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CONTEMPORARY CRITICAL THOUGHTS IN “ENGLAND, ENGLAND”

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ABSTRACT

The article investigates the latest critical views in England by analyzing a postmodern novel “England, England” by contemporary British author Julian Barnes, applying the postmodernist theory of deconstruction fostered by French philosopher Jacques Derrida. The theory’s main components such as the tension between memory and fidelity, heterogeneity, a break and absolute newness are regarded as the focus in examining and understanding highly developed current societies that are rejecting the mere objectivity of earlier movements and praising the diversity of truth.

KEYWORDS

Julian Barnes, “England, England”, Jacques Derrida, postmodernist, deconstruction, objectivity, diversity.

INTRODUCTION

“England, England” is one of the recent novels by a prominent contemporary English author, Julian Barnes who, in 1983, was selected as one of the “Best Twenty Young British Novelists” [3, ix] and has successfully been able to confirm his talent through his works that

are now regarded as classics. “England, England”, consisting of 3 parts and three chapters in the second part, is a novel that’s inclined to expose England that is proven to be “re-imagined, fictionalized, and commodified through the policies and practices of the

English Heritage industry” [5, 18] like the main leading character, Martha Cochrane’s the very first memory verified by the narrator as a lie – “artfully, and innocently arranged lie”. [1, 11] From the point of view of the author, considering his interview to The Observer, “England, England” is about “the idea of England, authenticity, the search for truth, the invention of tradition and the way in which we forget our own history”. [6, 15] Moreover, he preferred the novel to be merely classified as “a political novel rather than a satire” where he employs a storyline to depict English and world’s “English” conceptual policies, political events, systems and models. Works of political fiction, we are informed, such as political novels, often directly criticize an existing society or present an alternative whereas in satires human or individual vices, follies, abuses, or shortcomings are held up to condemn by means of mockery, derision, burlesque, irony, parody, caricature, or other indirect methods, sometimes with an intention to inspire some social reforms. Yet, in our research, we are more concerned about its postmodernist features that can foster our understanding of contemporary unconventional perceptions by taking into an account the progressive literary approaches such as deconstruction in the postmodern literary representatives’ works.

THE MAIN RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Having read the book, but honestly rereading it twice, at least, one understands that it’s not in vain the author was eager to describe his character, though immature and innocent being as the one who thinks England jigsaw puzzles are one of the intrinsic constructive tools to get to know the territory of England. Yet, simultaneously it takes one into a deep contemplation that the author is perhaps inclined to deconstruct England by a jigsaw puzzle called “deconstruction”. Deconstruction – the latest philosophical, literary

theory and a well-known postmodernist concern developed by Jacques Derrida who regarded its main components as “not the mixture” but as “the tension between memory and fidelity” [2, 16] where it might foster its truthful portrayal in “England, England”. Since Julian Barnes points at the fact, that England is now, left between the memory and fidelity. Memory is being declared as “an impure and corrupted system” [1, 13] yet, like Martha, a very young child, everyone naively believes its “innocence and authenticity” by considering Francis Drake as “an English hero and a Sir and an Admiral and therefore a Gentleman” while, he is remembered as a pirate in Spain, who used to attack Spanish ships carrying treasures from their colonies in South America, and also raided Spanish and Portuguese ports in the Atlantic Ocean. This already confirms that our biased, one-sided, unfair memories are not able to sustain the fidelity and commitment in postmodern societies to establish a society where no one would have to go through trials in order to build up a character. This assumption as well needs some deconstructive plan to “invent a new rule, a new norm, a new criterion, a new law” [2, 17] that would upside down the situation when Martha’s mother would stop shedding tears just because her father left them. They both needed to start a new life through “deconstruction” where they would be without tears and pains. A break – as an essential element of deconstruction according to Jacques Derrida, should be accomplished by breaking with the past, yet preserving the memory of the past, while inaugurating something undeniably new. Although Martha succeeded in preserving the bests related to her father, but her mother “broke” by burning her father’s photos, whom we think deserved.



CONCLUSION

What we infer from the storyline of the book is that in postmodern era everyone needs some form of deconstruction with its breaks and preservation of something either leaves you behind with your memories or else traditionally brings you some suppositions that you are automatically filled with your own biases. In our modest investigation of the novel we are left in the hesitation by how much delight or bliss can it bring us when we deconstruct the past although fidelity towards ourselves surely gives us a hand to control our lives with assured compromise though mistaken as far as “the moon goes in again; the air grow cold...”. [1, 230]

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