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ÇANAKKALE ONSEKİZ MART ÜNİVERSİTESİ

LİSANSÜSTÜ EĞİTİM ENSTİTÜSÜ

BATI DİLLERİ VE EDEBİYATLARI ANABİLİM DALI

INTERSECTING IDENTITIES: EXPLORING INTERSECTIONALITY IN ANDREA LEVY'S *SMALL ISLAND* AND KATHRYN STOCKETT'S *THE HELP*

YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZİ

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DOÇ. DR. SERCAN HAMZA BAĞLAMA

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ETİK BEYAN

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In this thesis, which I have prepared in accordance with the Thesis Writing Guidelines of the Graduate School of Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University; I hereby declare and undertake that I have obtained all the data, information, and documents presented in the thesis within the framework of academic and ethical rules, that I have presented all information, documents, evaluations, and results in accordance with the principles of scientific ethics and integrity, that I have properly cited all the sources I benefited from in the thesis, that I have made no alterations to the data used, and that the work I present in this thesis is original. I accept all potential loss of rights that may arise against me otherwise.

(İmza)
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TEŞEKKÜR

Bu tezin gerçekleştirilmesinde, çalışmam boyunca benden bir an olsun yardımlarını esirgemeyen saygıdeğer danışman hocam Doç. Dr. Sercan Hamza Bağlama'ya ve hayatımın her evresinde bana destek olan değerli aileme, bilhassa annem Zehra Dinçer'e sonsuz teşekkürlerimi sunarım.

İsmail Can DİNÇER

Çanakkale, 28 Ağustos 2025

ÖZET

KESİŞEN KİMLİKLER: ANDREA LEVY'NİN *SMALL ISLAND* VE KATHRYN STOCKETT'IN *THE HELP* İSİMLİ ROMANLARINDA KESİŞİMSELLİK KAVRAMININ İNCELENMESİ

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Batı Dilleri ve Edebiyatları Anabilim Dalı Yüksek Lisans Yeterlik Tezi
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28/08/2025, 87

Bu tez, kesişimselliği eleştirel bir çerçeve olarak kullanarak ırk, toplumsal cinsiyet, sınıf, milliyet, sömürgecilik statüsü ve meşruiyet gibi örtüşen toplumsal kategorilerin Andrea Levy'nin *Small Island* (2004) ve Kathryn Stockett'in *The Help* (2009) adlı romanlarında baskı, faillik ve ayrıcalık deneyimlerini nasıl şekillendirdiğini incelemektedir. Kimberlé Crenshaw'ın kuramsal çerçevesine dayanan ve feminist eleştiri, postkolonyal teori ve eleştirel ırk kuramından beslenen çalışma, tekil kimlik yaklaşımlarını eleştirerek, marjinalleşme ve direnişin karmaşık yapılarını üreten eşzamanlı yapısal güçleri ön plana çıkarır. 1960'ların Mississippi'sinde geçen *The Help*, Siyahi ev işçilerinin beyaz Güneyli ataerkil yapı altında maruz kaldıkları ırksal, toplumsal cinsiyete dayalı ve sınıfsal tahakkümün iç içe geçmiş biçimlerini betimlerken; onların tanıklığa dayalı direniş eylemleri, yapısal tahakküm ile anlatısal faillik arasındaki diyalektiği ortaya koyar. *Small Island* ise Windrush sonrası Britanya'da, Jamaikalı göçmenler ile beyaz Britanyalıların kesişen kimlikleri aracılığıyla imparatorluk miraslarının ve savaş sonrası yeniden yapılanmanın aidiyet, vatandaşlık ve dışlanma hiyerarşilerini nasıl yeniden şekillendirdiğini gösterir. Her iki roman da kendi edebi ve tarihsel gelenekleri – Afrikalı Amerikalı ve postkolonyal Britanya – içinde konumlandırılırken, sosyopolitik kabulleri incelenerek ideolojik kör noktalar açığa çıkarılır. Bu metinleri diyalog içinde ele alan araştırma, kesişimselliğin ABD yurttaşlık hakları hareketi kökenlerinin ötesindeki kuramsal kapsamını genişletir; onu imparatorluk ve imparatorluk-sonrası bağlamlarda ve yalnızca siyahi kadınlarla sınırlı olmayan öznellikler için eleştirel bir araç olarak sunar. Son olarak tez, kesişimselliğin

yalnızca edebi çözümleme aracı değil, aynı zamanda anlatısal temsildeki eşitsizliklerin maddi, tarihsel ve söylemsel boyutlarını kavramaya yönelik disiplinlerarası bir toplumsal eleştiri yöntemi olarak vazgeçilmez olduğunu savunur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kesişimsellik, Feminism, Post-Kolonyalism, Crenshaw, *The Help*, *Small Island*

ABSTRACT

INTERSECTING IDENTITIES: EXPLORING INTERSECTIONALITY IN ANDREA LEVY'S *SMALL ISLAND* AND KATHRYN STOCKETT'S *THE HELP*

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This thesis employs intersectionality as a critical framework to examine how overlapping social categories, including race, gender, class, nationality, colonial status, and legitimacy, shape experiences of oppression, agency, and privilege in Andrea Levy's *Small Island* (2004) and Kathryn Stockett's *The Help* (2009). Grounded in Kimberlé Crenshaw's theorisation and informed by feminist, postcolonial, and critical race theories, the study critiques monolithic identity paradigms and foregrounds the simultaneous structural forces that produce complex configurations of marginalisation and resistance. In *The Help*, set in 1960s Mississippi, the narrative depicts the compounded racial, gendered, and class-based subjugation of Black domestic workers under white Southern patriarchy while their testimonial acts of resistance reveal the dialectic between structural domination and narrative agency. In *Small Island*, set in post-Windrush Britain, the intersecting identities of Jamaican migrants and white Britons expose how imperial legacies and postwar reconstruction recalibrate hierarchies of belonging, citizenship, and exclusion. Each novel is situated within its respective literary and historical genealogies – African American and postcolonial British traditions – while their sociopolitical receptions are examined to uncover ideological blind spots. By placing these texts in dialogue, the research extends the theoretical reach of intersectionality beyond its U.S. civil rights origins, demonstrating its critical utility in imperial and post-imperial contexts and among subjects beyond women of colour. It also advocates for the use of intersectionality as both a literary tool and a mode of social critique, calling for interdisciplinary approaches that engage with the material, historical, and discursive dimensions of inequality in narrative representation.

Keywords: Intersectionality, Feminism, Post-Colonialism, *The Help*, *Small Island*

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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary literary landscape, the examination of socially constructed categories, such as race, gender, and class, has become an indispensable element of critical analysis as it seeks to understand systems of inequality. One crucial notion that aids in this analysis is *intersectionality*, a term initially coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989 in a legal framework to address the manifold injustices that Black women endure. Since its inception, intersectionality has become a foundational framework across a range of academic disciplines, most notably in feminist theory, postcolonial studies, and sociology. At its core, intersectionality refers to the way multiple aspects of a person's social and political identities, including race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, sexuality, class, interact and overlap to shape their individual experiences. These interconnected identities expose people to multiple and simultaneous forms of discrimination or privilege, which cannot be fully understood in isolation. In this context, this thesis explores the intersectional dynamics in Andrea Levy's *Small Island* (2004) and Kathryn Stockett's *The Help* (2009), two novels that delve deeply into the lived experiences of marginalised individuals whose multi-layered identities result in idiosyncratic and complex oppression and discrimination structured by systemic inequalities, and can be grasped through the analytical lens of intersectionality.

This research aims to investigate how intersectionality functions within the narratives of *Small Island* and *The Help*, with particular attention to how various aspects of personal identity intersect to shape the characters' social status and perceived value. It explores how these intersecting identities influence the opportunities available to them, the forms of victimisation they experience, and the constraints they face within their respective societies. Intersectionality provides a valuable lens to analyse these narratives, as it enables a nuanced understanding of the multi-layered and often contradictory experiences of marginalised individuals. Traditional approaches that isolate one category of analysis, such as focusing solely on race or solely on gender, fail to account for the complex ways in which these identities interact and compound each other. By adopting an intersectional framework, this thesis accentuates the multiplicity of oppression faced by the characters in *Small Island* and *The Help*, as well as their acts of agency and resistance. This study also seeks to unveil the mechanisms by which power is both maintained and challenged in these texts, through institutional structures and interpersonal relationships.

Both novels are situated within distinct historical and geographical contexts: *Small Island* is set in post-World War II Britain, spanning the period before, during, and after the Windrush era, while *The Help* takes place in 1960s Mississippi, United States, during the Civil Rights Movement. Despite geographical, cultural, and temporal differences, there are notable similarities in the patterns of oppression and resistance experienced by the characters. Andrea Levy and Kathryn Stockett, though writing from different cultural and temporal standpoints, both employ fiction to interrogate historical injustices and give voice to those whose stories have often been silenced. *Small Island* offers a poignant portrayal of Jamaican immigrants in Britain, examining the subtle interconnections of the seemingly seperate challenges they face in terms of racism, displacement, sexism, and cultural misunderstanding. Levy's narrative intricately weaves together the lives of four protagonists, Hortense, Gilbert, Queenie, and Bernard, each offering a distinct perspective on the intersecting forces of empire, war, and social hierarchy. *The Help*, on the other hand, centres on the lives of African American maids working in white households in Jackson, Mississippi, during the Civil Rights era. Through the voices of Aibileen, Minny, and Skeeter, while narrating their struggle for dignity and justice , Stockett brings forth the interconnectedness of the themes of racial prejudice, class stratification and gender roles.

By examining these texts through an intersectional lens, this thesis brings to the foreground the interdependence of multiple axes of identity and how these configurations are impacted by specific cultural, historical, and economic forces. In *Small Island*, characters must navigate not only racial hierarchies but also the shifting terrains of post-war reconstruction and changing national identities. Gilbert's experience as a Jamaican RAF veteran returning to a country that sees him as inferior illustrates the racial and colonial prejudices embedded in British society. Hortense, despite her educational achievements and refined demeanour, faces discrimination both as a woman and as a Black immigrant. Their encounters with Queenie and Bernard also highlight the complexities of white British identity during a time of socio-political transformation. Likewise, *The Help* illustrates how the domestic setting becomes a microcosm for wider social power structures. Aibileen and Minny's narratives expose the physical, emotional, and psychological toll of working within white households where they are both essential and marginalised. Skeeter's role as a white woman who seeks to document the lives of Black maids further complicates the dynamics of race and class, revealing the potential and limitations of allyship between women who do

not share same social class, privileges and racial backgrounds. The intersecting identities of these characters influence how they perceive the world and how the world perceives them. Moreover, the thesis examines the literary techniques employed by Levy and Stockett to convey intersectional realities. The use of multiple narrators, shifts in perspective, and distinct linguistic registers allows for a polyphonic narrative structure that reflects the diversity of experiences. This narrative multiplicity resists monolithic portrayals of Black identity and instead embraces complexity and nuance. The inclusion of vernacular speech, epistolary elements, and interior monologues offers insight into the internal struggles and strengths of characters who are silenced in dominant historical discourses. The notion of voice is particularly significant in both novels. In *Small Island*, the act of storytelling becomes a means of asserting identity and reclaiming agency. Hortense's desire to teach, to speak, and to be heard challenges the silencing effects of colonialism and sexism. In *The Help*, the writing of the maids' testimonies becomes both a literal and symbolic act of resistance. The tension between voice and voicelessness, visibility and invisibility, lies at the heart of intersectional struggles[1].

Another layer of analysis involves the socio-political reception of these novels and their contribution to ongoing discussions about race and gender in their respective societies. *Small Island* has been lauded for its candid depiction of Britain's colonial past and its legacy, influencing debates around immigration and multiculturalism. *The Help*, while commercially successful, has also faced criticism for its portrayal of race relations and the positioning of a white protagonist at the centre of a Black struggle. These contrasting receptions further highlight the importance of intersectional critique in literary studies, as they reveal the cultural investments and blind spots in popular narratives.

The Help and *Small Island* are selected for this study for their capacity to illustrate different dimensions of intersectionality. *The Help* brings forth the position of Black women in a historically specific American context and echoes Kimberlé Crenshaw's foundational framework, while *Small Island* extends intersectional analysis into a transnational setting

[1] Such tension resonates with New Historicism**,** which asserts that literary texts both reflect and contest the power relations of their historical moment by recovering marginalized or suppressed voices. Drawing on Bakhtin's (1981) ideas of heteroglossia and dialogism, the narrative multiplicity in *Small Island* and *The Help* can be seen as resisting monologic, official discourse and making room for counter-histories within dominant culture.

shaped by race, gender, and migration. Together, the novels demonstrate both the rootedness of intersectionality in Black women's struggles and its adaptability beyond that scope. Their selection is further grounded in their critical prominence and cultural resonance, which make them especially effective case studies for exploring the evolving reach of intersectional inquiry

The structure of the thesis is as follows: Chapter One provides a detailed overview of the theoretical foundations of intersectionality, tracing its history and development within feminist thought, postcolonial thought and beyond. Chapter Two focuses on *The Help*, examining how intersectionality manifests within the socio-cultural landscape of the American South and how the characters navigate systems of oppression. Chapter Three turns to *Small Island*, analysing how the novel represents the intersecting dynamics of race, gender, class, nationality and status of immigration through its diasporic and Briton characters and narrative form. Doing so, the thesis approaches its analysis of the two novels by aligning with both the original and expanded applications of intersectional theory. In the examination of *The Help*, the thesis adopts the traditional scope of intersectionality as it was initially conceptualised and centres on the compounded forms of oppression experienced by Black women. By situating the analysis within the context of the American Civil Rights era, the study aims to foreground that race, gender, and class converge to produce distinctive patterns of marginalisation for Black women, thereby reaffirming the foundational arguments made by early intersectional theorists such as Kimberlé Crenshaw. In contrast, the analysis of *Small Island* broadens the framework, reflecting how intersectionality has evolved and has been adapted to different global and cultural contexts. This part of the thesis seeks to demonstrate how the framework can be extended beyond its original formulation to examine the complex interplay of race, gender, immigrant status, masculinity, and illegitimacy within the post-war British context. In doing so, the study illustrates the versatility of intersectionality as an analytical tool for exploring diverse forms of identity and social inequality.

This research also situates the novels within broader socio-historical and literary traditions. *Small Island* emerges from a postcolonial British literary context, engaging with themes of migration, identity, and the legacies of empire. It can be read alongside other works that grapple with the Windrush generation and the reconfiguration of British identity in the wake of decolonisation. *The Help*, conversely, is deeply embedded within African

American literary traditions, drawing upon the cultural memory of segregation and the fight for civil rights. By exploring these literary genealogies, the thesis underscores how historical context informs the intersectional experiences depicted in the novels.

Beyond literary analysis, the thesis incorporates essential theoretical frameworks that shape intersectional thinking. Kimberlé Crenshaw's seminal work on intersectionality is pivotal for this analysis, particularly her emphasis on how legal and social systems often render Black women invisible. Patricia Hill Collins' notion of the 'matrix of domination' and her exploration of controlling images that label Black women further clarify how intersecting oppressions operate within power structures. Additionally, the writings of bell hooks and Angela Davis on Black womanhood and feminism offer vital perspectives on the lived experiences of the characters, especially in the Southern United States. Theorists like Nancy Fraser with her status model of recognition and Spivak with her arguments about the 'subaltern' contribute to expanding the understanding of intersectionality. These theoretical perspectives are crucial in unravelling the complexities of identity and power in the two novels.

In conclusion, this research seeks to contribute to the growing body of scholarship that applies intersectional analysis to literary texts. By exploring the intersectionality in *Small Island* and *The Help*, the thesis sheds light not only on the multifaceted experiences of Black women and other marginalised identities in different cultural and historical contexts but also underscores the power of literature as a medium for social critique and transformation. The examination of these texts through an intersectional lens reveals the intricate ways in which identities are constructed, challenged, and reimagined, offering a richer and more inclusive understanding of human experience. Ultimately, this study demonstrates that literature not only reflects social realities but also shapes and contests them, inviting readers to engage critically with the worlds it portrays and the ideologies it confronts.

CHAPTER TWO
THEORETICAL BACKGROUND: INTERSECTIONALITY

Intersectionality is an acknowledgement that individuals may experience oppression and discrimination in a unique way, consequent on intersecting more than one marginalised identity. Intersectionality, a theoretical concept initially coined and introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw, emerged as a vital response to the imperative need for acknowledging the unique experiences of Black women facing discrimination within a society dominated by white patriarchy. Conventional paradigms of anti-racism and feminism often operate on the premise that individuals may face discrimination based solely on their gender or race, but they fail to account for the intersecting dimensions of identity. In the case of Black women, their experiences of oppression and victimisation stem not from the isolated factors of being Black or female but rather from the intersection of both their Black and female identities (Crenshaw, 1989). Traditional feminism often draws from the experiences of upper or middle-class white women, who face gender-based victimisation while still benefiting from their white privilege. Anti-racist discourse frequently centres on the experiences of Black men, who endure oppression due to their race but may possess certain advantages within a patriarchal society because of their gender. Both of these paradigms tend to narrow their focus on specific minority groups, neglecting the unique victimisation experienced by women of colour. These women grapple with oppression on two fronts – both as women and as Black individuals – without the compensatory privileges associated with either aspect of their identity (Crenshaw, 1989). Therefore, Black women experience double or triple discrimination, the complexity of which is not fully recognised by either Black or feminist solidarities alone. In this sense, the concept of intersectionality serves as a broader discourse that provides sufficient space to facilitate the recognition and exploration of the complex and unique experience of Black women's multi-layered subordination.

Intersectionality becomes a larger discourse over time as the concept is suited to include any minority group that suffers discrimination due to the intertwining of multiple marginalised identities such as ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, class or religious beliefs. The confluence of any of these identities results in a unique experience of multi-layered victimisation that may even differ between individuals of the same marginalised groups. For instance, the victimisation of a heterosexual Black woman may differ from that of a lesbian Black woman, or lower-class Black immigrant women may experience a different type of

discrimination from an upper-class Black woman. In other words, since the social identity of any marginalised person may have multiple facades, positioning them in a single minority group or category is obliged to fail to grasp the complexity of victimisation that individuals experience fully. The notion of intersectionality thus suits as an analytical tool to encapsulate and debunk various junction points of oppression of marginalised people by situating formerly isolated single-axis frameworks of egalitarian and anti-discriminatory discourses within a larger scope which revolves around the ideas of inequality, relationality, power, social context, complexity, and social justice (Hill Collins and Bilge, 2016). Intersectionality consequently gains ground within academic circles as critical enquiry and praxis, which lays out a framework to criticise limitations of previous theories, studies, and accumulations of knowledge on inequality, discrimination, racism, and sexism (Hill Collins and Bilge, 2016). As it becomes a broader framework, intersectionality itself is also criticised for over-categorising individuals without having any clear destination and progressive targets, based on the idea that seeking definite political identifications and categorisations for individuals is an inaccurate method for identity politics (Downing, 2018). However, intersectionality continues to have a high profile within and beyond academic spheres, influencing both research and practical applications. This concept is embraced as a dynamic and generative idea across a wide spectrum of academic fields, including history, sociology, literature, philosophy, anthropology, feminist studies, ethnic studies, queer studies, and legal studies, to name just a few (Cho et al., 2013: 787). The next section of the chapter will, in this context, explore the historical context of intersectionality to provide a deeper understanding of how this concept evolved both prior to and following Crenshaw's introduction of the term to the field.

2.1. Historical Context

Dividing the history of intersectionality into certain decades or locations leads to overly simplistic classifications. (Hill Collins and Bilge, 2016: 63-64). Instead, a more effective approach to understanding the history of intersectionality involves examining the genesis of its fundamental concepts, tracing their evolution and development, observing how they become institutionalised, and exploring their adoption and refinement in critical inquiry and practice among activists and writers (Hill Collins and Bilge, 2016: 63-64). In this sense,

to accomplish this objective, it is necessary to illuminate and discuss the initial arguments prior to the introduction of the term into the academic sphere. Although the term intersectionality was first coined by Crenshaw in the 1990s, the main arguments and core ideas that converge under the umbrella term of intersectionality were first addressed, discussed, and developed in the period between the 1960s and 1990s. Hill Collins and Bilge posit that the earlier phase of the history of intersectionality is ignored by many scholars who comport themselves as though the notion of intersectionality begins with the time when Crenshaw conceptualised and introduced the term to the field (2016: 64). Nevertheless, preceding Crenshaw, the same arguments were developed and discussed by many activists and authors using different terms and vocabularies, which set the stage for the eventual emergence of intersectionality (Hill Collins and Bilge, 2016: 64).

The main essences of the argument of intersectionality were first discussed and developed in the 1960s, when the civil rights movements escalated, and women of colour were given the chance to make their voices heard for the first time. During this period, since Black women were kept in the background and Black men were positioned at the forefront of the civil rights movements, women of colour established and organized their own solidarities for the first time, identifying themselves as 'Black women' (Hill Collins and Bilge, 2016: 65). In the 1970s, these Black women's solidarities expressed and conveyed their ideas by reminding their political existence and reflecting their experiences of subordination and segregation through various means such as pamphlets, essays, poems, or any kind of art forms, most of which underlined the main arguments and core ideas of intersectionality. It was during this period that Black women came to realise that traditional feminist discourses and anti-racist movements failed to address and represents the Black women's unique experiences. Women of colour observed that concentrating exclusively on gender, race, class, or any single-axis framework was insufficient to address their multifaceted experiences of discrimination, which led them to seek more effective approaches that could offer more effective solutions. Consequently, the main points and ideas of intersectionality appeared in various texts produced by Black women during that time (Hill Collins and Bilge, 2016: 66).

In *The Black Women: An Anthology* (2005), for example, Toni Cade Bambara as editor of the collection, brings together several texts written by Black women in different formats and political opinions. Each of these texts reflects different aspects and perspectives

of being a woman of colour, and reveals the depth, complexity, and diversity of the experiences of discrimination faced by Black women in the 1970s. While the contributors in the anthology vary from inexperienced students to professional writers, they share a common identity as Black women and assert a collective voice, demanding recognition for their unique and individual experiences of oppression (Bambara, 2005: 7).

One of the selected texts in the anthology is Frances Beale's essay "Double Jeopardy: To Be Black and Female", the title of which, as one of the earliest instances of the concept of intersectionality, suggests the same argument of the notion, only using a different vocabulary: how Black women's racial and sexual identity intersect and how this creates double jeopardy, double oppression, and double discrimination. Beale denounces capitalism, blames it for the repressive and derogatory position Black women are rendered to be situated in. She argues that the capitalist system structures society in a manner that prevents Black men from accessing employment opportunities where they could thrive and earn respect, and that this system leads to their exploitation and ultimately results in their exclusion by employers. Consequently, Black women are forced to work as a breadwinner of the family under white employment, while their husbands remain at home, unemployed. This reversal of roles disrupts the entire dynamic and peace of mind of the Black family structure, enforcing Black women in a predicament where they are not only exploited and degraded by their white women employers but also abused by their husbands who are manipulated by the system to believe that they are emasculated because they have a working wife who occupies a higher position in the family (Beale, 2005: 109-110). Underlying the main arguments and core ideas of the intersectionality paradigm, Beale further elucidates the uniqueness of the multi-faceted oppression and discrimination of Black women by underlying its reasons and means as follows:

> Black woman in America can justly be described as a "slave of a slave:' By reducing the Black man in America to such abject oppression, the Black woman had no protector and was used, and is still being used in some cases, as the scapegoat for the evils that this horrendous system has perpetrated on Black men. Her physical image has been maliciously maligned; she has been sexually molested and abused by the white colonizer; she has suffered the worst kind of economic exploitation, having been forced to serve as the white woman's maid and wet nurse for white offspring while her own children were more often than not starving and neglected. It is the depth of degradation to be socially manipulated, physically raped, used to undermine your own household, and to be powerless to reverse this syndrome. (Beale, 2005:112)

The reference to the double victimisation of Black women by referring to them as "slaves of slaves" highlights the fact that women of colour are not only victimised by prevailing upper-class white men, but also by other victim groups such as white women and Black men, making the position of Black women in society even more degrading than that of white women or Black men. As she describes Black women as "slaves of slaves", she also addresses the oppressors of Black women as "white coloniser", evocating that the foundation of the capitalist system, in which Black women are victimised, has its origins in colonisation and slavery. Such a choice of words consolidates the condemnation of capitalism which Baele blames for the double victimisation of Black women. Nevertheless, as Hill Collins and Bilge (2016) point out, although Baele's ideas promote Crenshaw's forthcoming notion of intersectionality and essentially echo the same arguments, her opinions are generally excluded from the historical narratives of intersectionality (p. 67). The Combahee River Collective's "A Black Feminist Statement", on the other hand, is included in such narratives as one of the pioneering texts of intersectionality having a remarkable impact on the feminist thoughts (Hill Collins and Bilge, 2016: 67). The statement, which was first published in 1977, recognises patriarchy, misogyny, racism, and capitalism, and also points to homophobia and heterosexism as other intersecting forms of oppression that Black women face. The statement begins with a bold assertion that reveals the main motives of its argument:

> The most general statement of our politics at the present time would be that we are actively committed to struggling against racial, sexual, heterosexual, and class oppression, and see as our particular task the development of integrated analysis and practice based upon the fact that the major systems of oppression are interlocking. The synthesis of these oppressions creates the conditions of our lives. As Black women we see Black feminism as the logical political movement to combat the manifold and simultaneous oppressions that all women of color face. (Combahee River Collective, 2017 :15)

The term "double jeopardy" that Baele chooses in her article is here transformed into "manifold and simultaneous oppression"; however, the idea remains the same which points out the same problem Crenshaw discusses in her following articles. By using the term "integrated analysis" or "interlocking oppression", the statement emphasises the same idea that the notion of intersectionality reflects. Since the statement comes into being with the contribution of various Black feminist women, it manages to reveal with a collective voice the combining reasons behind the unique victimisation that Black women experience in their daily life, bringing all factors that form different facets of the oppression into focus. The

statement claims that sexism, heterosexism, racism, or class discrimination oppress them in such a way that it is nearly impossible for Black women to separate these “simultaneous oppressions" from each other (Combahee River Collective, 2017: 19). Looking at the key ideas and repetitive terms, such as “manifold, simultaneous, integrated or interlocking” in the text, it is evident that “A Black Feminist Statement” contributes to the growth of the concept of intersectionality in a larger framework. Indeed, in the 1970 and 1980s, various indicative words and expressions for intersectionality such as “multiple jeopardy”, “triple jeopardy”, “interactive oppressions”, “multiplicative effects” were frequently used in texts by Black feminists, eventually leading to the formation of a common vocabulary within the discourse of intersectionality (Hill Collins and Bilge, 2016: 76).

Social movements that initially enabled the silenced Black women to raise their voices and fight the system for emancipation and justice paved the way for the inclusion of women of colour in the institutions and academia where they participated in the system and permeated their ideas within the academic sphere through their research and theoretical analysis (Hill Collins and Bilge, 2016: 77). Following the inclusion of social activists in academia, race, class, and gender studies gained prominence and several core theoretical texts, such as Audre Lorde’s *Sister Outsider* in1984, Angela Davis’ *Women, Race, Class* in 1981, June Jordan’s *Civil War* in 1981, and bell hook’s *Ain’t I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism* in 1981, appeared and prepared the ground for establishing the framework for the discourse of intersectionality. Each of these works analyses the systematic oppression experienced by Black women, unfolding the causes and consequences of the multidimensionality of this oppression. Audre Lorde (2007), for instance, in *Sister Outsider* draws attention to the reason why Black women have a need for their own discourse that is distinct from the traditional feminist discourse in which white women dominate, saying that “[a]s white women ignore their built-in privilege of whiteness and define woman in terms of their own experience alone, then women of Color become ‘other,’ the outsider whose experience and tradition is too ‘alien’ to comprehend” (p. 117). In this sense, the absence of solidarity between non-white and white women, coupled with racism in women’s movements that primarily focus on the experiences of white women, compels Black women to forge their own alliances and create a discourse that aptly addresses the specific nature of their complex discrimination. As a Black lesbian feminist, Lorde (2007) further clarifies the need for a broader framework that encompasses all aspect of her identity as a Black person, as a woman and as a lesbian:

> As a Black lesbian feminist comfortable with the many different ingredients of my identity, and a woman committed to racial and sexual freedom from oppression, I find I am constantly being encouraged to pluck out some one aspect of myself and present this as the meaningful whole, eclipsing or denying the other parts of self. But this is a destructive and fragmenting way to live. My fullest concentration of energy is available to me only when I integrate all the parts of who I am. (pp. 120-121)

To put it in another way, she believes that gender, sexual orientation, race, and ethnicity are the different branches of the same tree, and that severing or breaking one branch would mutilate the entirety of the tree. Similarly, dictating an induvial to give up one aspect of their identity would diminish the self-integrity of a person. Therefore, Lorde points out here the necessity for a more inclusive notion that is able to account for the complexity of the interrelated oppression of Black women by the systems without overlooking any part of their identity. In this context, intersectionality, as a broader discourse, indeed fully embraces individuals who have the opportunity to articulate all facets of their victimisation experience without separating and excluding one aspects of their identities.

Additionally, bell hooks also acknowledges the same necessity in her arguments, stating that both anti-racist and feminist discourses fail to represent Black women, who find themselves excluded from both solidarities. Hooks (1982) argues that such contemptuous marginalisation stems from both the patriarchal bias of Black men, who dominate the anti-racist movement (p. 89), and the racist ideology of white women, whose experiences shape the feminist discourse (p. 136). In this context, hooks (1982) addresses the domestic violence that Black women are enforced to tolerate since divorce is not an option in most cases, claiming that "[b]lack women are one of the most devalued female groups in American society" and that "they have [thus] been the recipients of a male abuse and cruelty that has known no bounds or limits" (p. 108). Hooks (1982), then, highlights the unfair working conditions of Black women employed by white women and points out how these white women assert their superior position and class privileges through various degrading attitudes towards their non-white employees. According to hooks (1982):

> In America, white racist ideology has always allowed white women to assume that the word woman is synonymous with white woman, for woman of other races are always perceived as Others, as de-humanized beings who do not fall under the heading woman. (pp.138,139)

In other words, the marginalisation of Black women from feminist discourse is deeply rooted in a racist ideology that perceives Black women as not fitting the conventional definition of a 'proper woman'. Hooks, ultimately, emphasises that Black women, lacking

support from both Black men and white women, necessitate a more inclusive discourse, and that this would enable them to find a sense of belonging and effectively address the dual discrimination they face.

Although initial discussions of intersectionality and the term 'Black women' primarily focused on African American women, other non-white heterogeneous women solidarities, such as Native Americans, Asian Americans, Latinas, or Chicanas, have also added their voices to African American women, as they share experiences of being subjected to similar multifaceted and systematic oppression (Hill Collins and Bilge, 2016: 71). In the 1970s and 1980s, various non-white feminist groups produced several anthologies such as *La Mujer: En Pie De Lucha* in 1973, *The Study of Women: Enlarging Perspective on Social Reality* in 1979 and *This Bridge Called My Back* in 1981(Hill Collins and Bilge, 2016: 71). These collections comprised core texts, pivotal articles, essays, testimonials from real-life experiences, and poems, and significantly contributed to the development of the theory of intersectionality, shaping it into an inclusive concept that serves as an analytical tool (Hill Collins and Bilge, 2016: 71). Women of colour of different ethnicities who resided in the British Empire were also victimised by similar manifold oppressions, and therefore gathered around the name "Black" which functioned as a "coalitional political identity" for them (Hill Collins and Bilge, 2016: 75). In *The Heart of the Race: Black Women's Lives in Britain* (1985), Afro-Caribbean writers Beverley Bryan, Stella Dadzie and Suzanne Scafe, all of whom were the old members of the Organisation of Women of Asian and African Descent (OWAAD), express their gratitude to women of colour in the United States for breaking the persistent silence of Black women, and intend to raise their own voice to manifest their experiences of oppression in the British Empire addressing problems at the heart of their society in a more precise manner (p. 1). For example, according to Hill Collins and Bilge (2016), the OWAAD explicitly identifies white imperialist culture as a primary source of the racism, sexism, and various forms of discrimination faced by Black women in Britain (p.76).

In the light of all these studies, articles, testimonies and researches, all of which recurringly articulate the necessity for a broader framework to address the multidimensional oppression of Black women and individuals who are marginalised by single-axis frameworks, in her groundbreaking article "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics" Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) contributes to the ongoing discourse by

coining the term of “intersectionality” and exemplifying how intersectionality can function as an analytical tool for academic researches and analyses.

2.1.1. Kimberlé Crenshaw

At the beginning of her seminal article, Crenshaw (1989) recapitulates the core ideas of the previous discussions and diagnoses the reasons that constitute such multidimensional discrimination by delineating the basic foundations of intersectionality. She emphasises on the narrow scope of anti-racist and feminist discourses noting that such limitedness give cause for systematic deletion of the identity of Black women who are allowed to become prominent in neither discourse. In such cases, upper and middle-class white women’s experiences of gender-based oppression prevail over Black women’s complex and multi-layered oppression and form the fundamental ground of the feminist discourse in which women of colour are “theoretically erased”. Anti-racist movements and policies likewise stand against only traditional racism and concentrate solely on the marginalisation of Black men, disregarding Black women whose multi-layered victimisation remains unspoken again. In this context, Crenshaw (1989) asserts that these limited frameworks preclude any possible remediation of Black women’s double discrimination and fail to apply as an analytical tool to fully grasp the complexity of the intersection of racism and sexism. Therefore, she introduces the term ‘intersectionality’ as a broader concept which includes multiple forms of discrimination in its scope, operating extensively to analyse the victimisation experience of women of colour in numerous contexts.

Crenshaw (1989) then applies the notion of intersectionality to her analysis of three court cases in which Black women plaintiffs lose lawsuits as a consequence of the legal framework’s inadequacy for the recognition of Black women’s unique identities to underline how established judicial systems of the United States fails the acknowledge the intersectional position of Black women. According to her, anti-discrimination laws are designed and operate as single-axis frameworks that do not accept multiple identities of individuals; thus, Black women fail to manifest that defendants discriminate against them not only because they are Black or women, but because they are both:

> Black women encounter combined race and sex discrimination implies that the boundaries of sex and race discrimination doctrine are defined respectively by white women's and Black men's experiences. Under this view, Black women are protected

> only to the extent that their experiences coincide with those of either of the two groups. (Crenshaw, 1989: 143)

In these court cases, race and sex discrimination juxtapose in a manner that hinders Black women's victimisation to be addressed and remedied by either doctrine. As Crenshaw (1989) stresses, such juxtaposition is not the sum of both types of discrimination, but their mixture, a unique experience of discrimination that can only be attributed to women of colour and does not coincide with the experience of Black men and white women (p.149). From this perspective, Black women's experiences appear so unfamiliar and complex for feminists and the anti-racist community that both solidarities' only race- or gender-focused approaches fail to address Black women's needs (Crenshaw, 1989: 150). Crenshaw notably emphasises the isolated position of Black women and examines the underlying causes of this marginalisation by elaborating on the primary agendas and characteristics of feminist and anti-racist discourses. As she discusses feminist discourse's general attitudes towards race issues, for instance, she posits that:

> When feminist theory attempts to describe women's experiences through analyzing patriarchy, sexuality, or separate spheres ideology, it often overlooks the role of race. Feminists thus ignore how their own race functions to mitigate some aspects of sexism and, moreover, how it often privileges them over and contributes to the domination of other women. Consequently, feminist theory remains white, and its potential to broaden and deepen its analysis by addressing non-privileged women remains unrealized. (Crenshaw, 1989: 154)

Stated differently, the over-generalisation of womanhood into a stereotype that has a single race or class rigidly delimitates the extent and analytical capacity of any anti-sexist or anti-patriarchal theory since they would no longer function as comprehensive notions and instead operate for a particular group of women's interest. Crenshaw (1989) also highlights the failure of the Black community to acknowledge the women of colour's intersectionality and how Black men's lack of support and non-recognition of the needs of black women prevent a complete analysis of Black people's racial subordination and correct identifications of their problems (p.166). According to her, top-down approaches cannot be applied to formulating anti-discrimination theories. Instead, centralising the most-disadvantaged group around key theories is crucial for conducting the analysis of racial or sexual discrimination. This approach allows for a broader understanding of outcomes and facilitates the development of remedies for marginalised people's struggles against discriminatory ideas enforced by the status quo (Crenshaw, 1989: 167).

Crenshaw, in her following article “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color” (1991), elaborates her arguments and solidifies the notion of intersectionality as an umbrella term that encompasses numerous ongoing research and analysis within the study of race, class and gender. Crenshaw (1991), through the article, instantiates the utilisation of intersectionality as an analytical tool for race, class, and gender research when she examines the role of intersectionality in violence against women of colour. She presents relegating effects of intersectionality on domestic violence that Black women often face from structural, political, and representational perspectives.

According to Crenshaw (1991), structural intersectionality imports how the intersectional location of Black women differentiates their experience of all forms of domestic abuse, including rape, from that of white women. In such circumstances, women of colour’s racial identity militates against them and reduces their options for shelter or any means of protection since, unlike white women, the majority of Black women are unable to afford such services due to several disadvantages such as obligations inflicted upon them concerning the care of children, extreme poverty, and the lack of job opportunities to maintain their life independently (Crenshaw, 1991: 1245). Crenshaw (1991) argues that the state of extreme destitution of Black women who are victims of domestic violence stems from this double victimisation that dispossesses them of any relief and financial support that are more attainable for white women who have more economic and racial privileges (p. 1246). In this context, the system does not function for Black women as effectively as it does for white women; instead, the social structure operates as a vicious circle that incarcerates women of colour without presenting any outlet but augmenting the constraints and burdens that are already established upon them.

Political intersectionality accentuates the opposing political agendas of anti-racist and feminist discourses and how these conflicting political objectives, at times, lead them to unintentionally assist the various ongoing victimisation of Black women, even including domestic violence and rape (Crenshaw 1991:1252). Restricting their focus merely to a particular type of discrimination and aiming to keep their goals allegedly pure require feminist or anti-racist discourses to apply a certain amount of subordination for the groups beyond the scope of their objectives (Crenshaw 1991:1252). Following this purpose, Black women are not only elided from both discourses but also oppressed by them because,

ostensibly, their femaleness conflicts with the political aims of a community of colours, and their Blackness distorts the political horizon of white feminists. To put it differently, concerning women of colour, anti-racist and feminist discourses paradoxically turn into yet another operational forces that contribute to racism and sexism in order to rely on their policies and accomplish their own political goals. Under this view, for example, anti-racist communities often strike an aggressive attitude towards feminism since it is widely assumed within the community of colours that gender problems are inconsequential for their common cause, and some even assert that the integrity of their community can be accomplished through the justification of domestic violence (Crenshaw 1991: 1253).

To exemplify, Crenshaw (1991) explores Shahrazad Ali's *The Blackman's Guide to Understanding the Black Woman* (1989), in which "Ali draws a positive correlation between domestic violence and the liberation of African Americans" (pp. 1253-1254). Crenshaw (1991) notes that "Ali's premise is that patriarchy is beneficial for the Black community and that it must be strengthened through coercive means if necessary" (p. 1254). Here, 'coercive means' can be interpreted as various forms of abuse and violence towards Black women by their male partner, and suggesting that such violence might be 'necessary' Shahrazard Ali (1989) endorses the presence of justification for domestic violence within the community. Regrettably, the issue of violence and abuse in the domestic life of Black women is also overlooked within different women solidarities as it is seen as a 'minority problem' by the majority, and they are set against directing their attention to domestic violence unless it also poses a problem for white women (Crenshaw 1991: 1260). Consequently, such conflict of interest between the Black community and feminists creates an intersectional position where Black women who are subjected to violence are not only politically isolated, ignored and silenced but also further oppressed and abused by either community in various means that are compatible with their objectives.

Crenshaw (1991) also conceptualises representational intersectionality that analyses how the anti-discriminatory discourses' lack of acknowledgement of intersectionality and their opposing stances towards each other enhance their dominance and potentiate the deprecatory position and negative representations of Black women in the society (p. 1282). Through the deep examination of the controversy over 2 Live Crew who are a rap band charged with obscenity, Crenshaw (1991) attempts to elicit the way the cultural images of Black women and disputes over those images disregard the confluent benefits of women of

colour (p.1283). 2 Live Crew was charged due to their explicit sex content and implicit encouragement to rape and violence against Black women in their music and performances. Yet here, Crenshaw (1991) does not question the rightfulness of the charges but the selectivity of the prosecutors' target, arguing that 2 Live Crew stand trial for not only their misogynistic content but also their racial identity since society has a tendency to see Black men as potential oppressors and molesters (p.1285). Crenshaw (1991) further claims that all charges against 2 Live Crew do not serve or protect the advantage of Black women; on the contrary, harassment of Black women's bodies is used as a means of racism's assertion of power and influence (p. 1295). In this case, instead of recognising the double victimisation of Black women and generating any constructive solutions, anti-sexist arguments merely take advantage of Black women's sexual exploitation in order to reinforce racism against Black men in the mainstream media. In other words, these anti-sexist arguments' so-called sensitivity and consideration of Black women's integrity and respectability only function to strengthen racist claims against the Black community by representing Black men as oppressors, molesters and criminals and Black women as abused, molested, and degraded sexual objects.

According to Hill Collins and Bilge (2016), through these landmark articles, Crenshaw accomplishes more than coining the notion of intersectionality as an umbrella term for race, class and gender studies. First, Crenshaw's arguments highlight the core ideas of intersectionality, such as relationality and social justice (Hill Collins and Bilge, 2016: 83). She draws particular attention to relationality and demonstrates the implicit interconnectedness of seemingly separate central powers that simultaneously and interactively operate the lives of individuals. Thus, she proves the futility of single-axis frameworks to illuminate discrimination experience of Black women that stems from numerous inseparable roots of power systems that can only be untangled by comprehensive analysis of multiple social factors (Hill Collins and Bilge, 2016: 83). Crenshaw's standpoint as a Black feminist enables her to cope with such extensive analysis since her individual experiences of subordination provides an accountable knowledge at first-hand, and her scholar identity coinciding with her Black feminist identity exemplifies an ideal stance for other Black scholars regarding the methods, validity, and scope of their studies (Hill Collins and Bilge, 2016: 82). In her articles, Crenshaw also exemplifies how intersectionality can function as a critical inquiry to thoroughly illuminate the experience of double victimisation of Black women in various contexts such as the issue of domestic violence, inefficacy of

social welfare in providing shelter for abused Black women, deficiency of judicial systems in recognising intersectional position of Black women and even a prosecution of Black rap band (Hill Collins and Bilge, 2016: 83). The practicality of intersectionality in several examples of different contexts, indeed, affirms the credibility of the notion and gains acceptance as an academic field that suit to encompass a wide range of research on race, class, and gender. Since Crenshaw instantiates such prevalent and urgent victimisation examples that are linked to social structure, social representations, and politics as contexts of her research, her articles become both theoretically informative and solution-oriented, and present intersectionality not only as a way of theoretical enquiry but also a way of praxis and action that contributes to social justice initiatives (Hill Collins and Bilge, 2016: 84).

As both a critical inquiry and a practical approach, intersectionality has gained prominence as a body of knowledge within academia and has been well-received by scholars. However, the act of naming the field has sometimes led to a tendency to overlook the historical roots of intersectionality that predate Crenshaw's articles (Hill Collins and Bilge, 2016: 85). Therefore, this section attempted to provide more comprehensive information about the origin and earlier history of intersectionality before the term was coined by the Crenshaw, and the next sections will cover research and studies that predate Crenshaw's influential contributions, along with the subsequent integration of intersectionality into academic discourse.

2.1.2. Dispersal of Intersectionality

Since Crenshaw coined the term, intersectionality has gained popularity within and beyond the academy. It has diffused among scholars sparking new debates and research in academia, and then achieved global acceptability dispersing beyond English-speaking countries. With the development of digital technology, it has also found its way into the internet and social media (Hill Collins and Bilge, 2016).

At the onset of the new millennium, intersectionality drew considerable interest from a wide range of scholars who authored articles and various forms of publications embodying scholarly knowledge on intersectionality. This expeditious incorporation of intersectionality into academia entailed formative outcomes concerning its impact on academic studies, disciplines, and knowledge. (Hill Collins and Bilge, 2016: 98-99). Scholars from various

academic disciplines adapted intersectionality into their fields in diverse manners and correlated the intersection of race-, class-, and gender-related arguments with their research to re-evaluate the already established knowledge or ongoing studies from different perspectives (Hill Collins and Bilge, 2016: 99). Therefore, intersectionality played a substantial role in exceeding boundaries and reconstituting traditional ways in scholarship. To exemplify, Hill Collins and Bilge (2016) point out how American sociology embraced intersectionality to revise their former discernment that race, class, and gender were segregated as unrelated areas (p.99-100). Till then, American sociology had performed their research on sociological subdisciplines separately and overlooked their interrelations and impact on each other (Hill Collins and Bilge, 2016: 100). For example, as studies that concern marriage and women merely focused on issues of gender, the effects of race and class on the family relationships of women remained unnoticed. Again, in the light of the same bases, outcomes of any sociological research regarding inequality and discrimination remained inadequate and limited since its narrow scope was incapable of illuminating the experience of the silenced and the oppressed who were disadvantaged in more than one aspect of their identity (Hill Collins and Bilge, 2016: 100). Instead, privileged groups, including white, western, and upper-class people, were at the centre of the studies and analysis of American sociology, and their experiences therefore shaped the frameworks of the field. With the incorporation of intersectionality into American sociology, formerly segregated subdisciplines were interconnected to surpass the traditional constraints of the field and paved the way for more comprehensive research and studies (Hill Collins and Bilge, 2016: 100).

The appliance of the theory of intersectionality into another academic field enriches both disciplines since such application not only reshapes the existing knowledge of the particular field and supplements different perspectives to obtain more comprehensive results but also enlarges the scope of intersectionality itself and enhances its theoretical and epistemological credibility and adaptability (Hill Collins and Bilge, 2016: 102). Moreover, it generates constructive arguments that stimulate further research in both disciplines. In other respects, however, intersectionality's interdisciplinary dispersal also stirred several debates to diminish the political potentiality of intersectionality, confining the notion to gender-related analyses (Bilge, 2013). Such debates regarded intersectionality as a product of feminism and strived to set boundaries around the paradigm, excluding race, class, or any other facets of identity but gender. However, "[r]eframing intersectionality as a creation of

‘feminism,’ an outcome of feminism’s internal debates, effectively erases a landmark oppositionality from which intersectionality emerged: feminists of colour confronting racism within feminism” (Bilge, 2013: 420). In other words, assuming intersectionality is a mere sub-branch of feminism is paradoxically decreasing the notion from a wide-ranging umbrella term to one of those single-axis frameworks whose limitedness and incapacity initially necessitated intersectionality’s genesis. As intersectionality’s primary concern is the interconnectedness of multiple forms of oppression and discrimination which stem from different facets of identity, such debates contradict the core idea of intersectionality and drain the meaning of the term, converting it into a nonsensical and inconsequential notion. Consequently, as Bilge (2013) underlines, applying intersectionality as an analytical lens does not require gender or any particular aspect of identity as an essential component for analyses since focusing on race, class, gender, religion, or sexual orientation might vary based on the purposes of specific analyses.

Subsequent to the embracement of intersectionality within the academia in the United States, the paradigm has disseminated to a larger audience across the globe, gaining international acceptance beyond English-speaking countries, as a credible form of theory and praxis among a vast range of artists, activists and scholars who conduct studies and research within the venues of social inequality and human rights (Hill Collins and Bilge, 2016: 88). The primary determinant of intersectionality’s rapid dispersal across the globe was the United Nations Preparatory Committee transpired in Genova as part of the preparations for the 2001 United Nations World Conference Against Racism (WCAR) in Durban South Africa (Hill Collins and Bilge, 2016: 89). Along with several representatives from India, Philippines, Guatemala, Portugal, Brazil and United Kingdom, KimberléCrenshaw was also invited to the Committee and asked to present a research synopsis which reflects a contextual briefing of her race and gender studies including the theory of intersectionality (Hill Collins and Bilge, 2016: 89; Grzanka, 2018a: 16). This background analysis is regarded as a pivotal document in the history of intersectionality in the sense that “it marks the inclusion of intersectional theory, research, and politics at the highest levels of international diplomacy” (Grzanka, 2018a: 16), since “the consideration of intersectionality at the level of the United Nations (UN) and in more than rhetoric signifies an undeniable degree of political legitimacy and recognition for the movement” (Grzanka, 2018a: 16-17). Such a large audience that the conference in Durban offered has, indeed, granted a chance an international acknowledgement of the common problems of women of

colour or any marginalised groups who are multiply burdened, but such universal recognition has also revealed that intersectionality is a prevalent notion that takes numerous forms in various nations in different social structures across the world. As representatives from diverse nations and cultures bring their own experiences of discrimination, interrelations and confluence of racism, xenophobia, homophobia, sexism, class oppression or any form of social stratification are exposed. In other words, by consolidating the multiple forms of discrimination experienced by oppressed groups from across the globe, the scope of intersectionality's full potential reaches beyond race, and gender is revealed to worldwide audiences. According to Grzanka (2018a), another reason why Crenshaw's paper was essential is that it accounted for both political and structural dimensions of intersectionality in its content (p.16). In this sense, Crenshaw does not only unfold the triple discrimination imposed by social, economic, and political structures on marginalised people to maintain power dynamics but also addresses how these multiply oppressed groups politically organise and collectively strive for their emancipation and empowerment, even sometimes against their communities when they are attempted to be silenced by other marginalised groups due to the conflict of interest (Grzanka, 2018a: 16-17).

With the rise of digital technology and the internet, intersectionality has evolved and moved to digital platforms, where knowledge, arguments and research are in a constant state of flux (Hill Collins and Bilge, 2016: 105). Through the internet, traditional boundaries and practices of research transformed into more flexible and dynamic channels for knowledge and debates. As a result, several new discussions concerning intersectionality among interactive social groups in social media have also surfaced, culminating in the theory's dispersal across the globe (Hill Collins and Bilge, 2016: 105). These new debates have surpassed intersectionality even beyond scholars' and activists' grasp and become available to be shaped by every sort of content creator who fosters brand-new questions relating the theory to their individual everyday experiences, which offers even more specific intersection points of oppression and discrimination (Hill Collins and Bilge, 2016: 105). Being shaped by numerous new contributors through social media, intersectionality's dissemination has ultimately reached a point of perpetual continuation.

As intersectionality has rapidly attained global acceptance in a myriad range of societies and nations, the paradigm has been both progressively expanded with new ideas and scrutinised from different angles by various key figures in academia. In this context, the

next section of the chapter will explore further arguments and critiques by key figures such as Patricia Hill Collins, Richard Delgado and Nancy Fraser regarding their contributions to the ongoing discourse on intersectionality.

2.1.3. Expanding the Discussion on Intersectionality

In addition to the global spread of intersectionality, the epistemology, methodology and core themes of the paradigm have been further explored through numerous interdisciplinary studies, research and critiques by several prominent figures within and outside academia. Through the interpretive and critical analyses of intellectual authors, such as Kimberlé Crenshaw, Patricia Hill Collins, Sırma Bilge, Richard Delgado, Nancy Fraser, Angela Davis, Patrick R. Grzanka, and Bell Hooks, the framework of the ongoing discourse of intersectionality has been elaborated and its scope expanded from critical race theory to politics and economics. This section of the chapter will therefore explain the different perspectives and approaches of the selected figures in relation to intersectionality. While Hill Collins (2000), as a Black feminist thinker, investigates the dimensions and contributions of the paradigm in both theory and practise and centralises her arguments around identity politics, which offers a new epistemology for Black feminist discourse, Fraser (2003), as a feminist philosopher and critical thinker, posits her arguments from an economic, cultural, political and philosophical perspectives, and Delgado (2010), another notable contributor to critical race theory, interrogates the practicality and efficacy of intersectionality and critiques the ongoing transformation of critical race theory in the twenty-first century.

2.1.3.1 Patricia Hill Collins

Much as Hill Collins predominantly focuses on identity politics while analysing intersectionality, she does not overlook the concept's relationship to economics and politics. In defining the interrelated dimensions of Black women's oppression in the United States, Hill Collins (2000) presents the ideological, political, and economic dimensions of oppression together. Regarding the economic dimension, she emphasises the dependence of American capitalism on the exploitation of Black women's labour (p.4). Hill Collins asserts that slavery in modern society has morphed into economic exploitation that forces Black

women to accept minimum wages in exchange for working under harsh conditions to sustain their lives (p. 4). This exploitation also incapacitates Black women intellectually, since overworking occupies their free time to an extent that prevents them from developing other skills to qualify for alternative careers to the labour force, which is primarily for the non-white community (p. 4).This argument is situated within a broader scholarly tradition, including the works of Amott and Matthaei (1991), Davis (1981), Marable (1983), and Jones (2010), which offer more comprehensive analyses of the economic marginalisation of Black women under capitalism and have been consulted in the course of this study. In terms of the political dimension of oppression, Hill Collins (2000) addresses the political subordination of Black women through various forms of disenfranchisement from the past to the present, such as the restriction of Black women's right to vote and participation in civil office or the refusal to ensure equality in the educational and judicial systems (p.4). Arguments pertaining to the political dimensions of the oppression experienced by Black women are articulated more comprehensively in the scholarly works of Burnham (1987), Scales-Trent (1989), and Berry (1994), which have also been consulted throughout the duration of this study.

In relation to the ideological dimension of oppression, Hill Collins (2000) emphasises the role of 'controlling images', through which all forms of hegemonic ideologies prevail and are eventually naturalised and normalised at all levels of society (p.5). In this sense, she asserts that:

> [C]ertain assumed qualities that are attached to Black women are used to justify oppression. From the mammies, jezebels, and breeder women of slavery to the smiling Aunt Jemimas on pancake mix boxes, ubiquitous Black prostitutes, and ever-present welfare mothers of contemporary popular culture, negative stereotypes applied to African American women have been fundamental to Black women's oppression. (Hill Collins, 2000: 5)

In other words, through a variety of derogatory images of Black women that recur in every sphere of life, the inferiority of Black women is imprinted in the collective consciousness to justify all kinds of subordination, discrimination and oppression. These negative stereotypes objectify and reinforce Black women's otherness and alienation, making racism, sexism and poverty natural and imperious constituents of their lives (Hill Collins, 2000: 69).

'Mammy' is one of the most common controlling images, representing an ideal Black woman designed in line with white upper class interests: a loyal and obedient servant of the

white family, a perfect cook, an affectionate nanny and deferent handmaid who internalises her subordination and welcomes low wages and hard work (Hill Collins, 2000: 72-73). In the sense that her willing acquiescence to the white family underpins both the economic and racial supremacy of the white employer, and her femininity, stripped of its sexuality and fertility, is veiled so as not to pose a threat to the white mother employer; thus, the mammy is one of the best functioning images perpetuating the intersecting oppressions of race, gender and class (Hill Collins, 2000: 73-74). 'Black matriarch' is another controlling image that functions as a justification for intersectional oppression. It depicts working Black women in a pejorative way, targeting both their failed maternity and their femininity (Hill Collins, 2000: 75). As working Black women deny being financially disempowered and refuse to confine themselves to the role of a mother and homemaker, they are accused by the system of neglecting their duties as wives and mothers and thus blamed for all domestic problems in the Black family (Hill Collins, 2000:75). In this sense, the stereotype of the Black matriarch is portrayed as an irresponsible and unsupportive working mother figure who ensures that her children do not succeed in school, and also as a neglectful, petulant and masculine wife who is the real cause of her husband's adultery, domestic violence and her eventual divorce (Hill Collins, 2000:75). Such condemnation of working Black women serves to rationalise the ongoing poverty and educational deficits in the Black community without drawing attention to the underlying set of reasons such as class inequality, economic exploitation, systemic racism, gender inequality and so forth (Hill Collins, 2000:76-77).

Considering the image of the mammy and that of the matriarch together, it becomes clear that the system offers Black women no way to avoid degrading stigmatisation or disapproval (Hill Collins, 2000: 78). On the one hand, systemic racism obliges Black women to work in order to maintain their families, as employment opportunities for Black men are more limited and Black women often find themselves forced to financially support their husbands; however, at the same time, working Black women are reproached by the same system of abandoning their gender roles, emasculating their husbands and neglecting their children (Hill Collins, 2000: 78). In this particular context, working Black women are both appreciated as idealised mammies who embrace the superiority of the white family and work diligently under various forms of exploitation, and blamed as Black matriarchs for neglecting their female duties and being responsible for the social and economic problems within Black society.

Once Black women gain access to the social welfare services as a result of attaining more political power and legal prerogatives in the United States, another controlling image emerges in the form of the ‘welfare mother’ or more contemptuously the ‘welfare queen’, addressing those poor single Black mothers who benefit from welfare programs (Hill Collins, 2000:78). The image of the welfare mother portrays an indolent, reprobate, and idle mother who exploits social welfare services to prosper rather than getting a regular job and earning a living for her children (Lubiano, 1992:337-338, as cited in Hill Collins, 2000: 80). By emphasising the fact that they have children without husbands, the image of the welfare mother initially points to the moral deprivation of these unmarried Black mothers (Lubiano, 1992:337-338, as cited in Hill Collins, 2000: 80). In this context, the controlling image of the welfare mother, similar to that of the Black matriarch, suggests that these unemployed and single Black mothers who rely on social welfare are in fact failed mothers who set a poor example for their children and fail to raise decent Black individuals for society (Hill Collins, 2000: 79). Through the image of the welfare queen, these single Black mothers are not only blamed for the decline of social values and ethics but also portrayed as “economic drains” who are held responsible for the financial strain of the state (Lubiano, 1992:337-338, as cited in Hill Collins, 2000: 80). The word ‘queen’ in this image implies that these single Black mothers are portrayed as anything but poor and desperate. Rather, the image of the 'welfare queen' connotes the idea that these single Black mothers enrich themselves through poverty programmes and welfare benefits by receiving the amount beyond necessities from the state (Bridges, 2018: 289). In this context, these Black mothers are even blamed for conceiving as many children as possible in order to receive more welfare without working (Reingold and Smith, 2018: 253; Hill Collins, 2000). Davis (2018) refutes such perception management planned with the image of the welfare queen by asserting underlying causes of Black women having children at a young age as follows:

> Black teenage girls do not create poverty by having children. Quite the contrary, they have babies at such a young age precisely because they are poor – because they do not have the opportunity to acquire an education, because meaningful, well-paying jobs and creative forms of recreation are not accessible to them. They have children at such a young age because safe, effective forms of contraception are not available to them. (p.76)

In other words, Black mothers do not deliberately prompt circumstances where they become victims of poverty and dependent on social welfare. Instead, their initial position as victims, rooted in multiple layers of discrimination and oppression, leads to the further

victimisation that is virtually forced upon them by the system. However, as Hill Collins (2000) notes, “creating the controlling image of the welfare mother and stigmatising her as the cause of her own poverty and that of African- American communities shifts the angle of vision away from structural sources of poverty and blames the victims themselves” (p.80). In other words, fabricating prevalent controlling images to put the blame for all socioeconomic inadequacies on those who are already victims of these deficits not only repress those marginalised groups’ assertiveness advocating for their civil rights, but also allows current administrations to shirk responsibility for eliminating income inequality and poverty.

‘Jezebel’ and her contemporary version of ‘hoochie’ are other common stereotypes created to suppress Black women's sexuality and degrade their femininity to mere sexual objects by normalising lustful and deviant Black women who are morally depraved and sexually insatiable (Hill Collins, 2000: 81). The image of Jezebel, which dates back to slavery, was initially created to justify the frequent rapes and other sexual molestations of white men against their Black female slaves at the time (Hill Collins, 2000: 81). With the image of Jezebel, white masters excused themselves from all accusations of sexual assault by claiming that they were seduced and provoked into sexual intercourse by these so-called lustful Black women and not the other way round. Hoochie, on the other hand, epitomises the image of the sexually assertive Black woman, through which the Black woman’s body is commodified in popular culture for profit (Hill Collins, 2000: 82). According to Hill Collins (2000), hoochie images can vary between ‘club hoochies’, who enjoy the nightlife with revealing clothing and attitudes that suggest loose sexual morals, or ‘gold-digging hoochies’, who seduce rich men by using their sexuality to gain their wealth, and ‘hoochie- mamas’, who are unwed mothers who earn money for their children in exchange for sexual favours (p. 82-83). In contrast to other controlling images, hoochies attain a wide range of acceptance and become so prevalent in everyday life that even the Black community internalises such deprecatory images of Black women and perpetuates similar misogynistic ideologies regarding their sexuality (Hill Collins, 2000: 83).

Controlling images are cultivated and disseminated through social media, television, government agencies and schools (Hill Collins, 2000: 85). As the internet and television constitute greatest part of popular culture on a global scale, they are particularly effective in the production and vulgarisation of controlling images (Hill Collins, 2000: 85). Furthermore,

Hill Collins (2000) argues that African American communities themselves also internalise sexism and perpetuate derogatory images of Black women, such as 'hoochies', in their community organisations, colleges and universities, churches and family life (p. 86-87). According to her, Black activists in civic organisations, academics in universities, and preachers in the church make anti-racist speeches, oppose class stratification and economic exploitation, and usually overlook or even promote heterosexism in their utterances and everyday lives (2000: 86).

In essence, every controlling images are designed to target, obviate, or marginalise different aspects of Black women that do not conform to the unassertive, subordinate role assigned to them by the prevailing hegemonic ideologies such as racism, sexism, heterosexism or classism. Such discriminatory ideologies intersecting together establish social norms contouring what is 'normal' and either oppress or discriminate against those who are not defined by these manufactured norms. In terms of Black women, especially when several aspects of their identity do not conform to these normative social and ideological constructions, such as working in positions primarily held by men or white person, having children and remaining unmarried, being sexually assertive, being homosexual, or simply resisting the authority, an intersecting oppression emerges in which multiple forms of oppressions work together in an attempt to negate and reshape Black women. According to Hill Collins (2000), "[t]he foundations of intersecting oppressions become grounded in interdependent concepts of binary thinking, oppositional difference, objectification, and social hierarchy" (p. 71). Thus, all hegemonic ideologies stem from binary thinking, which produces oppositional categories built on seemingly contradictory elements, such as white and Black, male and female, homosexual and heterosexual (Hill Collins, 2000: 70). Binary thinking serves as a lens through which to observe social groups and individuals, to determine the differences and oppositions between identities, and to stimulate the contrast between them in order to establish a hierarchical relationship between the 'normal' as superior and the 'other' as inferior (Hill Collins, 2000: 70-71). Consequently, such a superiority relationship requires objectifications for discriminatory practises to maintain their dominance over those who are subordinated because they are categorised as the opposite of the normal (Hill Collins, 2000: 71). In this context, controlling images functions as one of the best operative means to preserve power dynamics and social hierarchies, consolidate binary thinking, and normalise intersectional oppressions and subordinations.

In addition to linking intersectionality to the political, economic and ideological dimensions of oppression, Hill Collins (2000) also denotes two ways in which intersectionality foregrounds the relationship between knowledge and empowerment (p.227). First, intersectionality renders comprehensive and accurate examination of the experiences of African American women and numerous other marginalised groups, leading to a better understanding of their multidimensional oppressions than previous one-dimensional interpretations and restricted representations (Hill Collins, 2000: 227). Secondly, intersectionality unveils the 'matrix of domination' which is the term Hill Collins (2000) employs to refer to the "overall social organization within which intersecting oppressions originate, develop, and are contained" (p.228). According to Hill Collins (2000), such organisations manifest themselves through social institutions such as schools, government, housing, employment and adapt the manners of domination that shape the forms of intersecting oppressions over time in response to social, geographical and political change (p. 228). Although the modalities of the matrix of domination may vary considerably across nations, cultures, and societies, the presence of intersecting oppression remains constant as a universal component of different forms of domination (Hill Collins, 2000: 228).

Assuming that the matrix of domination exists in different forms in different nations and societies necessitates to bring forth 'nation' or 'nationality' as another facet of intersecting oppression in the transnational context (Hill Collins, 2000: 229). Indeed, race, class, gender and sexuality, which are all different aspects of an identity, are intertwined with the concept of nation, which denotes a human group that shares a common history, culture and region (Hill Collins, 2000: 229). Nations share a political ideology, known as 'nationalism', which seeks the political autonomy of the nation and to establish a 'nation state' in which they have the governing power to decide their future and protect their common interests. (Hill Collins, 2000:229). In this sense, Hill Collins (2000) asserts in relation to the United States that the government acts as a nation-state, takes merely white nations' interest into consideration while enforcing laws and overlooks or suppresses the civil rights and benefits of non-white citizens (p.229-230). Consequently, Blacks, Chicanos, Puerto Ricans, Native Americans and other non-white marginalised groups living as citizens in the United States are compelled to defend their civil rights by embracing their own national identities and nationalist ideologies, which eventually leads them to challenge the authorities and resist the ongoing unequal treatment and discriminatory policies (Hill Collins, 2000: 230). Here, the national identity of non-white people is used as another excuse

for condemnation by the state, which has the power to regulate 'the truth' through social institutions, schools, news and social media in order to justify the victimisation of other nations and secure the privileged position of whites (Hill Collins, 2000: 230). Indeed, similar nationalist approaches by governments exist throughout the world, particularly in countries such as the UK where colonialism and imperialism are deeply embedded in the history of the government.

In this context, it is worth noting Spivak's (1988) arguments concerning the 'subaltern', with which she addresses the 'epistemic violence' imposed on postcolonial subjects in the colonial centre by Western hegemony. The notion of 'subalterns' addresses formerly colonised people, in other words, postcolonial subjects who find themselves in the colonial centre where they are oppressed, silenced and manipulated to embrace the identity as 'the other' and the inferior (Spivak, 1988). Spivak (1988) uses the term epistemic violence to refer to the systematic erasure of indigenous culture, language and knowledge and the imposition of Western ideologies which postulate the subordinate position of the colonial subject and the superiority of Western cultures in the minds of subalterns through depoliticisation, perpetual silencing and cultural imperialism. Since Western colonisers have the power to produce, modulate and suppress knowledge, imperialist ideologies can easily penetrate societies at the centre and on the margins, effectuating a Eurocentric truth that supposedly speaks on behalf of all. However, this engendered Eurocentric truth does not allow for the voice of indigenous people, especially subaltern women (Spivak, 1988). In terms of subaltern women, Spivak problematises the popular image of 'white men saving brown women from brown men', claiming that such Eurocentric expressions relegate indigenous women to a mere object who cannot help themselves and therefore must be saved by white saviours from their own people who are also portrayed as dangerous and primitive (Spivak, 1988: 305). The image of subaltern women who need white men to survive is crucial here to demonstrate how nationality or national identity is also accomplice in the intersecting oppression of gender and sexuality. The traditional gender role, which involves fragility, passivity and dependence on the opposite sex, converges with the subordinate position of the subaltern woman, resulting in a particular form of oppression in which the subaltern woman is not only saved by opposite sex but also by the coloniser. The subordinate position of the subaltern woman thus results from both her gender and her national identity, whereby she occupies a multi-layered subordinate position in the colonial centre. In order to challenge colonial logic and national hegemony, it is therefore crucial not to treat the nation and

immigration as isolated concepts, but to include them together with anti-racist and feminist discourses in the study of intersectionality (Patil, 2013: 863). As Patil (2013) explains, "if we continue to neglect cross-border dynamics and fail to problematize the nation and its emergence via transnational processes, our analyses will remain tethered to the spatialities and temporalities of colonial modernity" (p. 863). Accordingly, it is important to consider the concept of nationhood and its relationship to other forms of oppression in research in order to arrive at more accurate, comprehensive and universal conclusions that are not constrained by a hegemonic ideology.

Grzanka (2018b) acknowledges the same argument as an example of 'the weak intersectionality' (p. 197), which is first outlined by Dill and Kohlman (2011) to elaborate on a superficial form of intersectionality that simplifies or isolates identities and risks misrepresenting the transformative aims of intersectional theory. In this context, Grzanka (2018b) claims that "to incorporate any category (e.g., nation) as an axis of difference without examining how it is cocreated by and coproductive of other dimensions of inequality (e.g., gender, sexuality) is likely to reinforce hegemonic knowledge about that category" (p.197). Thus, in terms of nationality, overlooking the role of national identity and immigration in oppression and subordination in the transnational context could be tantamount to endorsing and perpetuating the same hegemonic colonial ideologies.

Returning to Hill Collins (2000), beyond dimensions of oppression and her emphasis on nationality, it is important to mention her investigations on the epistemology and methodology of intersectionality along with her offering a procedure for framing a Black feminist epistemology. As a body of rules and principles of research, methodology provides direction for gaining knowledge and implementing defining paradigms such as intersectionality in research (Hill Collins, 2000: 252). Epistemology, on the other hand, "investigates the standards used to assess knowledge or why we believe what we believe to be true" (Hill Collins, 2000: 252). In this sense, epistemologies play a crucial role in determining what question is worth investigating or what parameters need to be applied (Hill Collins, 2000: 252). However, as Hill Collins (2000) points out, the truth that epistemology probes is vulnerable to power dynamics and remains politically manageable; thus, it usually echoes the prevailing hegemonic ideologies of the matrix of domination (p.252). Since the process of knowledge validation, which is shaped by the government, universities, news and social institutions, is predominantly controlled by white men, the knowledge that is produced

and validated in this process is not in conflict with the interests of white men (Hill Collins, 2000: 253). For that reason, the truth about the experiences of marginalised people whose gender, race, sexuality, nationality and class do not align with those who are in power persists as subjugated knowledge (Hill Collins, 2000: 251-252). In this sense, Hill Collins (2000) posits that Black feminist thought as a form of oppressed knowledge must be evaluated through an alternative form of epistemology in which Black women scholars produce and validate knowledge through their experience of multiple victimisations without being obliged to convince white heterosexual intellectual men of the credibility of the knowledge they acquire (p.253-254).

Another reason for the need for an alternative epistemology for Black feminist thought is rooted in the fact that the established methods of the knowledge validation process are not applicable to Black feminist scholars, as such positivist methodological approaches require a certain level of apathy and a neutral stance that leaves no room for personal values, experiences, and emotions that are assumed to compromise the objectivity of research results (Hill Collins, 2000: 255). However, the collective experiences and unique perspectives of Black women are indispensable in challenging hegemonic narratives and one-dimensional discourses and revealing the intersecting oppression they face (Hill Collins, 2000: 256). Accordingly, an alternative epistemology for Black feminist thought must be grounded in both Black women's wisdom and knowledge, as these two similar but distinct aspects of knowledge shape Black women's experience of survival (Hill Collins, 2000: 256). In this regard, Hill Collins (2000) posits:

> As members of a subordinate group, Black women cannot afford to be fools of any type, for our objectification as the Other denies us the protections that White skin, maleness, and wealth confer. This distinction between knowledge and wisdom, and the use of experience as the cutting edge dividing them, has been key to Black women's survival. In the context of intersecting oppressions, the distinction is essential. Knowledge without wisdom is adequate for the powerful, but wisdom is essential to the survival of the subordinate. (p.257)

Hill Collins uses 'wisdom' here to refer to the practical knowledge that Black women can accumulate through a lifetime of experience with intersecting oppressions as the key to their survival when the law and governments fail to protect them. Therefore, Black women's wisdom and knowledge become the primary sources that make up the epistemology of Black feminist thought. Hill Collins (2000) suggests the use of dialogue, furnished with empathy and caring, that conveys genuine concerns about Black women's current issues as a method

for eliciting accountable information about Black women's lived experiences to shape the new epistemology (p.266). Through the epistemology of Black feminism, Hill Collins (2000) argues, Black women can illuminate the concurrent oppressions that exist in their lives through various means and their potential to challenge these oppressions as a force of resistance both individually and collectively (p.273-274).

2.1.3.2. Nancy Fraser

Nancy Fraser (2003), another contributor to the paradigm of intersectionality, places the terms 'redistribution' and 'recognition' at the centre of her argument in political and philosophical discourse and offers a two-dimensional conception of justice by intersecting these seemingly contradictory critical terms. Terminologically, redistribution stems from the liberal tradition as part of distributive justice, which combines individual liberty with egalitarianism to provide a basis for socio-economic redistribution (Fraser, 2003: 10). Recognition, on the other hand, originates in Hegelian philosophy and refers to a correlative relationship that establishes subjectivity through mutual recognition between equal but different individuals (Fraser, 2003: 10). While redistribution is about the equitable sharing of economic resources, recognition focuses on reciprocal acknowledgement of people's equal rights and worth, regardless of their marginalised identities. Therefore, their offers to redress injustice differ from each other. (Fraser, 2003: 13). In this context, redistribution suggests a solution to economic restructuring that involves "redistributing income and/or wealth, reorganizing the division of labor, changing the structure of property ownership, democratizing the procedures by which investment decisions are made, or transforming other basic economic structures" (Fraser, 2003: 13). On the other hand, the remedy of recognition for injustice suggests a more symbolic and cultural change that invites marginalised groups into society where diversity is welcomed and any form of discrimination is condemned (Fraser, 2003: 13). Fraser (2003) elaborates on how these two concepts are presumably at odds with each other as follows:

> Many liberal theorists of distributive justice contend that recognition theory carries unacceptable communitarian baggage, while some philosophers of recognition deem distributive theory individualizing and consumerist. Moreover, each of these notions elicits criticism from farther afield. Thinkers who identify with the Marxian tradition maintain that the category of distribution fails to capture the full depths of capitalist injustice because it neglects the relations of production and fails to problematize

> exploitation, domination, and commodification. Likewise, those who embrace poststructuralist thought insist that the idea of recognition carries normalizing assumptions of centered subjectivity, which impede a more radical critique. (p.10)

In simpler terms, thinkers of both concepts disapprove of the justice formula of the other agenda, as some recognition advocates reject distributive justice because they think it focuses too much on individuals, while some liberal redistributive thinkers do not favour recognition because they think it neglects individuality and focuses too much on communities. Meanwhile, each concept is criticised by various groups such as Marxists or post-structuralists for not encompassing all forms of injustice. In this context, Fraser (2003) challenges these criticisms by claiming that both concepts can work together despite their different roots and functions, and offers a common ground for redistribution and recognition where they overlap and compensate for each other's shortcomings by creating a two-dimensional novel justice system (p.11).

She problematises such claims that redistribution supposedly only seeks justice through class politics or that recognition as a remedy of justice is only associated with identity politics (Fraser, 2003: 11). She purports that such simplistic divisions underestimate the complexity of social justice theories and concepts, overlooking the recognition aspects of class struggles and the existence of studies and discussions that encompass class stratification and economic injustice within identity-based movements such as anti-racist, feminist or anti-heterosexist movements (Fraser, 2003: 12). In this context, she denotes:

> [T]he paradigm of redistribution can encompass not only class-centered political orientations, such as New Deal liberalism, social democracy, and socialism, but also those forms of feminism and anti-racism that look to socio economic transformation or reform as the remedy for gender and racial-ethnic injustice. Thus, it is broader than class politics in the conventional sense. The paradigm of recognition, likewise, can encompass not only movements aiming to revalue unjustly devalued identities — for example, cultural feminism, black cultural nationalism, and gay identity politics — but also deconstructive tendencies, such as queer politics, critical "race" politics, and deconstructive feminism, which reject the "essentialism" of traditional identity politics. Thus, it is broader than identity politics in the conventional sense. (Fraser, 2003: 12)

In other words, denying traditional uniaxial definitions of recognition and redistribution, Fraser here emphasises the fact that the concept of redistribution transcends class-oriented political attitudes and that the concept of recognition has the potential to propose more than symbolic and cultural changes in identity politics. In place of this traditional dichotomy, Fraser (2003) proposes a 'conceptual spectrum' model in which

redistribution and recognition are positioned at opposite ends of the spectrum, with various social hybrids in between (p.16). In this model of the conceptual spectrum, pure redistribution at one end is concerned with class differentiation to overcome socio-economic maldistribution and economic exploitation, requiring only redistributive remedies, while pure recognition at the other end focuses on status and identity-based discrimination rooted in culture and society, requiring only recognition-oriented solutions such as heteronormativity. (Fraser, 2003: 17-18). Meanwhile, various social divisions between the two opposite ends deal with those complex forms of injustice where both economic and socio-cultural injustices come together, entailing two-dimensional remedies and requiring both recognition- and redistribution-oriented solutions (Fraser, 2003: 17-19).

In this context, Fraser (2003) instances gender as a hybrid category, as redressing gender injustice demands both redistributive and recognition-oriented solutions (p.19). From a redistributive perspective, as gender serves as the key to the division of labour in capitalist society, where women are typically assigned to lower paid jobs or domestic work, eliminating this gendered economic exploitation and marginalisation requires a reordering of the entire economic structure of society, similar to class-based solutions (Fraser, 2003: 20). From a recognition perspective, gender also plays a crucial role in determining status differentiation within a patriarchal society where women are devalued and oppressed, within a wider context that includes legislation, government policy, and everyday interactions (Fraser, 2003: 20-21). Therefore, in order to address the full extent of gender inequality, a dual approach is required that considers both class and status dimensions (Fraser, 2003: 21-22). In addition to gender, other social divisions that lie between the opposite ends of the conceptual spectrum, such as race, sexuality and to some extent even class, also have multiple dimensions, and any form of one-dimensional remedy that is possible through redistribution or recognition alone can neither explain the roots of these multi-layered inequities nor provide a substantive solution to them (Fraser, 2003: 25).

However, Fraser (2003) acknowledges that linking redistribution and recognition to generate a more comprehensive paradigm is an arduous project that requires addressing and resolving numerous issues deeply rooted in multiple fields of enquiry such as moral philosophy, social and political theories, and practical politics. (p. 26-27). In social theory, for example, it is a necessary task to construct a model of society that embodies not only the differences between class and status, but also their interrelationships and overarching aspects

(Fraser, 2003: 27). In this regard, Fraser (2003) argues that since contemporary societies are formed by both economic and cultural influences, one-dimensional theories such as economism and culturalism alone are not sufficient to unravel the complex layers of injustices within today's globalised capitalist society (p. 58-59). In place of economism or culturalism, Fraser (2003) therefore proposes 'perspectival dualism', a more comprehensive approach that is able to theorise both class-based subordinations, such as maldistribution, and status-based subordinations, such as misrecognition, while also highlighting the intersecting role of economics and culture in structuring multi-layered inequalities in contemporary society (p.63). Through perspectival dualism, redistribution and recognition can work together to uncover, examine and overcome the active and intersecting forms of unjust practises in which economic and cultural inequalities coexist in the complex structures of modern society (Fraser, 2003: 63-64).

In addition to social theory, moral philosophy is another field where several questions need to be addressed in order to generate an encompassing theory on which recognition and redistribution can converge (Fraser, 2003: 27). Firstly, it is crucial to determine whether recognition is a concept of justice or a concept of self-realisation (Fraser, 2003: 27). Fraser (2003) construes recognition as a theory of justice because misrecognition appears as a form of injustice that prevents individuals or certain groups of people from participating in society by silencing, rendering invisible and eventually inconsequential, based on multiple forms of discrimination rooted in cultural and traditional norms (p.29). From this perspective, recognition elucidates how cultural judgements and values determine the social status of individuals, through which social hierarchies are established (Fraser, 2003: 27). In this context, Fraser (2003) conceptualises her interpretation of recognition as 'the status model of recognition', in which misrecognition corresponds to an institutionalised subordination that precludes the equal participation of individuals, rather than a mental defect that impede self-actualisation (p.29). Legal regulations against same-sex marriage, deficient regulations of welfare programmes that invite stigmatisation of single mothers as welfare queens, and racial profiling that insinuates criminal tendencies to certain races are just a few examples of such institutionalised labelling and condemnation (Fraser, 2003: 29). For this reason, Fraser's status model of recognition does not aim to establish self-recognised individuals by recuperating their psychological state, but to overcome institutionalised subordination and promote equal participation by renovating condemnatory and discriminatory cultural norms, policies and legislations (Fraser, 2003: 30).

Fraser (2003) further asserts that the status model of recognition is not a sectarian and ontological model, like the self-realisation model of recognition, and that it does not thus determine what the universal good is for the individual (p.30-31). Rather, the status model approach is based on 'subjective freedom', which refers to the assumption that people can define their own interpretation of the good life and seek to attain their personal happiness on the condition that their freedom does not restrict the subjective freedom of others (Fraser, 2003: 31). Indeed, when considering misrecognition as a form of injustice in a more plural context, the status model reconciles recognition with redistribution and redistributive justice, making them equivalent in their approach to justice (Fraser, 2003: 33). In other words, reconstructing the concept of recognition as a matter of justice that extends beyond its internal and psychological definition allows recognition and redistribution to no longer opposing concepts with seemingly conflicting goals, but to work together in creating a broader framework that can more effectively overcome injustice (Fraser, 2003: 33).

Moreover, the status model of recognition predicates its approach on 'participatory parity' that offers all members of society the opportunity for equal participation regardless of their racial, economic or sexual identity (Fraser, 2003: 31). Through extensive social adjustments, the concept of participatory parity offers a transformed society that allows for full participation of citizens who can maintain a certain standard of living to socialise with each other under equal treatment through laws and customs (Fraser, 2003: 36). In order to succeed in the parity of participation, however, both objective and intersubjective conditions must be met (Fraser, 2003: 36). The objective conditions ensure an equitable distribution of income in order to prevent institutionalised inequality of wealth, economic exploitation and poverty, which confines individual's leisure time for social contact (Fraser, 2003: 36). The intersubjective condition, on the other hand, corresponds to the reconstructed social values and institutionalised cultural norms that treat all members of society with equal respect and grant them equal opportunity to establish esteemed social relationships and interpersonal communication (Fraser, 2003: 36). To actualise these conditions, Fraser (2003) asserts that participatory parity can function within a framework that embraces both redistribution and recognition and seeks to reform society in which class stratification and status inequality no longer serve to promote further subordination and discrimination (p.37).

2.1.3.3. Richard Delgado

Before concluding the theoretical section of the study, it is obligatory to refer to Richard Delgado, one of the founders of Critical Race Theory, and his critiques of the trajectory and objectives of intersectionality. In his work *Rodrigo's Reconsideration: Intersectionality and the Future of Critical Race Theory* (2010), Delgado questions the functionality of intersectionality both as a theory and as a practise in his discussions with his alter ego Rodrigo about the current state of critical race theory and the paradigm of intersectionality in particular. Delgado (2010) emphasises intersectionality's essentialist approach to determining intersectional subcategories of identities and questions the theory's essentialist assertion that one intersectional minority group is more discriminated against than other minority groups (p. 1268). In this regard, he claims that "[n]ot all black men are better off than all black women. To assume so is to commit the sin of essentialism. Some black men – ex-felons, gays, high- school dropouts, devout Muslims – may well be worse off than the average black woman" (Delgado, 2010: 1268). He also claims that the division of an individual's identity into so many sub-categories complicates recognition and understanding, making it harder for individuals to relate to, and sympathise with society; this fragmentation of personal identities further fractures society and creates distance not only between individuals and majority groups but also among different minority groups (Delgado, 2010: 1272). He further points out that focussing on personal identities and personal experiences causes the focus to deviate from the broader perspective of systematic inequalities and oppressions. (Delgado, 2010: 1288) In short, Delgado (2010) criticises the conceptual incoherence, practical consequences and social implications of intersectionality and points to the inadequacies of the concept's approaches to understanding and redressing discrimination and inequalities.

2.2. Conclusion

Intersectionality is an alternative, broad-based discourse to the traditional discourses of anti-racism or feminism, whose narrow scopes and single-axis frameworks are inadequate to capture the interlocking aspect of social identities and the unique form of oppression and discrimination experienced by people who are disadvantaged due to the intersection of their multiple social identities. Although the paradigm of intersectionality originally emerged

from the need to acknowledge and rectify Black women's multidimensional experiences of victimisation, it has expanded over time to include all forms of intersectional identities, such as Black homosexuals, Muslim immigrant women, low-income Native Americans, young refugees, to name a few. Even though the paradigm has been criticised for its excessive categorisations or essentialist approach to defining intermeshing social identities, intersectionality has proven its functionality in bringing to the forefront previously overlooked forms of discrimination against multiple burdened minority groups, paving the way for recognition and the possibility of solidarity on a global scale for those who are silenced and oppressed in multiple ways around the world. Indeed, in a short period of time, intersectionality has spread beyond critical race theory and has been adapted by various academic fields such as sociology, psychology, philosophy, economics, politics, and literature to enrich their studies and broaden the scope of their previous or ongoing analyses by using intersectionality as a comprehensive theoretical framework for their research. In this context, this study aims to demonstrate that intersectionality can also be applied as a theoretical framework in literary analysis by foregrounding the underlying patterns of multi-layered discrimination and victimisation of literary characters and identifying their causes and consequences within and beyond the story. Accordingly, in the following chapters, Kathryn Stockett's *The Help (*2009) and Andrea Levy's *Small Island* (2004) will be analysed through close reading, incorporating the paradigm of intersectionality into the examination of these narratives.

CHAPTER THREE

INTERSECTIONALITY IN KATHRYN STOCKETT'S *THE HELP*

Kathryn Stockett's first novel *The Help* (2009), received widespread critical acclaim, achieved best-seller status upon its release, and has been translated into multiple languages worldwide since its publication. The novel provides a vast panorama of the socio-economic, political, and domestic life of the southern United States during the civil rights movement of the 1960s, focusing on the personal experiences of Black and white female characters from different social classes. Through the three first-person narrators' points of view, all of whom are southern women from various backgrounds, the novel emphasises the recurring themes of racism, sexism, gender roles, and class stratification that drive the central conflict of the narrative. Such a multi-layered context also provides numerous sub-plots involving multiple secondary characters, whose experience further contributes to the overarching theme of injustice. In addition to the central theme of injustice, Mchaney (2014) contends that *The Help* also displays post-modern traits such as 'poioumena' that Alistair Fowler describes as "self-begetting novels" (as cited in Mchaney, 2014:88). Indeed, the novel focuses on the process of writing and publishing a novel about the experiences of Black maids in Jackson Mississippi, which thus includes the theme of storytelling within the story. In this sense, according to Mchaney (2014), the novel exhibits self-referential elements blending historical facts with fiction through the personal observations of its protagonist's point of view failing to grasp the full historical accuracy of the time but creating a meta-historical text (pp.89-90).

While fictionalising the experiences of Black women working as maids in Jackson, Mississippi, in the early 1960s, when the civil rights movements were on the rise in the United States, *The Help* powerfully uncovers the multifaceted oppression faced by Black working-class women, who find themselves trapped in socio-economic, mental, emotional, and physical constraints while enduring marginalisation and denigration by the ruling 'white' class due to their racial and gender identities. Although the story is set when civil rights movements were gaining momentum in the country, it does not focus on activists of colour. Rather, it is about the private lives and unspoken issues of Black maids "who are not known in history because they are not the leading lights of the Movement" (Mchaney, 2014: 85), focusing on the various types of discrimination, subordination, and victimisation they encounter. At the time, "black working women—wage earners as well as family members—served as living testaments to the strength of African American culture and the depth of southern-style oppression" (Jones, 1985: 235). Thus, this historical role of Black women as

both the bearers of cultural continuity and victims of layered oppression finds fictional reflection in *The Help*, where domestic workers quietly uphold the emotional structure of both white and Black communities. In this way, the novel perfectly reveals the uniqueness and multilayers of Black maids' victimisation, and illustrates how their experiences are shaped by the intersectionality of race and gender, as well as how these interconnected facets of identity interact with class stratification to deepen their oppression and marginalisation.

Aibileen Clark and Minny Jackson, two Black women who work as maids in the homes of white families, are the two main protagonists in the story. Aibileen is a middle-aged Black woman, who has lost both her son and her husband, lives alone and works as a maid to make a living in an environment full of hostility, largely due to the burgeoning anti-racist movements across the country at the time. On the other hand, Minny Jackson, much younger than Aibileen, lives in an extended family where she has to deal with five children and an irascible and drunken husband. Because of her responsibility for five children, Minny also works as a maid under a white middle-class woman. In addition to the Black characters, Eugenia Phelan, also known as 'Skeeter', is another protagonist who is not a maid but an educated white woman. Unlike all the other middle-class white women in the novel, she is described as a colour-blind person featuring amiable, unbiased and empathetic behaviours towards Minny, Aibileen and other Black maids in the neighbourhood. Skeeter aspires to a career as a writer and secretly collaborates with Black maids whose trust she gains to help her write a book titled *Help*[2], in which Black women anonymously reveal to Skeeter their personal experiences of victimisation while working under white employers that they never feel safe enough to speak out before. Employing this book, Skeeter sets sights on facilitating Black women's voices and their unique experiences of subordination are heard by millions and stimulating any positive elevation towards emancipation and equality in the ongoing intersectional discrimination against Black women in the United States at that time.

Since both Skeeter and Stockett are middle-class white women attempting to address the challenges faced by Black women, the novel, through the character of Skeeter, might reflect Stockett's own anxieties, hesitations, and inner struggles that she may have experienced while narrating *The Help*. This potential dual reflection suggests the complexities and tensions that might arise when representing the experiences of Black

[2] In this section, *The Help* refers to Kathryn Stockett's novel, while the term "Help" refers to the book-within-the-book authored by Skeeter Phelan, a character in Stockett's *The Help*. The distinction is made to avoid confusion between the primary text and the fictional work within it.

women from the perspective of an 'outsider'. Furthermore, the centralisation of Skeeter in the main plot as a key figure who aids Black women who are otherwise unable to help themselves might lead to her being interpreted as a white saviour, with the novel potentially suggesting a subtext of white superiority. Indeed, the story has been criticised by multiple critics with similar concerns (Smith, 2014; Hardison, 2016). This study, however, argues that Skeeter does not function as a white saviour but rather as an autobiographical character representing Stockett's point of view and her own critical stance towards gender and the race-biased society of Jackson, Mississippi, where Stockett grew up. Concerning this, on the UNC Press blog, Rebecca Sharpless, who is an author and associate professor of history at Texas Christian University, states that:

> A number of people have expressed their indignation at the character of Skeeter Phelan, who comes to rescue the African American women. As a white woman who has written a book about African American women, I am sensitive to the possibility of overstepping my boundaries or simply Not Getting It. But I always tell my students that, while an outsider's perspective is different from an insider's, it doesn't have to be all wrong. (Sharpless, 2011, as cited in Mchaney, 2014: 81-82)

While Stockett may not fully capture the depth of Black women's experiences of victimisation as authentically as a Black woman might, her observations of the discrimination and subordination they faced daily in that era remain neither inaccurate nor misleading. Portraying Skeeter as a white saviour would overlook the efforts, courage, and self-determination exhibited by the Black characters in the novel who play crucial roles in bringing *Help* to light. In fact, Skeeter's role in writing the book is repeatedly downplayed throughout the novel, revealing instead the significant contributions and central roles of the Black maids whose memories and personal experiences form the very essence of *Help*. Skeeter's involvement is limited to earning the trust of the Black maids, recording their stories, editing them, and leveraging her connections in the publishing industry. The book, therefore, is fundamentally shaped by the contributions of these Black women, who are portrayed as the true architects of their own narratives through their courage and assertiveness.

Gaining the trust of Black women, however, is anything but a simple task for Skeeter. For example, when Minny first learns of the book Skeeter plans to write with Black maids, she is immediately suspicious of Skeeter and questions Skeeter's intentions, suspecting possible malice. Accordingly, before she agrees to help Skeeter with the book, Minny interrogates her sternly by asking "What makes you think colored people need your help?

… Why you even care about this? You *white* … Maybe you just want me to tell you all this stuff so I get in trouble … You know what'll happen if people catch us?" (Stockett, 2009:164-165). These questions expose the deep-rooted segregation between races in American society at the time, embedded not only in the social fabric but also in the economic and cultural structures. Breaking through this entrenched divide between white and Black women necessitates genuine effort and significant sacrifices, with both sides taking enormous risks. Aibileen, aware of the severe consequences, bravely confides in a white woman and undertakes the project to ensure her voice is heard. Thus, to convince her friend Minny to trust Skeeter, Aibileen says, "We all working for the same thing here, Minny" (Stockett, 2009:164). At this point, Aibileen uses the pronoun 'we' instead of 'she' because Aibileen is the first who concludes that *Help* will not be Skeeter's book, but the voice of all Black women who take great risks to expose their experiences of victimisation. Under these circumstances, the portrayal of Skeeter as a white saviour not only overstates Skeeter's role but also underestimates the assertive and courageous contributions of numerous Black women to this project and overlooks the sisterhood that forms between Black and white women in this process. This collaboration between the Black maids and Skeeter criticises the exclusion and alienation of Black women from women's solidarity and feminist discourses during the civil rights movements, exhibiting what the unifying force of women's power can achieve. To underline the profound impact of the novel's portrayal of the intermediary and unifying collaboration among women from different racial backgrounds, Donaldson (2014) asserts:

> On a small but undeniable scale the book that Skeeter works on in collaboration with thirteen maids appears to signal a major change of heart for Skeeter herself, for the African American women who work with her and who express their deeply felt gratitude, and ultimately for the reader, who understands, with Skeeter: "Not that much separates us. Not nearly as much as I'd thought" (as cited in Donaldson, 2014). That is the statement, Stockett tells us in the afterword, "that I truly prize" (as cited in Donaldson, 2014) and that she sees as summing up the ultimate value of the book—the possibilities of individual and collective transformation, the end of a long and ugly legacy of racism, and the triumph of reconciliation. For Stockett, that line sums up her own sense of redemption, an emotion implicitly shared with the reader. (pp.44-45)

Skeeter's interviews with the Black maids, from which the book *Help* has emerged, also align with Hill Collins' (2000) ideas of collecting the oppressed knowledge of Black women to develop an alternative epistemology for Black feminist thought, as outlined in the

previous chapter. *Help*, which brings together and gives voice to the unspoken victimisation experiences of dozens of Black women, sets a good example for the process of collecting validated knowledge from oppressed and silenced coloured women without being restricted or distorted by any hegemonic ideologies. The Black maids' interviews that are collected in *Help* reflect their authentic survival experience and practical knowledge that helped Black women survive multilayered subordination and oppression. While gathering such information, Skeeter applies to 'the use of dialogue' with empathy and caring, having real concerns for the situations that those Black women are in, which Hill Collins (2000) believes is an ideal way to elucidate verifiable knowledge about the experience of Black women (p: 266).

Adopting a more critical and sceptical lens, however, one can argue – following Spivak's (1988) arguments – that the power dynamics between Skeeter and Aibileen, Minny and the other Black maids in the writing process of *Help* still reflect hegemonic structures where subaltern voices may be at the risk of being silenced anew. Much as Skeeter's efforts and approaches may seem progressive, inclusive and genuine, her mere inclusion in a project that is planned to function as the voice of the silenced, oppressed and racialised Black woman can be questioned regarding whether the voice of subaltern women is still heard and represented within dominant discourses. From Spivak's (1988) point of view, Skeeter's role in this project can be interpreted as speaking for the subaltern rather than enabling them to speak for themselves. Nevertheless, in the case of *Help,* such concerns may not be applied to Skeeter*,* because through the inner thoughts of Skeeter, the reader observes the transformation of Skeeter's concerns from giving precedence to her career to a self-devotion through the candid acknowledgement of ongoing racism and injustice around her. Although at the end of the novel, Skeeter receives a promotion and is praised for *Help*, while Aibileen is punished by being unemployed, in the second half of the Help, Skeeter's main motivation is altered from a career pursuit to helping the victimisation and injustice that Black women face to be acknowledged and heard. Therefore, Skeeter's position in the project resists such concerns, for Skeeter does not impose her control over narratives of Black maids or reinterpret their testimonies; instead, she preserves their voices with utmost care and authenticity. In this sense, the novel strives to form an interracial sisterhood representing the collective struggle against oppression. Through Skeeter, Stockett also makes evident how white middle-class women and Black women are discriminated against differently in a white-dominated patriarchal society. Skeeter feels alienated from her peers and is constantly

criticised and reprimanded by her mother because she does not fit into the traditional gender role of a woman whose only occupation is that of a housewife and mother. Without contemplating marriage, she pursues a career as a journalist and writer, while her mother tries to find her a husband and hopes to make her a proper woman and wife. In her career, Skeeter faces several challenges due to her gender, which is always associated with domestic affairs. For example, she is assigned to write a column about cleaning and cooking tips in the newspaper, even though she knows little about either. Nonetheless, although she faces sexism and feels limited in both her social life and her career, Skeeter still takes solace in several privileges of being a middle-class white woman. She is privileged and protected by the law, with unrestricted access to education and services, the freedom to choose her marriage and profession, and the security of not living in constant fear of poverty, battering, rape or any form of dehumanisation. Such privileges correspond to what Du Bois (2012: 626) defines as "public and psychological wage", which is a constellation of material and psychological advantages given to white individuals simply on account of their race, regardless of their social class. Du Bois (2012) explains this set of privileges that is given to white citizens as follows:

> They were given public deference and titles of courtesy because they were white. They were admitted freely with all classes of white people to public functions, public parks, and the best schools. The police were drawn from their ranks, and the courts, dependent upon their votes, treated them with such leniency as to encourage lawlessness. (…) On the other hand, in the same way, the Negro was subject to public insult; was afraid of mobs; was liable to the jibes of children and the unreasoning fears of white women; and was compelled almost continuously to submit to various badges of inferiority. (626)

Such contrast between liberty and constraints of white and Black individuals at the time is emphasised in *The Help* by exposing Skeeter's, Aibileen and Minny's struggles simultaneously and how enormously different the severity of the problem that white and Black women deal with. In contrast to Skeeter, Aibileen and Minny are forced to grapple not only with sexism but also racism and class discrimination concurrently. As Black female employees, both Aibileen and Minny epitomise the concept of intersectionality through their triple experience of discrimination based on race, gender, and class. This overt contrast between the experiences of discrimination faced by female characters of different social classes and races unearths how the discrimination against Black women diverges from that experienced by white women, underscoring the need for an intersectional approach in examining and addressing the unique challenges faced by Black women.Aibileen and Minny

must work under white employers who pay low wages for gruelling household chores, nursemaiding, and cooking. In addition to minimum wage, they are also forced to put up with various forms of humiliation and exploitation at the hands of their white employers. In the case of Aibileen and Minny, quitting is not an option because their employers, as white middle-class women, have a dominant social power in a society that enables them to prevent a particular Black woman from being hired by another white family. On several occasions, the white ladies do not hesitate to remind their maids of this as an indirect threat. When Skeeter offers the Black maids to tell her about their experiences of oppression and victimisation as they work under the poor conditions of white women's employment, they are so intimidated by the idea of being unemployed that they hesitate to tell the truth. Later, Aibileen reveals some of her experience by asking, "[W]hat if we told the truth? How we too scared to ask for minimum wage. How nobody gets paid they Social Security. How it feel when your own boss be calling you" (Stockett, 2009: 128). At this point, she breaks off the conversation, as if she is too uncomfortable describing what their employers call them at work. Aibileen has a son named Treelore who would like to become a writer, but he dies after injuring himself at work. Explaining the manner of his son's death, Aibileen says "[H]is broken body was thrown on the back of a pickup by the white foreman. And then they dropped him off at the colored hospital … They rolled him off the truck bed and the white men drove away" (Stockett, 2009:153). Here, Aibileen implies that the indifference and lack of care of a white employer have caused the death of her son, whose racial identity ultimately prevents him from seeking proper medical care. Racial segregation, which devalues Black lives in comparison to white lives and leads to her son's death, now compels her to continue working under the same oppressive conditions. With no economic support, social security, or the assurance of a working relative, Aibileen cannot simply quit or retire from her job as a maid. Concerning the relations of race and class and their intertwined effect on individuals, Hall (1980) claims "[r]ace is thus, also, the modality in which class is 'lived', the medium through which class relations are experienced, the form in which it is appropriated and 'fought through'(341). Based on this premise, instead of being secondary to the class, race includes, surrounds and intersects with class, shaping each other dynamically. Here, Aibileen's predicament is indicative of the interconnectedness of race and class, including gender, and how each of these facets of identity operates within a relationship of reciprocal cause and effect, bringing forth a combined victimisation for Black female employees in the novel.

Yule May, another Black maid working under Miss Hilly Holbrook, who is one of the most respected white women in town with political influence, also confesses, “I didn’t like working for her and I wanted to quit many times but I was afraid to. I was afraid I might never get another job once she’d had her say” (Stockett, 2009: 249). Yule May would like her twin boys to get an education and tries to save enough money to send them to college, but her and her husband’s low payments are never enough to cover the expenses. When she asks her employer for a loan, Miss Hilly refuses it, saying that “it is kinder to let them learn to work things out by theyselves ” (Stockett, 2009: 251). After this, Yule May desperately attempts to steal a ring from Miss Hilly, yet she is caught and arrested. In one of her letters, she explains her reason for stealing as follows:

> I stole from that woman. An ugly ruby ring, hoping it would cover the rest of the tuition. Something she never wore and I felt she owed me for everything I’d been through working for her. Of course now, neither of my boys will be going to college. The court is fine is nearly as much as we had saved. (Stockett, 2009:250)

Yule May is one of the many secondary characters whose experiences exemplify the way multiple forms of discrimination – racial, gender, and economic – intersect to compound the victimisation of Black women. Similar to Minny and Aibileen, Yule May is forced to work as a maid, knowing that there are no alternative and adequate job opportunities for lower-class Black women in other sections of life. To secure her children’s future, she feels compelled to commit a crime because, in her opinion, social restrictions offer her no other option than to break the law. As victims and prisoners in a society where they are restricted not only by their race but also by their gender and social class, they are more trapped than Black men, who have more job opportunities, and white women, most of whom do not even feel the need to have a job to make a living. The process of victimisation of Black women when they cross the line with their white employers is revealed in more detail through Aibileen’s inner thoughts as she reflects on it:

> First thing a white lady gone do is fire you.[...] But then a week after you lost your job, you get this little yellow envelope (...) Paper inside say NOTICE OF EVICTON. [...] You start to panic some then. You still ain’t got no job prospects. Everywhere you try, the door slams in your face. And now you ain’t got a place to live. [...] no jobs, no money, no house. You hope this is the end of it, that she done enough, she ready to forget. It’ll be a knock on the door, late at night. It won’t be the white lady at the door. She don’t do that kind a thing herself. But while the nightmare’s happening, the burning, or the cutting or the beating, you realize something you known all your life: the white lady don’t *ever* forget. And she ain’t gone stop till you dead. (Stockett, 2009:188)

Aibileen's inner thoughts, which reveal the enmity between white employers and their Black employees, confirm the nonexistent sisterhood among women at the time. Here, Aibileen reflects the image of the white woman in her mind that goes beyond an exploitative or unfair employer and portrays her as the arch-enemy of Black women, an evil person from whom Aibileen expects the worst. This strong negative image of white female employers in the minds of Black women is the result of their long experience of working under the employment of white women, whose internalised racist and classist attitudes and discriminatory and derogatory treatment of their Black maids deepen the already existing rift between white and Black women.

Aibileen's views of the 'white lady' as an abusive employer are confirmed when Minny rejects the offer of employment from Hilly, who is desperate to hire Minny as a maid. Instead of coming to terms with Minny's rejection of her job offer, Hilly admits that she has already spread rumours about Minny being a thief in the neighbourhood, discouraging other families from hiring her as a maid. Minny says "I've never stole a thing in my life but she told everybody I did and wasn't nobody in town gone hire a sass-mouthing thieving Nigra for a maid and I might as well go head and work for her free" (Stockett, 2009: 338). Here, Hilly uses her racially and economically privileged and superior position as a middle-class white woman to victimise Minny by taking away her freedom of career choice through calumniation and stigmatisation, thereof turning into another perpetrator of the multiple social and economic restrictions and the multifarious victimisations that Minny and many Black women try to endure at this time. This example highlights how discrimination against Black women in society, reinforced by white female employers, necessitates an intersectional approach to fully understand the combined impact of race and gender on their experiences.

Although not every relationship between the white female employers and their Black maids is characterised by hostility, in most instances reciprocal respect, amicable attitudes and any signs of sisterhood are rarely seen in *The Help* (2009). Hooks (1982) notes in *Ain't I A Woman* that "[i]n general, white women did not wish to associate with black women because they did not want to be contaminated by morally impure creatures" (p. 130-131). After all, according to hooks (1982), Black women at the time were seen as "immoral, licentious, and insolent" (p.133). This internalised racism of white women is palpable in every white character in *The Help* (2009), including Skeeter, who is portrayed as the most

sympathetic and colour-blind white woman. In her conversations with the Black maids, Skeeter grows closer to them, developing a degree of empathy and realising her previous indifference to the constant victimisation of the Black maids around her. Although she does not belittle, humiliate or abuse the Black women, Skeeter never considers them as individuals who are unique personalities and have their own lives, problems, needs, hopes and despairs. Till her eventual recognition of the prevalent injustice towards Black women, Skeeter considers Black maids, even Constantine who has raised her, not as a person but as an asset to provide comfort in her daily life. As Smith (2014) points out in her article "Black Women's Memories and *The Help*":

> [S]he fails to recognize how little she knows about the women who have worked for her family and her friends. She undoubtedly feels a deep attachment to Constantine, the African American woman who raised her, but Skeeter has never understood the circumstances that caused her sudden departure from her household. Her lack of knowledge about her beloved Constantine's life suggests the asymmetry in the relationship between the black maids and the families for which they worked. The maids attended to the most intimate details of the lives of the families that employed them. Yet even the children who believe they love them know next to nothing about their private lives. (pp: 29-30)

Skeeter further becomes cognisant of the racism of those other white women that she has previously overlooked. For instance, she notices that "Hilly raises her voice about three octaves higher when she talks to coloured people", as if her maids cannot understand them clearly (Stockett, 2009:157). Hilly's attitude confirms the postcolonial idea that Black people are strangers to white civilisation and cannot use white people's language as effectively as white people can (Fanon, 1952; Babha, 1994). Skeeter's other friend Elizabeth also smiles at Black maids while talking in a way as if people of color are children (Stockett, 2009: 157). This unveils another postcolonial stereotype that characterises Black individuals as intellectually inferior to their white counterparts, often attributing to them qualities of childlike naivety or a primitive disposition. (Fanon, 1952; Babha, 1994) A relevant postcolonial idea is voiced by Skeeter's mother when she talks about the illegitimate child of a Black maid. She emphasises the immorality of Blacks and warns her daughter that "[y]ou cannot leave a Negro and a Nigra together unchaperoned … [i]ts not their fault, they just can't help it" (Stockett, 2009: 70). Such presumptive comment of Skeeter's mother foregrounds the established prejudice of whites regarding Black people's lack of moral values, implying that their depravity comes from their nature and therefore is unavoidable. For this, Homi K. Bhabha (1994) exposes how Black people are portrayed in colonial

discourse, which is internalised collectively by these white-middle-class women in the southern society of America at the time in the novel:

> The black is both savage (cannibal) and yet the most obedient and dignified of servants (the bearer of food); he is the embodiment of rampant sexuality and yet innocent as a child; he is mystical, primitive, simple-minded and yet the most worldly and accomplished liar, and manipulator of social forces. (82)

This contradictory ideology regarding Black people in colonial discourse can be detected in the general attitudes of the white employers towards their Black employees throughout the novel. They hire black people at minimum wage, believing that Black women are the most obedient and affordable servants for help, yet at the same time, label their Black servants as uncivilised, untrustworthy and morally depraved lesser beings.

According to hooks, white women in the post-slavery era believed that "they needed the protection of segregation so that they would not catch 'Negro' diseases" (1982: 133). This belief emerges in *The Help (2009)* where Hilly introduces the 'Home Help Sanitation Initiative', which suggests that white women build separate bathrooms in their garages or sheds for their Black employers in order to protect their families from Black diseases (Stockett, 2009:158). Hilly bluntly states her motives behind such segregationist action by saying that "[e]verybody knows they carry different kinds of diseases than we do" (Stockett, 2009: 8). She further claims that she designs her Home Help Sanitation "[a]s a disease preventative measure" (Stockett, 2009: 8). In her instructive letter, Hilly also explains her so-called scientific reasonings for introducing such preventative measure by noting: "99% of all colored diseases are carried in the urine. Whites can become permanently disabled by nearly all of these diseases because we lack immunities colored carry in their darker pigmentation" (Stockett, 2009: 158). This biased view of Hilly echoes historical racist ideologies that linked being coloured to disease susceptibility which is a notion that was often used to justify and rationalise slavery and American racial hierarchies and racial stereotypes (Kiple and Kiple, 1980: 211). In this sense, Hilly's comments, her initiative and most of her actions regarding Black women throughout the novel can be interpreted as a reflection of the racist ideology that views Black people not as human beings of a different race, but rather as living beings of 'different species' whose perceived dangerous diseases may threaten the health of 'human beings'. Such racist perspectives advocate for Black people's restrictions from white individuals as much as possible.

The novel repeatedly emphasises how natural and reasonable the idea of estrangement is for these middle-class white women. For instance, Hilly excuses her racist beliefs by asserting that "coloured people and white people are just so...different" (Stockett, 2009:186). However, the difference Hilly mentions is never scrutinised and elaborated upon with reasonable explanations beyond class difference, and it relies on groundless prejudiced assumptions regarding their so-called 'lack of morality' and biological differences. Skeeter's mother also expresses her internalised racism to Skeeter when she criticises her daughter for idolising Constantine rather too much, referring to Black people she claims to be not like "regular *people*" (Stockett, 2009: 364). Hilly and the other white women in the novel convince themselves of the existence of this racial difference in order to feel superior to Black women. Since women are considered inferior in a patriarchal society, marginalising another minority group is a way for them to regain their self-esteem.

By exposing this non-existent sisterhood and deep-rooted antagonism between Black maids and white female employers who victimise their Black female workers as a result of their internalised racism, the story acknowledges that gender identity alone is not enough to uncover and analyse Black maids' experiences of victimisation. Indeed, addressing only gender identity provides a narrow scope, because it cannot reflect the general or standard female experience, as other identities of women such as class or ethnicity constantly overlap gender identity and create a unique intersectional experience for each woman. Accordingly, in myriad cases, a group of women from different races or classes may be subjected to discrimination and oppression by another group of women from the dominant race and upper classes. For instance, the Black maids in *The Help* are not only abused by the white or Black men but also by the white women because their racial and sexual identities intersect. Therefore, they are not only inferior as women to men, but also as Black women to white women, resulting in a double subordination. In this context, such an experience of victimisation can only be elucidated by analysing through the lenses of intersectionality.

At the same time, the multilayered oppression of Aibileen and Minny also illustrates what Nancy Fraser describes as the "two-dimensional" nature of injustice: the economic dimension of maldistribution, evident in their underpaid and insecure labor, and the cultural dimension of misrecognition, visible in the daily humiliations and racial devaluation they endure. Their oppression in *The Help* thus demonstrates that redistribution without recognition, or recognition without redistribution, would be insufficient, since both their

material exploitation and their symbolic marginalization reinforce one another. Here, Aibileen's predicament is indicative of the interconnectedness of race and class, including gender, and how each of these facets of identity operates within a relationship of reciprocal cause and effect, bringing forth a combined victimisation for Black female employees in the novel.

In addition to depicting the racial discrimination perpetuated by white middle-class female employers, *The Help* also portrays the gender-based subordination experienced by Black maids at the hands of Black men. For example, the novel fictionalises domestic violence through Minny's chapters. Although Minny is notorious for being generally responsive and moody, she is portrayed as benign and pure of heart deep down. However, she loses her job more than once or is beaten by her husband because of her reactive attitude. Minny's husband Leroy constantly batters Minny, who usually appears at work with bruises on her face or arm (Stockett, 2009: 183). Leroy engages in violence because he believes Minny's petulant behaviour at work could make her family a target of white hostility. Therefore, he hopes to correct Minny's inappropriate behaviour through violence. It can thus be argued that Leroy uses violence as a means presented by Shahrazad Ali (1989), who argues in *The Blackman's Guide to Understanding the Black Women* that violence is a necessary means to restore the lost authority of Black men within the Black family, particularly when Black women do not adhere to the parameters of feminine gender roles (p.174). As a Black man, Leroy also experiences subordination and oppression at the pipe-fitting job in the plant or in other social contexts of his life; however, he overcomes his victimisation by beating his wife and restores his self-respect and superiority by victimising another marginalised person. He often beats his wife without giving any petty justification at all, as Minny mentions at one point, "[h]e was just beating me for the pure pleasure of it" (Stockett, 2009: 304).

Minny, on the other hand, feels that she cannot fight back at Leroy or get a divorce because she is not only a woman but also a Black woman whose business opportunities and legal rights are even more restricted than Leroy's due to the intersectional effect of her race and gender. Without the support of her husband, she can neither raise her five children nor provide a safe environment where they can grow up with sufficient education and health service support. Although in the late twentieth century, welfare services were established that financially supported single Black mothers with children, it also led to Black women's

stigmatisation as welfare queens as a form of yet another oppression (Hill Collins and Bilge, 2016). Legal authorities and justice systems also fail to recognise Black women's victimisation (Crenshaw, 1989). In this sense, as a coloured woman, Minny's racial identity coincides with her gender, aggravates her victimisation and reduces her options for means of protection, which is a quintessential instance of a structural aspect of intersectionality. Since the system does not offer ample employment opportunities to Black women, it imposes poverty on them, deterring abused Black women from affording any social services that could enable them to maintain their lives independently.

Minny's racial identity also prevents her from hoping that the police will help her. Supporting this, Crenshaw (1991) expatiates that "[w]omen of colour are often reluctant to call the police, a hesitancy likely due to a general unwillingness among people of colour to subject their private lives to the scrutiny and control of a police force that is frequently hostile" (p:1257). As Minny says at one point, "[c]ause who gone protect our peoples ? Ain't no colored policemans " (Stockett, 2009: 196). Here, Minny expresses her and other Black people's general lack of trust in the white policemen who are supposed to protect victims yet frequently turn into victimiser forces when it comes to coloured people at the time. As demonstrated, Black women face dual victimisation: they experience oppression as women, often at the hands of their husbands, and as Black individuals, lacking the support systems or escape mechanisms that are available to white women.

By portraying Black women as abused and victimised by Black men, the novel again acknowledges that, much like feminism and sexism, racial identity and racism alone cannot fully and comprehensively capture Black women's unique experiences of discrimination. As represented in the novel, not all Black people share identical experiences; aspects of identity, such as being male, may grant certain advantages, with Black men benefiting from patriarchal privilege over Black women. In this sense, the victimisation that the Black maids experience in the novel can only be elucidated by dealing with the juxtaposition of racism and sexism, along with myriad forms of discrimination such as classism. The subordination of Black women to both white women and Black men – who themselves are subordinated to white men – indicates the crucial need for a broader conceptual framework to reveal the uniquely disadvantaged and disparately subordinated position of Black women within the social hierarchy. In the novel, the seemingly unconnected victimisation of the Black maids by the white female employers like Hilly and their Black spouses like Leroy, as well as their

poverty that forces them to endure all these oppressions and closes the doors to escape, vividly illustrates how different forms of oppression operate simultaneously, overlapping and leading to a more intense and multi-layered form of victimisation in Black women's lives. Accordingly, the experiences of victimisation endured by the Black maids are not equivalent to Skeeter and Hilly's encounters with gender discrimination, nor to Leroy's experiences of racism; rather, they represent a complex and multidimensional form of marginalisation and oppression, which can be fully understood within the equally intricate and layered framework of intersectionality.

Minny expresses the fact of Black women's victimisation simply as, "[w]e living in hell, we trapped. Our kids is trapped" (Stockett, 2009: 96). This succinct expression vividly underscores the sense of insecurity and imprisonment that Black women feel in a hostile environment where they are constantly oppressed and forced to live restricted lives while not feeling safe in the workplace, on the streets, and even at home. Minny also lays bare the truth that Black children are born into lives marked by the same disadvantages and entrapments, carrying the prospect of similar complex layers of subordination and victimisation, because the same racial, economic and sexual determinants intersect to seal their children's future as well. Being unable to change their future and receive proper education that could make a difference, Minny cannot help but prepare them for a similar oppressed life, thereof teaches them to say "*yes ma'am* and *please* before they can even say cookie" (Stockett, 2009: 51). In the novel, although all her children are of school age, two of them already work in different jobs, as Minny puts in:

> My kids know how to work (…) Leroy Junior, who's a senior at Lenier High, is bagging groceries at the Jitney 14. That's the white grocery store over in Miss Hilly's neighborhood. Sugar, my oldest girl, in tenth grade, babysits for our neighbor Tallulah who works late. (Stockett, 2009: 219)

Minny is a mother who is unable to provide her children with sufficient education, nurture their skills, talents and potential and support them to follow their dreams because Minny is oppressed and restricted by the system that does not provide Black women with enough space, time, money and security to become a so-called 'proper' mother. Through the portrayal of Minny, who is forced to put her children to work while they are still in school, Aibileen, who has lost her talented son Treelore in a work accident, and Yule May, who is so desperate that she is willing to risk stealing to send her children to college, the novel reveals underlying reasons for the inadequate level of education in African American

society. Born into a system that subjects them and their parents to intersecting forms of oppression,such as class inequality, systemic racism, and economic exploitation, Black children start life at a greater disadvantage and with fewer opportunities compared to their white counterparts. Therefore, the mere inefficiency of Black mothers in raising or supporting their children cannot be considered the primary reason for the persistent poverty and educational deficits in the Black community. However, to shift the attention from the real reasons behind any perpetuating deficiency in the Black community, the system condemns and stigmatises working Black women through controlling images such as 'Black matriarch', asserting that Black mothers spend so much time at work that they neglect the needs of their children and household duties thus raise problematic and unemployed poor individuals and potential criminals to the Black society. In this context, *The Help* elicit the actual reasons behind the social economic and educational problems of the Black communities at the time, revealing how Black women are trapped by multiple restrictions, compelled to work while also bearing the responsibilities of motherhood, being wives, and managing their household chores.

3.1 . Conclusion

This chapter contends that *The Help* encapsulates the threefold subordination of Black women through the intersecting axes of race, gender, and class. Through a close examination of the layered discrimination and subordination endured by Black maids in Jackson, Mississippi, during the early 1960s, specifically via the lived experiences of characters such as Minny Jackson, Aibileen Clark, and their interactions with both white employers and Black men, the chapter reveals the multifaceted nature of their victimisation. The Black maids in the novel are subjected to subjugation and exploitation by the white employers, such as Hilly Holbrook, whose demeaning, threatening, and discriminatory actions epitomise the entrenched hostility of upper-class white women towards the Black community during that period. Through the figure of Hilly, the novel exposes the absence of female solidarity and the specific victimisation inflicted by women upon other women. Furthermore, the character of Leroy Jackson embodies the patriarchal violence prevalent among Black men, revealing that Black women's oppression extends into their own social sphere. The compounded vulnerabilities arising from their racial and gender identities

severely constrain Black women's socioeconomic mobility, which relegates them to laborious and exploitative roles as a means of survival. The narrative thus succeeds in adeptly fictionalising the unique and multidimensional experiences of alienation and discrimination endured by Black women, positioning them as more profoundly subordinated than other marginalised groups, including white labourers, white women, and Black men.

CHAPTER FOUR
INTERSECTIONALITY IN ANDREA LEVY'S *SMALL ISLAND*

Andrea Levy's fourth novel *Small Island* (2004) is set in the years surrounding the Second World War, a period during which many Caribbean men enlisted in the British armed forces, specifically the Royal Air Force, and were later encouraged, especially in 1948, to migrate to Britain in search of better employment opportunities (Ellis, 2012: 70). This encouragement led to the arrival of the *MV Empire Windrush* which transported 492 West-Indian passengers to London on 22 June 1948, marking the start of large-scale migration from colonies (Ellis, 2012: 70):

> Windrush has often been read as an event symbolic of the rise of multicultural, multiracial Britain, but it also belongs to a longer and complicated history of Black Atlantic migrations, which carry the force of cultural rupture and irrupt into culture, such as the traumatic migration of the Middle Passage, which carried African peoples into slavery. (Marquis, 2012: 39)

The novel thoroughly examines these Windrush events of 1948 in post-war Britain through the interconnected lives of its central characters: a white and middle-class English couple, Queenie and Bernard, and a diasporic Black Jamaican couple who migrate to London, Hortense and Gilbert. Hortense, an educated Jamaican woman, marries Gilbert to move to England, hoping for a refined and civilised life. Gilbert, a former RAF airman, faces challenges in gaining acceptance and opportunities due to racism and economic difficulties. Queenie, a working-class white Englishwoman, accommodates Jamaican lodgers while her husband Bernard is away after the war, subsequently forming a complex relationship with them. When Bernard comes back, their home becomes a source of cultural and emotional conflict.

In *Small Island* (2004), Levy employs a multi-voiced narrative structure that makes visible different perspectives within the four first-person narratives on post-colonial themes such as migration, colonial history, and national identity. Throughout the novel, Levy shifts not only perspectives but also geographic location and time. While the 'before' chapters illuminate the pre-diasporic lives and motivations of the characters and provide a broader context for understanding their eventual transformations, the chapters titled '1948' mark the period during and after the Windrush migration, capturing its multifaceted impact on the protagonists' lives as well as on the wider fabric of British society. Additionally, although

the primary setting of the events is London, the location of the events varies from Jamaica to India and the United States. Duboin (2011) elaborates on how the shift in time leads to expanding the settings of the novel among multiple locations, thus functioning for the benefit of the overarching post-colonial themes of the book:

> Through a series of long flashbacks, the novel expands beyond post-war London to rural England, to Jamaica and India. Levy thus contextualizes the migrants' arrival and the disruptive encounter with the racial Other within a global frame, showing how the trauma of World War Two, the decline of Empire, transnational migration and the beginnings of "colonization in reverse" led concomitantly to profound sociocultural changes that reshaped both Jamaica and Great Britain into "small islands" (each in her own way). (p.15)

This global perspective enables the novel to challenge oversimplified national narratives, emphasising how the Empire not only caused migration but was also shaped and defined by it. In other words, the British Empire created conditions, such as economic inconveniences in colonised countries and promises of opportunities in the 'Mother Country', that set forth migration from colonised countries like Jamaica to Britain. The mass immigration, in return, reshaped inexorably the Empire's cultural and racial dynamics, even its sense of identity in the post-war era. By integrating personal narratives with transnational histories, the novel also reveals the links between colonial legacies and identity development across geographical and cultural divides. Through its diverse geographical settings, temporal shifts between 1948 and earlier periods, and the interwoven narratives of four central characters, who differ markedly in gender, race, cultural background, and socioeconomic status, yet exhibit notable parallels in their struggles and aspirations, the novel deliberately resists offering a singular and unified portrayal of migration and the Empire, and instead presents a multifaceted and contested perspective on a transforming British society:

> The structure of the narrative, with its shifting voices and time periods (before and after), indicates that her narrative seeks deliberately to complicate the prevailing approach to Windrush history as a moment of rupture. Instead, Levy reclaims a pre-history of discourses and events that inform and even shape Windrush and post-Windrush encounters. (Ellis, 2012:72)

In other words, *Small Island* reexamines a crucial historical era that transformed British society, and offers a broader panorama of the period through the previously silenced point of view of colonial subjects, which disputes and enriches established yet constrained pre-told narratives about post-war colonial immigration. In this capacity, Ellis (2012) notes that the novel might serve as historiographic metafiction since the novel draws on postmodern

and postcolonial techniques, foregrounds competing perspectives, especially those of Hortense, Gilbert, Queenie, and Bernard, as active agents in shaping the story, reimagines the experience of arrival and belonging through a multi-voiced narrative structure that challenges linear, authoritative histories, and blends fictional testimony with historical reflection, questioning how stories of the past are constructed and remembered (pp. 72-73). Though stylistically influenced by realist traditions and Windrush-era authors such as Sam Selvon and George Lamming, *Small Island* resists a fixed and chronological narrative, instead offering a fragmented and pluralistic account of Britain's multicultural development (Ellis, 2012:73). Supporting the arguments of Ellis, Marquis (2012) points out that *Small Island* explores how ideological forces shape personal lives, using shifting temporal and spatial perspectives to emphasise the intersections and tensions between competing socio-cultural orders and to reconstruct history through diverse and subjective testimonies rather than a singular and authoritative viewpoint (p.38).

Levy's *Small Island* is deeply connected to her family history, as her father was one of the Windrush migrants and her mother joined him shortly thereafter (Andermahr, 2019: 557). Driven by a desire to reclaim overlooked family and cultural histories, Levy highlights experiences neglected and rarely addressed in British education, even within Black families (Andermahr, 2019: 557-558). Levy succeeds in this endeavour by foregrounding marginalised narratives and giving voice to historically silenced experiences: "*Small Island* remaps our understanding of the histories, places, and peoples, before and after Windrush migration, in Jamaica and England as well the wider world" (Knepper, 2012: p.1). In achieving this, *Small Island* engages with a range of postcolonial concepts and themes, including new ethnicities, spatial remapping, the oppositional dynamic between margin and centre, the notion of the third space, and the complexities of liminality and hybrid identities (Dubois, 2011). In addition, according to Knepper (2012), the novel is conducive to being analysed in terms of Levy's innovative use of language, her subversion of colonial gazes, her engagement with trauma and feminist perspectives, and her reworking of genres like the Bildungsroman and neo-slave narrative (pp.9-10). Her complex plotting, oscillating temporalities, and use of humour also challenge dominant narratives and invite fresh readings of identity and history within Caribbean diasporic and Black Atlantic frameworks (Knepper, 2012: 9-10).

The multilayered structure of Levy's novel, featuring four discontinuous and interwoven personal narratives, provides diverse perspectives pertaining to gender, class, and race (Duboin, 2011:15). Consequently, the novel captures transparently how racial prejudice, national identity, gender roles, and class stratification intersect, often in conflicting and contradictory ways. In contrast to *The Help*, which predominantly examines intersectionality through the lenses of race, gender, and class within a segregated American context, *Small Island* provides a more expansive framework and addresses further dimensions, including colonial history, national identity, and the socio-legal implications of legitimacy, consequently offering a more nuanced and historically anchored depiction of intersectionality. In this context, through a meticulous analysis of the distinct and contrasting perspectives of the central characters, this chapter seeks to elucidate the intersectional experiences of victimisation, discrimination, and subordination encountered by Hortense, Queenie, and Gilbert within the colonial centre. In doing so, this analysis will not be confined to the intersections of gender, race, and class; instead, it will further investigate how additional facets of identity, including colonial subjecthood, national belonging, and the socio-cultural implications of legitimacy, complicate these experiences.

Hortense's unique experience of subordination and discrimination in *Small Island* is shaped by the intersections of her gender, race, social class, her status as a colonial subject, an immigrant, and an illegitimate child. Being a Black woman in a white world and being a colonial subject whose mindset is conditioned by the colonial indoctrination towards the superiority of the British are synthesised to form a multidimensional suppression that diminishes her class status, legal power, and social independence, while isolating and silencing her from multiple fronts. Hortense's experience of discrimination commences at an early age due to her status as the illegitimate daughter of Lovell Roberts, an esteemed government official in Jamaica. Raised in her uncle's household, which is not entirely her own, she has never seen her father. While her relatives exhibit care for her, she remains acutely aware that she is not genuinely 'one of them', a guest in a family that places a premium on lineage and social standing. Hortense's birth outside of wedlock instils a profound desire to attain respectability, propriety, and elevated social status. She adopts a refined and formal British accent to compensate for her illegitimacy. She adheres to strict etiquette and moral superiority, and pursues a teaching career, a position regarded with honour and respect in colonial society.

However, acquiring such an object presents significant challenges when her gender identity and illegitimacy intersect and complicate factors working against her. For instance, when Hortense is a child, she watches Michael, her cousin and the boy she quietly loves, being sent to a prestigious boys' school, which is a pathway to status, education, and respect. On the other hand, Hortense is not offered the same chance, even though she is intelligent, well-behaved, and eager to learn. Here, her gender and her birth status function as intersectional forces denying her access to the same opportunities that are freely given to Michael, who is not as talented and eager as she, yet a legitimate male member of the family. Even during their childhood, Michael is afforded the freedom to engage in play within the yard, unencumbered by responsibilities. In contrast, Hortense is always required to attend to various errands and household duties, as a female and a secondary member of the family, as she complains:

> "Leave me alone, Michael. You can play all day, but I have work that must be done," I told that wicked boy daily. I had washing to do in the outhouse sink, and cleaning of the shades on the kerosene lamps. I was responsible for keeping the area under the tamarind tree free from dirt and a pleasure to sit on. (Levy, 2004: 40)

Years later, even when Michael is revealed to have a relationship with a married white woman, Mrs. Roberts, the mother of Michael, loses her senses and takes out her all pain on Hortense, slapping her on the face and accusing her of knowing about Michael's inappropriate infatuation all along and hiding it from them. Hortense asks desperately, "[w]hy are you treating me like this?" (Levy, 2004: 57). However, the distressed mother does not respond; instead, she attempts to strike again, compelling Hortense to save herself by fleeing the scene. This situation indicates that Hortense lacks a voice within this family, whose members treat her with indifference and disrespect, fail to appreciate her talents, and close their ears to her cries. Here, Hortense's question regarding her mistreatment can be addressed through the lens of her intersecting identities. Deprived of any esteemed status within society, she becomes perceived as the least worthy and most submissive member of the family, not due to personal shortcomings, but rather because her gender and birth status already render her inconspicuous in public life. Her expendability within a family that is preoccupied with authority and reputation is the consequence of being born both female and illegitimate, identities that concur and diminish her value before she can assert it.

As a result of her overlooked and underestimated status at the onset of her life, Hortense endeavours to regain her worth and respect through different means. Raised with

"English manners and Christian discipline" (Levy, 2004: 61) to idealise Britain and its values, Hortense believes that education, etiquette, and living a life like a British white lady in Britain will earn her respect. Such a belief shapes another facet of her identity as a colonial subject whose mindset is imprinted by colonial indoctrination, which eventually intersects with her other identities to deepen her victimisation when she migrates to London. Therefore, her internalisation of British ideals and the disillusionment need to be investigated. Further, the underlying reasons and factors within the formation of her colonial identity need to be addressed to illuminate the severity and complexity of her intersectional victimisation that she will experience as a diasporic Black woman in the colonial centre. Revealing the depth of colonial indoctrination within Hortense's mindset clarifies how her colonial identity clashes with her other social positions and how it becomes a central axis of exclusion in her intersectional experience. This psychological impact of colonialism on Hortense's worldview and her self-identification, and personal objectives can be understood through Frantz Fanon's notion of internalised colonial inferiority, as he asserts in *Black Skin, White Mask:*

> The black man wants to be like the white man. For the black man, there is only one destiny. And it is white. Long ago, the black man admitted the unarguable superiority of the white man, and all his efforts are aimed at achieving a white existence. (Fanon, 1986:228).

In this context, despite never receiving genuine parental love and care from the family that has raised her, she is inwardly convinced that, due to her middle-class Jamaican background, her slightly lighter skin, and her father's esteemed status among the elite, she is more refined and deserving than individuals whose skin is not as fair as hers and who are not educated in British customs. Her colonial education also significantly shapes her identity and instils a sense of pride; she communicates in 'the Queen's English', dresses appropriately, and expects respect. Consequently, following the final humiliation that she is compelled to endure, Hortense departs her childhood home without hesitation upon securing a position at a teacher-training college in Kingston.

Even during her tenure as a teacher in college, she maintains that she is entitled to a position of greater prestige than the one she currently holds, which reflects her disillusionment as a colonial subject, particularly concerning the notion that superiority is derived from higher social class and lighter skin, traits that are often associated with Britishness. Consequently, she expresses dissatisfaction with her students from lower socio-

economic backgrounds, who do not exhibit the same British mannerisms as she does anticipate. She thinks of them as "[s]ixty nappy-headed, runny-nosed, foul-smelling ragamuffins" and "[s]ixty black faces" (Levy, 2004:68). She tends to describe their behaviour pejoratively, with words such as "some staring at me, gaping as idiots do" (Levy, 2004:68), "fidgeting like vermin behind rows of wooden desks" (Levy, 2004: 68), "wretched boy" (Levy, 2004:68), or "thieving boy just looked on me with a rascal's eye" (Levy, 2004: 68). Comparing these lower class children, she longs for her former upper class students: "I was used to children from good homes. In Mr and Mrs Ryder's school wealthy, fair-skinned and high-class children sat ruly waiting for my instruction before lowering their heads to complete the task satisfactorily" (Levy, 2004: 68). Here, Hortense's inclination to associate value and superiority with white skin, high social status, and wealth is even more evident. In this regard, she appears to hold the belief that the fair-skinned and affluent children warrant her attention and effort more than the lower-class, dark-skinned students, as she presumes that the former possess a greater potential for talent and skill.

In her subsequent career, Hortense's illegitimacy as an intersecting status continues to obstruct her pursuit of more esteemed positions in Jamaica. It intersects with her gender, limiting her options for a career, which is already narrowed due to her being a woman, ultimately compelling her to migrate to London. For instance, the headmaster of the Church of England school in Kingston, which admits light-skinned girls as teachers, denies Hortense after an interrogation wherein her legitimacy is called into question. Following her rejections, Hortense contemplates that "[her] breeding was not legitimate enough for him to consider [her] worthy of standing in their elegant classroom before their high-class girls" (Levy, 2004, p. 86). As a woman, her job opportunities are already limited to a small number of teaching positions. However, her illegitimacy further intersects with her gender identity, reducing her options even more.

Following her brief tenures at another college, Hortense encounters Gilbert, a Jamaican individual recently returning from his volunteer service in the Royal Air Force during World War II. He aspires to return to England to forge a better life and perceives himself as a constituent of the "Mother Country" he has once fought for. Given that Hortense shares similar aspirations concerning life in Britain, she extends a proposal of marriage to Gilbert in order to partake in that so-called 'promising' life within the embrace of the Mother Country. Reflecting such promises, Hortense thinks, "I would soon be living in England and

able to rise far above these people, higher than any disdain could ever take me" (Levy, 2004, p. 102). Hortense's inner thoughts reveal that her desire to attain a higher status arises from the 'disdains' – the indignities, humiliations, and ignorance she has faced in her childhood and early adolescence, which have continued to impact her career and further restricted her already limited choices in Jamaica. Her intersecting identities as a non-marital child and a woman uniquely victimise her, compelling her to flee her home country in search of the lost self-esteem she has never possessed. Nevertheless, this decision leads to additional victimisation as a Black immigrant and colonial subject upon arriving in London, where she confronts the harsh realities that await her. Hortense's case thus exemplifies that the intersectional connections between various facets of an individual's identity expand the experience of victimisation.

During that era, West Indians commonly thought about endless opportunities and a better life in the mother country, as Caribbean writers Bryan, Dadzie, and Scafe illustrate concerning the Windrush years:

> Britain, having lost many of its industries, homes and workers during six years of war, needed a cheap and ready supply of labour. And we needed jobs. This was the economic magnet which lured so many of us to the Mother Country in the late forties and fifties. We responded readily to the persuasion and the propaganda, to the lure of 'streets paved with gold' and of 'jobs for all'. Little could we have known the realities which we would have to face as we entered a society so steeped in its racist past. Little could we have known that our vision of hope, sustained through centuries of exploitation, would be so hard to realise when we set foot on British soil. (1985: pp.15-16)

Gilbert and Hortense reflect the historical West Indians who endeavour to attain a prosperous life replete with opportunities in London. Nonetheless, their illusions of belonging to the Empire, as well as their expectations, are ultimately shattered by British discrimination and ignorance. Hortense and Gilbert quickly realise that the Mother Country is unaware of their existence. Now that they have entered its territory, it shows disdain for them and denies any promises that have previously been made.

Gilbert has similar experiences during his time in the RAF, where he notices that many British soldiers have never heard of Jamaica. When he tells them that he is fighting for 'his country', Britain, they look at his Black skin with confusion and ask, "Your country?" (Levy, 2004, p. 140). Then, Gilbert, who is taught to see Britain as his homeland, feels betrayed when he discerns that the Empire does not see him as his equal. When Gilbert first

arrives in England as an RAF recruit, he is immediately struck by the stark contrast between the idealised vision of the "Mother Country" he has been raised to revere and the grim and decaying reality he encounters. Gilbert, who is raised with the same colonial indoctrination that shaped Hortense's mind, is taught to believe in a noble, refined, and compassionate Britain – a maternal figure deserving of sacrifice. However, he finds himself in a war-torn and inhospitable land that greets him not with warmth but with scorn. It captures his sense of betrayal and alienation, as England appears not only impoverished and hostile but also indifferent to the very men it has once called upon for aid. This experience turns his colonial identity into an intersecting force that deepens and complicates the ongoing oppression and discrimination he experiences as a lower-class immigrant and Black man in London. His dreams for acknowledgement, acceptance, and respect are crushed by the decay, the apparent social divide, and the ingrained racism present in daily life, causing him to reflect painfully, "How come England did not know me?" (Levy, 2004: 141).

For Hortense, her ingrained belief in British superiority intensifies the pain of rejection more than it does for Gilbert. She feels let down by the very system she has trusted and centred her values and identity around. Her reality begins to unravel when she confronts the disillusioning truth that her previously esteemed English pronunciation, which has secured her a top position in a pronunciation competition back in Jamaica, is perceived as inadequate in London. This becomes evident when the taxi driver struggles to comprehend her enunciation, despite her efforts to employ her best accent (Levy, 2004: 16). In addition to the initial miscommunication, the taxi driver acts as if Hortense is incapable of understanding basic words and thus speaks very slowly and exaggerates mouth motions. Furthermore, as if Hortense is unaware of the concepts and devices that belong to the civilised notion, such as doorbells or knockers, when they reach the address, the taxi driver instructs her and asks, "Just go and ring the bell. You know about bells and knockers? You got them where you come from? (Levy, 2004: 17). Such instances reinforce the colonial assumption that individuals of African descent are inherently estranged from white civilisation and are viewed as fundamentally incapable of fully mastering its linguistic complexities (Fanon, 1986; Babha, 1994). Throughout the novel, Hortense frequently encounters difficulties communicating effectively with others, intensifying her ongoing sense of alienation in the colonial centre as a colonial subject. Subsequently, when she attempts to communicate with Queenie, she struggles to articulate the term 'basin' comprehensibly. After several attempts, she ultimately concedes and falls into silence:

> ‘I’m sorry but I don’t understand what you’re saying.’
> I thought to say it again slower but then remembered an alternative that would work as well. ‘A bucket,’ I said.
> ‘A what?’ she started again.
> It was useless. Was I not speaking English? I had nothing but the potty to point at instead. But she would surely misunderstand that. And who knows where that confusion could take us? So I hushed my mouth. (Levy, 2004, p.228)

When Queenie attributes Hortense’s silence to her unwillingness to speak much, Hortense thinks, “I held my tongue. Forbearance prevented me informing her that what I do say she does not appear to comprehend” (Levy, 2004, p.229). These exchanges of dialogue illustrate how the colonised subject is constrained to silence within the colonial centre, as miscommunication and cultural misunderstanding erect significant barriers that must be surmounted for meaningful dialogue between immigrants and the British to transpire. Despite her proficiency in English, Hortense’s failure to be comprehended exacerbates her sense of voicelessness and further entrenches her alienation. Her silence during that moment transcends mere linguistic barriers; it serves as a symbolic representation of the disintegration of her colonial expectations and her self-perceived superiority, rendering her vulnerable and exposed. This crystallises how her colonial identity intersects with her lived experiences of racial marginalisation, gendered vulnerability, and immigrant dislocation, ultimately culminating in her victimisation.

Concerning the utilisation of ‘language’ in the context of the Small Island, Cynthia James (2010) articulates that “language is the main battleground on which British and West Indian cultures and identities clash and make accommodations” (p. 46). With Hortense, Levy employs parody to critique her pride in her refined, British-style English by subtly incorporating linguistic errors that undermine her self-image, particularly during instances when she is most performatively ‘British’ (James, 2010, p. 53). Hortense’s improper use of formal expressions and grammar illuminates the disparity between the colonial ideals of Englishness and the lived realities of British individuals (James, 2010, p. 53). This phenomenon challenges Hortense’s conviction in linguistic superiority and underscores the ironic conflict between West Indian expectations and the actual vernacular of working-class Britons, thereby creating a poignant commentary on language, identity, and colonial disillusionment (James, 2010, p. 53). Concerning the importance of language, which functions as a vehicle for advancement to a higher status for colonised individuals, Frantz Fanon (1986) asserts:

> Every colonized people-in other words, every people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality finds itself face to face with the language of the civilizing nation; that is, with the culture of the mother country. The colonized is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country's cultural standards. He becomes whiter as he renounces his blackness, his jungle. (p.18)

Similarly, Hortense consistently assumes, as previously mentioned, that by leaving behind her 'jungle' along with her culture, her identity, and any disdain and inferiority associated with it, or as she has been mentally conditioned to believe, results from it, she is elevated to a superior status as a British lady. Consequently, demonstrating her proficiency in English serves as a means to validate her worth as an esteemed individual, as Fanon brings forth her 'whiteness' and her inclusion in the culture of the Mother Country. However, she repeatedly fails to substantiate her Britishness through her use of English in a parodical way, which may signify impending disappointments that await her.

Apart from language, Hortense is also confronted with the crushing reality of her living conditions in London. She discovers that the home she will share with her husband is a single, colourless, dirty room devoid of proper furnishings, kitchen utensils, or significant housewares. Her profound disappointment about her abode and life in England is encapsulated in her poignant inquiry, "Is this the way the English live?" (Levy, 2004, p.22). Even the weather of England disappoints her, for it is always gloomy and dark without sunshine. With her immense frustration, she eventually confesses that:

> I never dreamed England would be like this. So cheerless. Determined, I held my breath but still I could hear no birdsong. The room was pitiful in the grey morning light. I thought it tumbledown last night but daylight was happy to show me more of its filthy secrets. Plaster missing from a bit of the wall. Jagged black lines of cracking everywhere. A missing handle on the chest of drawers. No basin in the sink. And there were lacy white patterns on the windowpane. Frost. (Levy, 2004, p.225).

England represents an environment for Hortense, wherein she encounters rats within the house for the first time, experiences frost and chilliness outside her window, and exists in a setting devoid of joy, colour, sunlight, and birdsongs. In this bleak, frigid, and joyless environment, Hortense, rather ironically, is drawn to the singular item that provides her pleasure and enables her to once again experience the melodies of birds: a blanket embellished with vibrant Caribbean colours, in other words, the sole object that appears incongruous in England. When Hortense and Queenie engage in shopping together, Hortense is afforded a greater opportunity to observe British individuals in close proximity.

She immediately discerns a lack of quality in garments, produce, and other materials, as well as an observable dowdiness in individuals' attire and personal cleanliness, and a deficiency in politeness in their gestures. In a certain context, Hortense seems to embody a more 'proper' notion of Britishness, which she perceives as a factor that elevates her status above those in her vicinity. She strives to present herself as immaculate, organised, and exceedingly courteous, qualities that she believes contribute to one's superiority or alignment with British ideals. However, due to the intersection of her race, class position, and colonised identity, she becomes the subject of condescension, with others treating her as dim-witted or compelling her to step aside on the pavement to allow British individuals to pass (Levy, 2004, p.335). In this sense, the novel foregrounds that cleanliness, tidiness, and kindness are not what make the British superior; rather, it is their skin colour, national identity, and colonial history. In this context, according to Bonnici (2005):

> 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. (p.92-93)

Within this process that leads Hortense to embrace her racial and colonial identity, she is also introduced to racism which functions as another layer of her multilayered discrimination in England when she is labelled as 'darkie' by Queenie, mistreated by Bernard and the neighbourhood and ultimately rejected from a teaching position due to her skin colour. The latter instance serves as a final blow, as it ultimately breaks her will and drives her to give up her illusions. She tries to apply for the position with the documents necessary to work in Jamaica as an educator. However, the white British woman, who appear to be astonished by the presence of a Black woman seeking a teaching role in a British school, declines her application, citing that Hortense is unable to teach in England:

> 'The letters don't matter,' she told me. 'You can't teach in this country. You're not qualified to teach here in England.' 'But...' was the only sound that came from me. 'It doesn't matter that you were a teacher in Jamaica,' she went on, 'you will not be allowed to teach here.' She shook the letters at me. 'Take these back. They're of no use.' (Levy, 2004, p.454).

Hortense is unjustly presumed to be unqualified without an adequate examination of her references. Consequently, she is considered ineligible to serve as a teacher in this country.

She does not give up and enquires about potential avenues for obtaining the required education to be a teacher. Her request, however, is met with only perfunctory comments or silence, in that no educational opportunities would be afforded to her, and she is deemed incapable of teaching solely due to her status as an immigrant Black individual. Despite her qualifications, being denied a teaching position ultimately shatters her sense of belonging to the Empire. She experiences a loss of both external status and internal pride, as British society fails to recognise her worth. This profoundly affects her self-image. Stripped of her middle-class identity, as in Jamaica, she is relegated to the lower class in England and viewed merely as another immigrant and labourer. Given her status as a Black immigrant and a woman, she encounters significant limitations in her career options, which are notably fewer than those available to white women who may pursue teaching positions in England, as well as to Black men like Gilbert, who can at least secure physically demanding jobs or driver roles. For Hortense, the loss of the opportunity to become a teacher further constricts her already limited career prospects, nearly relegating her to the lowest echelons of the social hierarchy in Britain. Following this refusal, Hortense finds herself bereft of both socio-economic independence and legal power, vulnerable in a society where white women face their own struggles for equality; her challenges are compounded. In this context, Hortense's colonial identity, her race, and gender intersect and cause her an economic dependency that shapes her class identity and traps her in a marriage where she initially assumes superiority over Gilbert but ultimately comes to rely on him for her sustenance.

Although Gilbert loves and respects Hortense, supporting her during her most challenging times, he continues to expect her to fulfil the traditional gender role of a submissive wife. Upon her moving into the Gilbert room, she is anticipated to engage in cooking and cleaning and to express gratitude amidst the untidiness of this small room. Later, when Hortense is denied the opportunity to become a teacher, he promptly suggests that she need not pursue employment, asserting his capability to serve as the sole breadwinner for their household. This proposition aligns well with the established gender roles and traditional dynamics of the family. Gilbert's other Jamaican acquaintances residing in the same household articulate their perspectives more directly and less gently regarding a wife's appropriate role and conduct within a marriage. Upon witnessing Gilbert transport Hortense's heavy trunk to his quarters, while referring to it as "my wife's belongings", Kenneth responds by stating, "A wife must do as her husband say. You ask a judge. You ask a policeman. They will tell you. Everyt'ing in that trunk belong to you. What is hers is yours

and if she no like it a little licking will make her obey" (Levy, 2004, p.24). This commentary by a Black man regarding the place and role of a wife in a marriage unveils the power imbalance between a man, who is presumed to be a controller and owner of a woman due to his economic power and masculinity, and a woman, who serves as a nurturer, cook, and a submissive partner to fulfil the man's needs, possessing neither personal belongings nor economic freedom. Such hierarchy functions as another layer of subordination that Black women have to endure. Even though Hortense, as an assertive and capable woman, refuses to settle into a mere housewife role, prevalent gender-based social expectations still present additional challenges to her and many other Black women's experience of victimisation at the time.

This chapter, therefore, asserts that Hortense's experience of subordination and marginalisation is more multilayered and unique than that of Queenie's and Gilbert's, who still have privileges of either being a man or a white middle-class woman. Hortense's victimisation arises from her illegitimacy, gender, race, colonial identity, and her subsequent lower-class immigrant status. These interrelated factors influence and shape one another within a cause-and-effect framework, thus aggravate Hortense's marginalisation and victimhood to a more intricate, obscured, and distressing level. Such experience can only be recognised through the lens of intersectional analyses that underlines the fact that the overlapping systems of oppression do not just contribute, but rather intensify and interact, creating a unique, often overlooked form of challenge.

Unlike *The Help*, intersectionality can be examined beyond the experiences of the Black women in *Small Island*, wherein a Black man or a white woman can also suffer a unique form of victimisation arising from various facets of their identity. The theme of intersectionality, therefore, continues with Gilbert, whose encounter with oppression is intensified by the convergence of his race, class, and colonial identity, causing double rejection, displacement, and alienation akin to that experienced by Hortense; however, this experience is characterised by a markedly different perspective and yields dissimilar consequences, such as emasculation. Gilbert is introduced to racism and colonial disillusionment before he migrates to London, during his volunteer services as an RAF airman in World War II and his training time in Virginia, United States. Gilbert volunteers for the war because of his fabricated colonised mindset that assumes that the West Indies, like all other colonised nations, are "part of a large family of nations with Britain as the

mother country" and that "[I]n times of need the mother country would call her children to defend her and any threatened democratic cause" (Bonnici, 2005, p.93). During his time as an airman, Gilbert realises he is not considered equal to British soldiers. His skin colour and colonised nationality crosscut to label him not as a son of the Mother Country but as a tool for menial tasks. Consequently, instead of receiving education relevant to the air forces, Gilbert is reduced to a driver role. In contrast, his friend, who has lighter skin, manages to secure a position as a flight engineer, even though his trade tests are no better than Gilbert's. Thus, it becomes apparent that it is not quality or resourcefulness that gets someone to a good position in the army, but the lightness of their skin and nationality.

From the moment his training commences in the United States, Gilbert is categorised as a Negro. However, as a British Negro, he is perceived as superior to African Americans and is afforded certain temporary 'privileges', such as the allowance to reside alongside white soldiers:

> [T]his American officer with the angular head was telling us that we, West Indians, being subjects of His Majesty King George VI, had, for the time being, superior black skin. We were allowed to live with white soldiers, while the inferior American negro was not. (Levy, 2004, p.131).

This differentiation between Black individuals' status underlines how race and national or colonial identity intersect to designate the worth and the intensity of the oppression and discrimination that is enforced upon them. Anti-racism as a discourse alone may prove inadequate for recognising this specific segregation among Black individuals unless colonial identity is integrated into the context. This also marks the time when Gilbert is first introduced to Jim Crow laws, segregation in the army and racism during his training in the United States, and as he continues his service in England as a driver, his sense of indignation only deepens due to the recurring condescension and marginalisation he encounters, wounding his dignity and sense of self. He realises his kind and assumingly 'civilised' attitude surprises British people, for they expect him, as a colonial man, to be so brutal and savage that he cannot even speak: "Some, let us face it, do not expect that we can talk at all. 'It speaks, Mummy, it speaks,' has been called after me. Oh, yes, Mummy, it speaks and when it speaks it usually speaks with courtesy" (Levy, 2004, p.165). Such observations made by Gilbert, again, are consistent with the theories posited by Fanon (1986) and Bhabha (1994) concerning the perceived savagery of colonised individuals as viewed by the British.

Later on, when Gilbert and Queenie dine together in public at a restaurant and attend a cinema together in London, other soldiers who are supposedly regarded as Gilbert's equals express their outrage at the prospect of a Black man and a white woman engaging in such activities. In the latter scenario, these white soldiers succumb to their indignation, escalating their anger to the point of physical violence and chaos, during which Queenie's father-in-law, and Bernard's father, Arthur Bligh, passes away due to a gunshot wound that accidentally strikes him. In this instance, the novel demonstrates the intersection of racism and national identity in maintaining colonial hierarchies within the imperial centre, but also emphasises that the conflict does not stem from the Black individual himself; rather, it arises from the underlying tensions perpetuated by a system founded on exclusion and white dominance.

After the war, when Gilbert returns to Jamaica, he struggles to establish a business due to several unfortunate mishaps and his and his cousin Elwood's lack of experience. This prompts him to contemplate joining the upcoming Windrush to try his luck in post-war London, not as a soldier this time, but as a war veteran and a proud civilian of the Empire. Following the loss of their mule and bees, Gilbert admits to Elwood that this small island offers little opportunity and that true prospects lie in America or elsewhere in England:

> So why so many young men and women queuing up for passport? Why so many striking for job and busting up the place? Elwood, I have seen it with my own eye. The world out there is bigger than any dream you can conjure. This is a small island. Man, we just clinging so we don't fall off. (Levy, 2004, p.207)

This exemplifies the false hopes propagated by the Mother Country regarding the perceptions of the colonised individuals, including those like Gilbert, who have previously witnessed the striking reality of a life marked by alienation and segregation in the colonial centre. Conversely, Elwood dismisses any promises made by the Empire to Jamaicans and refuses to consider Gilbert's insights concerning Jamaica's limitations. In contrast to Gilbert, Elwood takes pride in his Caribbean identity to such an extent that he harbours distrust towards white people and believes that Caribbean people can attain independence from both the overt and subtle control and influence of the Empire. Both individuals label each other as dreamers – Elwood, for his unrealistic aspirations of waging war against the Empire and reclaiming his nation's resources for its people, and Gilbert, for his belief that his Jamaican identity permits him to remain a part of the Empire:

> Through Gilbert and Elwood, the author places in dialogue two differing discourses that conjure up the antinomic relation between "routes" and "roots." […] Both characters are going through a period of transition, questioning the past and contemplating the future. […] Gilbert's sense of success and progress (which he believes can be achieved in London only) and Elwood's burgeoning anti-colonial sentiment are built upon their sense of difference, in connection with and/or in opposition to Britain. (Duboin, 2011, p.21).

The contradiction between Gilbert and Elwood is a proper instance for examining intersectionality, as both characters navigate aspects of identity, race, and colonial legacy in distinct manners. Gilbert's pursuit of social mobility in Britain ensues from the intersection of racial and national identities with his status as a middle-class immigrant, and this juxtaposition situates him within a system that ostensibly offers opportunity while refusing to give it through rooted mechanisms of structural exclusion. From the opposite end of the spectrum, Elwood's strong ties to Jamaica and his anti-colonial perspective illuminate how intersecting identities can foster resistance and redefine concepts of identity within the colonial periphery. As a result, their divergent trajectories highlight that intersectionality encompasses not only the multiplicity of identities but also the manner in which those identities engage with and react to systems of power and imperial hierarchy.

When Gilbert settles in London, however, despite being a war veteran, he fails to find those promised vast options, profitable job opportunities, rewarding dignity and honourable position within the society; instead, he faces housing discrimination, hostility, invisibility and further marginalisation. His immigrant identity, coupled with his status as a Black individual, renders him susceptible to both economic and social exclusion. Gilbert is unable to obtain the position of store man simply because a Black man cannot work in the same environment as white women whose husbands are intolerant of such arrangements. Office positions are likewise not afforded to him, irrespective of how fervently he pursues them. Eventually a worker approaches him and states: "We don't want you. There's no job for you here. I'm going to get in touch with that labour exchange, tell them not to send any more of you people. We can't use your sort. Go on, get out" (Levy, 2004, p.313). Ultimately, Gilbert secures a position as a postman driver with the Post Office, holding the belief that "for a Jamaican man a job as a driver was great luck – if only luck England-style" (Levy, 2004, p.313). Gilbert still feels a sense of alienation when his driver partner declares, "I ain't going nowhere with you" (Levy, 2004, p.315) upon realising he is a Black man. Here, another working-class man who is supposedly his equal in terms of class-stratification still otherises and subordinates him, having the privilege of being a white and a coloniser identity. Other

workers frequently belittle and mock Gilbert when he talks, and they pretend not to hear and make fun of him: "'Did I hear someone speak?' one of them say. They looked as idle as layabouts, leaning on a wall scratching themselves. All began chuckling at this man's funny joke" (Levy, 2004, p.316).

In addition to all these, Gilbert also faces Hortense's dissatisfaction with the standards they live by in London. Because of his gender role as a male, Gilbert feels the need to embody strength, to serve as a provider, and to earn the respect of the people around him. However, ongoing racism that permeates his daily life constantly undermines his authority and dignity, resulting in him being belittled, ridiculed, and frequently feeling powerless. For this reason, his masculinity is persistently called into question, not only by white men but also by his wife, Hortense, who expects him to be more 'manly' and successful. In this context, his race, his colonial identity, and his working-class immigrant status intersect with his gender, which puts an additional burden on his mental struggle. In the case of Gilbert, therefore, the idiosyncrasy of his marginalisation experience within the colonial centre can be foregrounded by the intersectional approach, which unveils how race, gender, class, and migration operate concurrently and amplify Gilbert's oppression. This results in a distinct form of humiliation, exclusion, and subordination. Thus, intersectionality differentiates his experience from those of other marginalised individuals and makes visible his ongoing struggle against both external constraints and internal conflicts, alongside his efforts to uphold his dignity and sense of self.

The experiences of Gilbert and Hortense, both of whom have been rejected from positions for which they are qualified and genuinely aspire to in London, can additionally be scrutinised through the lens of Nancy Fraser's (2003) conceptual framework of redistribution and recognition. The challenges encountered by Hortense and Gilbert are rooted not only in economic marginalisation but also in systemic misrecognition arising from race and colonial heritage. Hortense, a trained teacher from Jamaica, finds herself relegated to menial domestic work upon arriving in England, her qualifications dismissed not due to a lack of merit but due to embedded racial hierarchies and cultural prejudices. Similarly, Gilbert's service during wartime and his confinement to the role of a driver in an environment where co-workers frequently alienate and belittle him are emblematic of structural exclusion and pervasive racism, reflecting both maldistribution and misrecognition. These experiences correspond with Fraser's(2003) status model of recognition, wherein misrecognition

transcends the concept of a wounded identity, instead representing an institutionalised subordination that obstructs equal participation within society. Concurrently, the economic adversities faced by Caribbean migrants underscore the necessity for redistributive remedies that confront material inequality, thereby reinforcing Fraser's (2003) assertion that particular injustices reside at the intersection of class and status, necessitating redress in both dimensions.

Alongside Hortense and Gilbert, *Small Island* delves into the viewpoints of Queenie and Bernard, two white middle-class Londoners. Their victimisation experiences contrast with those of Hortense and Gilbert, who, despite sharing middle-class backgrounds within the same Empire, confront more intricate and profound challenges due to their colonial identity and Black skin. Queenie, like Skeeter in *The Help*, through her chapters and her point of view, evinces the notable differences between the victimisation experiences of a middle-class white woman and a Black immigrant woman in terms of severity and complexity of the oppression they face in the patriarchal post-war England. The intersection of gender and socioeconomic class restricts Queenie from attaining full autonomy over her existence. Originating from a modest background on a pig farm and lacking extensive career and educational opportunities, she fervently strives to ascend the social ladder by marrying Bernard, a middle-class man for whom she does not harbour significant affection or emotional attachment. Within this marriage, she perceives herself as ensnared with an uninspiring and emotionally distant partner, burdened by the responsibilities of a homemaker and caregiver. Although Queenie experiences a degree of independence during Bernard's absence in the war, as she manages households and accommodates lodgers, exercising decisional authority over her life, this newfound liberty proves to be precarious and ephemeral. Upon Bernard's return, she is anticipated to revert to her traditional role as a housewife, a position in which she derives little satisfaction.

Furthermore, when Queenie gives birth to Michael's son, whose mixed-race will not be tolerated in British society, she is the one who has to bear the consequences of sexual freedom, humiliation and social shame in contrast to Michael or Bernard, who are able to depart without adverse effects. However, although Queenie represents an oppressed woman who is victimised and constrained by the intersection of her class and gender, she still possesses certain privileges derived from her whiteness and British identity, which serve to shield her from the deeper marginalisation and severe violence faced by Hortense. In the

narrative, she retains power as the house owner, enjoys greater acceptance within her society and the Empire, and benefits from more extensive legal protection than those available to Hortense. In this context, Queenie's journey in the novel makes it conspicuous that privileges and oppressions can exist together at some junction points of identity aspects, and traditional gender-based or class-based frameworks alone are insufficient to fully comprehend the nuances of individuals whose experiences of oppression vary due to the interplay of multiple facets of their identities.

Bernard, Queenie's husband and the fourth point of view in *Small Island*, essentially embodies the perspective of supremacist individuals among the white British population, who exhibit hostility towards Black immigrants arriving with the Windrush. Nevertheless, the novel allocates an equal amount of time to Bernard with the intention of uncovering the inductive reasons that underpin his racist and segregationist actions and statements. In doing so, the novel unveils his complex identities and helps intersectionality show that Bernard, too, is shaped and harmed by the intricate systems of power. Bernard's gender role as a male individual within a patriarchal society restricts him to the conventions of masculinity, functioning as a prison that leads to his isolation and estrangement from his wife, Queenie. Bernard marries Queenie because social norms dictate that this is the expectation for men; during the wartime period, Bernard is obliged to serve, as such national duty is intrinsically linked to the notion of manhood, despite his lack of preparation for either commitment. Consequently, Bernard returns home bearing profound psychological trauma as a result of his experiences in India, where his exposure to numerous atrocities cultivates xenophobia and racism, thereby exacerbating an already entrenched prejudicial mindset typical of a white British coloniser. Upon his arrival home, he aspires to establish his superiority within his marriage, hoping to satisfy his wife with his manhood and earn her deference as a war veteran, thus living happily in his home. However, seeing that Caribbean immigrants live in his home shatters his hopes, triggers his traumas, surfacing hostility and anger within him in the form of racist attitudes.

Notwithstanding, the novel unequivocally emphasises that his prejudice is not solely personal but rather systemic, influenced by the Empire's assurance of white supremacy. Consequently, he may be regarded as yet another casualty of the deceptive promises of colonialism, comparable to Gilbert, yet situated at the opposite end of the spectrum. Nevertheless, his position is still one of power, superior to that of Gilbert, whose experience

is also ironically parallel to Bernard's, as both men have served the Empire as soldiers during World War II, arriving in England with objectives that ultimately prove unsuccessful. Furthermore, both men scramble to assert their masculinity while being constrained by the dictates of gender roles. Despite such resemblances, the novel also underscores that Bernard's status places him in a higher position relative to Gilbert and to Queenie and Hortense, for, as a white Englishman, Bernard occupies the apex of Britain's racial and social hierarchy. From this perspective, rather than simply categorising him as a villain, an intersectional approach first scrutinises Bernard's struggles with an interpretation that he is another tragic figure whose gender and national identity intersect and beget a distinctive form of oppression and challenges. It demonstrates that he is a product of a society that necessitates emotional suppression, racial superiority, and gender dominance. However, intersectionality simultaneously reveals, through the distinctions and similarities between Gilbert and Bernard, that Bernard is significantly less oppressed than Gilbert. This is evidenced by the fact that systemic structures position him as the rightful owner of the property that Gilbert and Hortense inhabit, the husband of Queenie as the sole enforcer of any change regarding their lives, and thus endow him with considerable freedom and decision-making power, despite its inherent fragility. As Gilbert returns to his Mother Country, he is met with unrecognition, disrespect, alienation, subordination, and countless restrictions. In contrast, Bernard receives security and acceptance, enjoying a privileged status over those colonised veterans who are deceived into migrating to the colonial centre, and becomes yet another challenge, exacerbating the ongoing victimisation of Black immigrants.

Thus, despite the common characteristics exhibited by various individuals sharing identical identities, such as gender, and the struggles associated with those identities, it remains possible that the diverse facets of their identities influence their experiences of oppression, resulting in varying degrees of severity. This, in turn, like it happens in the example of Bernard and Gilbert, alters the underlying motives and repercussions of their experiences, which requires an intersectional approach to recognise each of those nuances. At the end, Bernard's character is not exempt from critique; rather, it is comprehended within a wider framework of power dynamics. His relative privilege, when contrasted with Gilbert's systemic exclusion, underscores the importance of intersectionality in revealing the complex layers of both complicity and marginalisation in a postcolonial society.

4.1. Conclusion

This chapter posits that *Small Island*, through the experiences of its four protagonists, Hortense, Gilbert, Queenie, and Bernard, illustrates how individuals' lives are continually shaped by the reverberating effects of idiosyncratic junction points between various aspects of identity, such as race, gender, nationality, class, and even legitimacy status. These four characters possess both parallels and differences that make them unique in terms of facets of their identities. Each experiences distinct forms of victimisation that cannot be reduced to or analysed through the lens of a single discourse. Hortense and Gilbert, both diasporic Black Jamaicans, arrive in London with aspirations of upward mobility, shaped by a colonial mindset instilled through imperialism. They share racial, national, and migratory class identities but differ in gender and legitimacy status. Hortense and Queenie, as women resisting traditional gender roles, diverge in race and nationality. Similarly, Bernard and Gilbert, both war veterans attempting to reestablish their lives in post-war London while struggling with male gender expectations, differ in racial and national identity. These nuanced overlaps and divergences foreground their interactions and conflicts with each other and with the broader systems that entrap them all to varying degrees, systems including institutionalised racism, imperialism, colonialism, and rigid gender norms. These forces of oppression manifest as unique yet interconnected forms of constraint, or 'cages', which demand a broader and more comprehensive analytical framework. In this sense, intersectionality becomes essential in identifying and articulating the intricacies involved in a single person's victimisation process. By examining how the identities and experiences of these four characters intersect and influence one another within the colonial centre of post-war London, *Small Island* demonstrates that intersectionality operates subtly within the lives of individuals whose overlapping identities frequently conflict with one another. These tensions are influenced by systems of power that not only oppress but are also perpetuated by those very individuals, rendering them both victims and enablers. This complexity calls for an intersectional approach that can reveal the layered and often contradictory roles people inhabit within broader structures of social power.

CHAPTER FIVE
CONCLUSION

This thesis argues that an intersectional approach is essential for grasping the intricate and multilayered experiences of discrimination, subjugation and agency, as fictionalised in Kathryn Stockett's *The Help* and Andrea Levy's *Small Island*. By transcending single-axis frameworks of race, gender, or class, the research has uncovered that intersecting social categories, such as race, gender, class, nationality, colonial status, and legitimacy, create unique forms of marginalisation, resistance, and sometimes complicity across various historical and geographical contexts. Through meticulous close readings, each chapter reveals how identity axes converge at critical 'junction points', influencing characters' lives uniquely in both deeply personal and broadly systemic ways.

In *The Help*, Stockett powerfully dramatises the threefold subordination of Black women along the axes of race, gender, and class. Through close readings of the characters such as Aibileen Clark and Minny Jackson, the chapter exposes how these maids endure layered discrimination that is not caused by only their racial identity but by its convergence with their gender and class in early 1960s Jackson, Mississippi. White employers like Hilly Holbrook epitomise the entrenched hostility of upper-class white women through their demeaning mandates and exclusionary 'Home Help' initiatives, which reveals a profound absence of female solidarity and a uniquely gendered form of oppression. At the same time, the novel's portrayal of patriarchy among Black communities and of Leroy Jackson's domestic violence demonstrates that Black women's marginalisation extends into their discriminated society, as their gendered subordination is reinforced by Black men who see them as dependents or a threat to their masculinity. These intersecting pressures confine Black maids to exploitative and low-wage domestic roles, sharply contrasting with the relatively greater mobility of white labourers, white women, and Black men. *The Help* fictionalises these compounded vulnerabilities where race, gender, and class coalesce to limit autonomy and social standing and, by doing so, reveals the distinctive and multidimensional nature of Black women's alienation and subordination in a segregated society.

Small Island extends these insights into a post-World War II British context, where the legacies of the empire frame the experiences of both Caribbean migrants and white Britons. Hortense and Gilbert, both Caribbean migrants, embody the betrayal of colonial

subjects whose service to the 'Mother Country' goes unrecognised. Prior to and subsequent to their migration to London, Hortense's gender, race, illegitimacy, and her colonial mindset, formed by colonial indoctrination, intersect in a manner that deprives her of voice and respect, while establishing limitations between her aspirations, education, and career opportunities, confining her to a working-class immigrant status. In other words, her being female, illegitimate, Black and colonised interacts and intersects to define her lower-class and immigrant position in the colonial centre and leads to further victimisations and limitations in her life.

Similarly, Gilbert's race, class, masculinity, and diasporic identity synthesise to produce complex forms of victimisation that include emasculation, subjugation and exclusion in his new life in the Mother Country. In addition to Caribbean characters, Queenie and Bernard, as white Britons, illustrate how gendered and national expectations intersect and shape the lives of relative privilege but also how patriarchy and nationalism demand their forms of conformity and emotional repression. Their relatively privileged perspectives, akin to Skeeter's viewpoints in *The Help*, also function to elucidate the distinction between the differing experiences of gender-based discrimination faced by females and males. Certain individuals, such as Queenie and Bernard, benefit from their intersecting privileged identities, which Hortense and Gilbert do not possess. This opportunity for comparison demonstrates that a singular focus on gender-based approaches may fail to comprehend the intricate experiences of intersecting individuals. In contrast to *The Help*, which mainly examines the conventional intersectional aspects of race, gender, and class among Black women, a close reading of the four protagonists in *Small Island* manifests that, through characters such as Gilbert, Queenie and Bernard, intersectionality pertains to anyone whose various identities uniquely engage with power structures, resulting in distinct forms of victimisation. This four-character framework also illuminates that privilege and oppression co-exist, which produces varied experiences of agency, complicity, and injury.

By placing these two novels in critical dialogue, the thesis illuminates the remarkable elasticity of intersectionality across both national terrains and literary genres. Building on Crenshaw's foundational legal framework yet expanding its scope through a postcolonial feminist critique and the incisive political and philosophical interventions of thinkers such as Bell Hooks, Audre Lorde, Patricia Hill Collins, Nancy Fraser, Gayatri Spivak, and Edward Said, the study demonstrates that intersectionality is not confined to the contours of U.S.

civil-rights discourse. Rather, it proves equally potent in grappling with imperial and postcolonial formations. The transatlantic analytic employed here reveals that racialised and gendered oppressions, though locally inflected, exhibit striking structural parallels – whether manifest in Jim Crow segregation or in colonial regimes of spatial control. Simultaneously, the analysis underscores the irreducible historical particularities embedded in each context. By foregrounding the interplay of national belonging and imperial subjecthood as pivotal dimensions, this thesis extends Crenshaw's model, and proposes a more globally attuned and historically nuanced understanding of intersecting systems of domination.

This study reaffirms the urgency of incorporating intersectionality as a critical lens within literary studies and beyond. As the analysis has shown, without an intersectional lens, it does not seem possible to fully comprehend the depth of marginalisation faced by those who live at the crossroads of multiple identities. Theoretical approaches that fail to account for this complexity risk erasing the very subjects they claim to represent. This study applies the concept of intersectionality to the reading of fiction, reinforces Crenshaw's arguments, and demonstrates the relevance of her theory within cultural and literary contexts, which enhances the interdisciplinary significance of intersectionality and postcolonial feminism. Furthermore, the comparative analysis of the two culturally diverse novels unveils effective strategies for transnational literary criticism, illustrating how common theoretical frameworks can be adapted to suit various contexts.

In terms of scholarly contribution, this research enriches postcolonial feminist theory and critical race studies by centring not only on Black women's experiences but also on those of colonised men, transnational migrants, and white women negotiating privilege and constraint. It challenges the field to expand intersectionality beyond its usual focus on women of colour, showing that any subject positioned at the crossroads of social categories can offer valuable insight into the workings of power. Moreover, by foregrounding characters like Gilbert, whose colonial service and diasporic identity complicate traditional narratives of Black masculinity, the thesis argues for greater inclusivity in intersectional scholarship. In addition to its academic insights, the study underscores the literature's role as a platform for ethical engagement and social critique. Both *The Help* and *Small Island* employ narrative techniques, such as multiple viewpoints, unreliable narration, and instances of tragicomic irony, to expose the disparity between ideology and lived experiences. These literary elements urge readers to recognise the personal impacts of structural injustice and to

interrogate the systems that perpetuate inequality. Therefore, such fiction complements theoretical discussions by illustrating complex dynamics and encouraging empathetic reflections on marginalisation and solidarity.

Finally, while this thesis has focused on two seminal works of contemporary literature in English, it points towards future research directions. Subsequent studies may examine intersectionality in other global contexts, such as postcolonial African or Asian literature, or explore how emerging genres, like digital narratives and graphic novels, represent overlapping identities. Additionally, interdisciplinary work combining literary analysis with oral histories or sociological data could further validate the lived realities of intersectional subjects. In conclusion, the thesis reaffirms that intersectionality is both a theoretical imperative and a practical methodology for literary criticism. Attending to the layered identities of characters in *The Help* and *Small Island*, it has uncovered the interplay of race, gender, class, nationality, and legitimacy that underpins systems of power, and demonstrated that only by recognising the whole constellation of identity axes can we grasp the depth of marginalisation and the pathways to resistance.

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