...] I think I'm the same fellar" (PHILLIPS, 1995, p. 85).

Bertram's diasporic identity may be seen under two aspects: it may be defined statically in terms of one, shared culture which people with a shared history and ancestry have in common, or dynamically according to what people have become in the diaspora. As Hall (2003, p. 236) remarks, it is a matter of "becoming as well as of being". The identity of the diasporic subject, anchored in the past and looking forward to the future, is constantly affected and positioned by history, culture and power. The first option leads towards an essentialist position of identity, whereas the second foregrounds the colonial experience since it combines continuity and rupture. The extensive analepses in the text dealing with the past twenty years fail to show a static Caribbean community to which Bertram belonged when in England, even though he mentions Afro-descendants with whom he shared an ethnic affinity but no deep cultural ties. Although Bertram denies having been affected by the mother country, the passing of years, his mature stance to poverty and the environment, and especially his critical views on the future independent island show that similarity/continuity and difference/rupture have really formed his identity. Even though there is no overt mention of annihilation of self or degradation by others in his stay in Britain, as has occurred to the Jamaican couple of *Small Island*, Bertram's initial assimilation of the mother country is assumed. This may be surmised by

Bertram's twenty-year absence without writing to his family or maintaining any contact whatsoever with friends. This fact practically amounts to denying one's culture and traditions and adopting those of the colonizer.

However, at the exact moment of his arrival in Britain Bertram discovers that he was a Caribbean, peripheral, and people turn their gaze at him as an African. His contact with the metropolis immediately breaks the image in the mirror that he prepared for himself. The white (and therefore false) image revealed him as a Negro, homeless, alien to Britain and its people. Perhaps this is the reason why he did not continue his studies, dropped out of the project that Fr. Daniels had prepared for him and carved a different type of life on his own. Bertram perceived the colonizer's project to deploy him, became reluctant to serve the colonial regime on its terms and quitted the scholarship.

In the four days in which the novel is set, the various objects and persons he meets reflect the identity and the rupture experienced by Bertram. Since the objects and the people described are the same and, at the same time, different, they constitute a metonymy of the change that occurred in his identity. In the metropolis's view his island home has remained the same, or rather, it still constitutes the peripheral, the underdeveloped, the "other". However, it seems that he has negotiated his cultural identity differently from his island home. Whereas he has left England with a sufficient amount of money to be independent, the future government of the independent country just shifted from one colonizer to another without any real disengagement from dependence, subordination and subalternity. "It's Miami, not your precious London. [...] Well, what you must realize is that we living State-side now. We living under the eagle and maybe you don't think that is good but your England never do us a damn thing except take, take, take" (PHILLIPS, 1995, p. 112).

Homeward! What home?

Paradoxically, the very moment Bertram Francis returns to the homeland, he starts to feel the lack of a home, made

worse by a certain unease which overtakes him in his wanderings to and from Baytown. Actually there is something of a relationship between diaspora, home, homeland and the diasporic agent returning home. What does returning to the real or imagined homeland mean for diaspora people? Issues of home are a true concern for diaspora people since many have left the homeland because they were persecuted or because of civil war or because of minimum survival conditions. In Bertram's case, although he went on a highly prestigious scholarship, unawares he abandoned his country when it most needed him, which explains the deep ambivalence he has towards the notion of home. The text does not show any clues with regard to his island home either as a refuge or shelter. The fact that he refrains from writing and maintaining any contact with his family or friends demonstrates a complicated task and an ambivalent process for the diasporic Bertram.

However, in the diasporic Bertram's opinion, this ambivalence may be in the long run erased. "I was thinking that I might stay here and try and find a position in the society and make back my peace with the island. [...] I feel that the time is right and I must seize the opportunity to help the new nation" (PHILLIPS, 1995, p. 50). In spite of his mother's scepticism, with the money he brought from Britain he plans to open a business "that don't make me dependent upon the white man. [...] The only way the black man is going to progress in the world is to set up his own shops and his own businesses independent of the white man. There is no way forward for us if we keep relying on him, for we going continually be cleaning up his shit, and washing out his outhouse" (PHILLIPS, 1995, p. 50-51). Actually, this boils down to an act of "anthropophagy" practiced by the Caribbean against the metropolis which has always exploited him for centuries. An independent person emerges from the erstwhile *comprador* and would-be perpetuator of colonial mores. It seems that through this process the diasporic Bertram acquires a new identity which may be a metonymy of the independence his native country is acquiring.

However, the resistance that the diasporic agent enacts against the die-hard moves of the metropolis is impaired by colonial natives who eventually assume the role of the colonizer

after its Independence. Many Caribbean and post-colonial writers have represented this fact in fiction. In his 1963 play *La tragédie du roi Christophe* Césaire represents the difficulties that colonized countries have after Independence. In fact, the proclamation of Independence is relatively easy when compared to the construction of the country on entirely different bases from those deployed by the colonizers (HARRIS, 1973). In the process of his assimilation of a supposedly different post-Independence culture, Bertram is interpellated by ingrained corruption. He is openly informed that “our finest minds, the lawyers, the doctors, the odd businessman, who all been overseas to study and come back, are so bored with how easy it is to make money off the back of the people that they getting drunk for kicks and betting on who can lap up the most sewage water from the gutter” (PHILLIPS, 1995, p. 63). In short, it becomes clear to him that neither will his island home be his home: the awareness process that he acquired in the diaspora has to be blurred if he wants to make money, or rather, on the departure of the British, another set of “colonizers”, natives of the island, will assume office and maintain the status quo as if colonial times are not past. Such representations have been commonplace in the postcolonial literature of Marina Warner, Chinua Achebe and Jamaica Kincaid, where the struggle between colony- and anthropophagy-minded natives is developed fictionally.

Whereas the text’s silence on Bertram’s activities in the diaspora space seems to represent a reaction against the racialised disadvantage (HALL, 2003a) in the mother country and a determination not to comply with her strategies in the ex-colony, his roaming around the capital city represents his search for a viable solution to his identity. In the construction of his subjectivity as a diasporic subject at “home”, he is not currently dealing with the colonizer but with fellow natives. Many of these, however, have drifted from one colonizer to another and, paradoxically, have beaten the track of xenophobic nationalism without transforming the national consciousness into a political and social one (SAID, 1995). Perhaps Bertram’s deepest frustration lies in the three dialogues that he had with his boyhood friend, currently deputy Prime Minister, Jackson Clayton. Clayton, a member of the Independent government,

vaunts his success in importing car spare parts, receives kickbacks for service and benefits, and impairs any well-intentioned investor, like Bertram, who desires to install a decent business in the country. Jackson is actually an integral part of the state's corrupt and cumbersome bureaucracy and Bertram is supposed to overcome daunting hurdles in the process. "If I want to make it so you can't have a business here I don't even need to raise my voice, let alone pick up a telephone. I can make it so damn uncomfortable for you that you going be better off taking a walk up Black Rocks and pitching off your money into the sea" (PHILLIPS, 1995, p. 113). It is clear that Bertram does not feel at home in such a corrupt environment. He knew that Jackson and his kind, or rather, the new government which takes over, will repeat the colonial binary hierarchy, the degradation policy by which natives are othered people, the neo-colonial links with other metropolises and will never produce a full-fledged mature independent country. Cosmetic changes can be seen throughout the town exclusively, but the diasporic Bertram knows very well that the people are still poor and no economic planning has in fact been engineered for the benefit of all. Only the very few have benefited and actually will benefit from Independence.

Of course the island had changed, he was not blind. There were bigger buildings, foreign vehicles, video shops, American news magazines on sale, a Pizza hut, but all this was in the capital. Nothing much seemed to have changed in the country [...] and the differences that had always existed between country and town had simply become more marked. But for people like Jackson, a wealthier Baytown probably indicated a healthier island, despite the fact that the vast majority of the masses still lived in country poverty, a poverty that as far as Bertram could discern would only increase as long as agricultural workers were patronized in soil-breaking ceremonies by politicians who were saving up their money to buy yachts and even larger Japanese cars (PHILLIPS, 1995, p. 114 - 115).

Since true political and social change is not extant and the people are not the primary recipients of the benefits of Independence, the narrator is correct in likening the Independence festivals to a Carnival with no serious

consequences in its wake. Conversely, Jackson knows that the diasporic Caribbean returnee who has experienced the diaspora and has temporarily estranged himself from his home is more likely to disrupt the status quo of the hegemonic rulers that substitute the colonizers. Jackson's advice to Bertram is to

'go back to where you came from. [...] England is where you belong now. Things have changed too much for you to have any chance of fitting back. [...] You English West Indians should just come back here to retire and sit in the sun. Don't waste your time trying to get into the fabric of society for you are made of the wrong material for the modern Caribbean. [...] Well, you may be brothers alright, but you lost for true for you let the Englishman fuck up your heads' (PHILLIPS, 1995, p. 136).

The new rulers cold-shoulder the consciousness-raising native for they know that an interpellating subject will prevail.

Seeking the (m)other

The diaspora produces a type of cultural translating subject. Bhabha (1997) states that this translation is not merely an appropriation or an adaptation, but a process that requires that cultures revise and rework their own system of reference, norms and values. Ambivalence and antagonism follow each cultural translation activity, since negotiating with the other's difference reveals a radical insufficiency of one's own system of significance and significations. Since neither England nor the Caribbean island is actually Bertram's home, he has to negotiate not only both cultures but the culture of the island of his birth and that of the same island twenty years after, on the eve of Independence from Britain.

It is interesting to note that Bertram's mother is significantly a metonymy of his country of birth. Bertram does not merely leave his mother on the island but cuts all links with her. As the island is strange to him after the twenty-year period of absence, so his mother is an "other" to the point of expelling him from her house as Jackson has done. "I don't want you back here, Bertram, I really don't want you in my house for you done shame me enough and I can't take no

more" (PHILLIPS, 1995, p. 85). Similar to the Jamaican Hortense Roberts and Gilbert Joseph who intervene in the case of the black baby in spite of all the hostility, strangeness and bizarreness of their situation, it seems that at this moment the diasporic Bertram intervenes to live as a diasporic subject in his own home. He has to adopt a displaced, multiple and hyphenised identification to live in his own homeland. This double gaze of home/"home" is one of sceptical resistance with references to either place unclear. "I really have nothing to go back to in England [...] except a place and a people I know and don't care much for. [...] I don't yet feel at home back here either" (PHILLIPS, 1995, p. 152).

Nevertheless, there is a shared image of the nation going on in Bertram and other people he meets. It is a fact that the contact zone has been disrupted, albeit not irreversibly. This is actually the site of his intervention, or rather, his decision to make peace with his mother and thus intervene in the country's economical and political situation so that the process of true independence may be envisioned and eventually achieved.

He tried hard to image how he might cope, were he to make peace with his own mediocrity and settle back on the island. And then he glanced upward. He saw a man who, at this time of the morning and considering what was happening in Baytown, appeared unreal. The man was threading wires from telegraph pole to telegraph pole, as though trying to stitch together the island's villages with one huge loop. Then Bertram remembered. That evening the people would receive their first cables television pictures, live and direct from the United States. Bertram waved courteously to the man and turned away. Then he spat. He ground the spittle into the Tarmac with the tip of his shoe. And then he walked on and wondered if later this same day he should ask Mrs. Sutton how he might help his mother" (PHILLIPS, 1995, p. 158).

The symbolic and paradoxical statute of Independence Day and of the TV-cable worker linking the island to a hegemonic country triggers Bertram's intervention stance. Conceiving the nation as "a deep, horizontal comradeship" (ANDERSON, 1983, p. 15), Bertram goes beyond the conflict zones, overcomes the fatal contradictions that people like Jackson are

reproducing in their community and decides to help in the true autonomy of the island represented by his mother. Similar to the Jamaican couple in *Small Island*, who has no guarantee of success with regard to the future status of the black British native in their care, Bertram's decision is no warrant either. It is a process to be worked out continuously. Conscious of his hyphenated identity in his own homeland and of the challenge he has in this new diaspora, he finally accepts Mrs. Sutton's advice to assume responsibilities and act big. "Your mother's a good woman and the fruit don't fall far from the tree" (PHILLIPS, 1995, p. 81). A dialogue is needed between the different communities on the island so that transnational mobility could be less problematic and engagement centred around nation formation within a transnational frame may be achieved.

Conclusion

The representation of diaspora in Post-Colonial Studies and in literatures in English has been in many instances the site of contestation against the homogenizing efforts and "achievements" of globalization. Although the aesthetic aspect of literature can neither be blurred nor diminished, its engagement within current power politics should not be discarded. As in the recent past Shakespeare's plays have been reconstructed, reappraised and enacted to foreground hegemonic class and racial attitudes within a colonial society (DOLLIMORE; SINFIELD, 1989), conversely, novels dealing with the transnational diaspora and diasporic characters have been a source of contestation against community-splitting formations and in favour of community-building attitudes. They are engaged in a commitment towards a global phenomenon that racializes people, attempts at blurring cultural differences, favours the transnational at the expense of the individual and the community, and merely shifts hegemonic loci without any real change in global capitalism. Diasporic studies and novels dealing with the diaspora are certainly not intended to be politically neutral.

BONNICI, T. Diáspora em dois romances caribenhos: *Small Island*, de Levy e *A State of Independence*, de Phillips. Revista de Letras, São Paulo, v. 45, n. 2, p. 81 - 110, 2005.

- **ABSTRACT:** *The novels Small Place by Andrea Levy and A State of Independence by Caryl Phillips, respectively published in 2004 and in 1986, are analyzed. Since both deal with the transnational diaspora of Caribbeans migrating to Britain, postcolonial problems concerning home and identity in the colonial subjects are discussed and the processes involving the diasporic agent are problematized. Results show that the subjectivity of the colonial transmigrant is constructed either by interventions within racialized society or by disruptions against colony-minded native rulers sticking to the status quo.*
- **KEYWORDS:** *Caribbean novel; diaspora; identity; post-colonialism; subject; transnationality.*

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