

**DISCOVERING THE JAMAICAN IPSEITY: AN EXPLORATION
OF SUBALTERN IDENTITIES AND RACIAL DISCRIMINATION
IN ANDREA LEVY'S *SMALL ISLAND* AND MAISY CARD'S *THESE
GHOSTS ARE FAMILY***



*Project submitted to St. Teresa's College (Autonomous) in partial fulfilment of the
requirement for the degree of BACHELOR OF ARTS in English Language
and Literature*

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March 2023

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this project entitled “Discovering the Jamaican Ipseity: An Exploration of Subaltern Identities and Racial Discrimination in Andrea Levy’s ‘Small Island’ and Maisy Card’s ‘These Ghosts are Family’” is the record of bona fide work done by me under the guidance and supervision of Ms. Lakshmipriya P.Santhosh, Assistant Professor, Department of English.

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CERTIFICATE

I hereby declare that this project entitled “Discovering the Jamaican Ipseity: An Exploration of Subaltern Identities and Racial Discrimination in Andrea Levy’s ‘Small Island’ and Maisy Card’s ‘These Ghosts are Family’” by Ridha Fathima is a record of bona fide work carried out by her under my supervision and guidance.

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Introduction

Racism is the discrimination against, and segregation of people based on their race or ethnicity, generally non-whites. For a longer time, blacks and people of other colors have been considered inferior to whites. Blacks were sold as slaves for the majority of their past and were mistreated throughout history. This project deals with, in detail, a study of Jamaican immigrants in the UK and the US.

1.1 Jamaican immigrants in the United Kingdom

A term associated with these immigrants is the 'Windrush Generation'.

People arriving in the UK between 1948 and 1971 from Caribbean countries have been labelled the Windrush generation. It refers to the ship MV Empire Windrush, which docked in Tilbury on 22 June 1948, bringing workers from Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago and other islands, to help fill post-war UK labor shortages. It is unclear how many people belong to the Windrush generation, but they are thought to be in their thousands. They are among more than 500,000 UK residents who were born in a Commonwealth country and arrived before 1971, according to University of Oxford estimates. Since they came from British colonies that were not independent, they believed they were British citizens. ("Windrush generation: Who are they and why are they facing problems?") Often they were forced to accept jobs which they were over-qualified for, or they were paid less than other white workers.

Despite the desperate shortage of labour, some still found it difficult to get good jobs or accommodation due to what has been referred to as a 'colour bar'.

Some of those who came were returning servicemen from the Second World War

recruited from Britain's colonies in the Caribbean. From 1944, West Indian women served in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force and the Auxiliary Territorial Service in Britain. From 1944 to 1945, nearly 5,500 West Indian RAF servicemen came to Britain (Bound For Britain).

For many Caribbean immigrants, their first experience of discrimination came when trying to find private accommodation. They were generally ineligible for council housing because only people who had been resident in the UK for a minimum of five years qualified for it. As a result, many black immigrants were forced to live in slum areas of cities, where the housing was of poor quality and there were problems of crime, violence, and prostitution.

1.2 Jamaican immigrants in the United States

The documented history of black emigration from Jamaica and other Caribbean islands into the United States dates to 1619 when 20 voluntary indentured workers arrived in Jamestown, Virginia, on a Dutch frigate. They lived and worked as "free persons" even when a Portuguese vessel arrived with the first shipload of blacks enslaved in 1629. Since Jamaica was a major way station and clearing house for slaves en route to North America, the history of Jamaican immigration in the United States is inseparably tied to slavery and post-emancipation migration. After slavery was abolished in the United States in 1865, American planters imported temporary workers, called "swallow migrants," to harvest crops on an annual basis. These workers, many of them Jamaicans, returned to their countries after harvest. Between 1881 and the beginning of World War I, the United States recruited over 250,000 workers from the

Caribbean, 90,000 of whom were Jamaicans, to work on the Panama Canal. During both world wars, the United States again recruited Jamaican men for service on various American bases in the region. Since the turn of the twentieth century, three distinct waves of Caribbean immigration into the United States have occurred—most of these immigrants came from Jamaica. The first wave took place between 1900 and the 1920s, the second and weakest immigration wave occurred between the 1930s and the new immigration policy of the mid- 1960s and the final and largest wave of immigration began in 1965 and continues to the present. At present, Jamaicans are the largest group of American immigrants from the English-speaking Caribbean (Murrell).

The two primary texts under study are *Small Island* by Andrea Levy and ‘These Ghosts Are Family’ by Maisy Card. Levy’s *Small Island* is based on four main characters—Hortense, Queenie, Gilbert, and Bernard—and the story is told from each of their points of view. Mainly set in 1948, the plot focuses on the diaspora of Jamaican immigrants, who, escaping economic hardship on their own "small island", move to England, the Mother Country, for which the men have fought during World War II. Card’s *These Ghosts Are Family*, on the other hand, revolves around the consequences of the protagonist Abel Paisley’s decision to fake his own death and steal the identity of his best friend, Stanford Solomon. The novel traces the journey of the Paisley family from colonial Jamaica to present day-Harlem. The center of study in these texts is the condition of Jamaican immigrants in the UK, the discrimination against them, under a postcolonial lens.

This project intends to analyze the problems faced by Jamaican immigrants in the UK and the US, by comparing two works set in different timelines.

The next chapter offers a brief study of Levy's *Small Island*; the discrimination suffered by Jamaicans under the influence of the world war and their predicament.

Chapter 1

Small Island – An Overview

Small Island is a 2004 prize-winning novel by British author Andrea Levy, her fourth novel, published by Headline Review. It won three awards: the Whitbread Book of the Year, the Orange Prize, and the Commonwealth Writers' Prize. According to Wikipedia, Levy said in 2004: "When I started *Small Island* I didn't intend to write about the war. I wanted to start in 1948 with two women, one white, one black.....If every writer in Britain were to write about the war years there would still be stories to be told....And Caribbean people got left out of the telling of that story, so I am attempting to put them back into it. But I am not telling it from only a Jamaican point of view. I want to tell stories from the black and white experience. It is a shared history."

There are four major characters in the novel: Gilbert, Hortense, Queenie, and Bernard. Gilbert and Hortense are Jamaican while Queenie and Bernard are British. The novel depicts the troubles and anguishes of Gilbert and Hortense, including the discrimination against them based on their identity. The story is told from the viewpoints of the various characters. The title *Small Island* refers to the Caribbean country of Jamaica. A significant part of the story is set there. Hortense's life growing up and her meeting with Gilbert is set in Jamaica. During the time of the story, Jamaica was still a colony of the British and therefore they dominated their public and private spheres.

2.1 Hortense and Gilbert – Jamaicans

Growing up, life was never easy for Hortense. She knew that her birth mother was a woman named Alberta but had very little information about her father. Nevertheless, she regarded him with great respect. Her father had given her away to his cousins so that she could have a better upbringing. He paid her mother to leave Jamaica and take up a job in Cuba. Regardless of all these circumstances, she was taken care of by her maternal grandmother who was called Miss Jewel. Note the following excerpts from the novel:

Alberta was a country girl who could neither read nor write nor perform even the rudiments of her times tables. I was born to her out of wedlock - it would be wrong to say otherwise. But it was she who gave birth to me in a wooden hut...I grew to look as my father did. My complexion was as light as his, the color of warm honey. It was not the bitter chocolate hue of Alberta and her mother.

With such a countenance there was a chance of a golden life for I...

(Levy 31-32).

“I evoked my father's cousins and told him of Lovell Roberts, my father, a man of character, a man of intelligence, noble in a way that made him a legend...” (Levy 71).

While living in Jamaica, she was constantly subjugated. During her stay at her father's cousin's place, her aunt and cousin treated her like one of their servants. This could either be because of her birth to a poor woman or because she was a 'girl' herself. Growing up alongside her cousin, Michael, who later becomes an important character, she was taught how different girls and boys were and how girls were expected to be. Note the following excerpts from the novel:

For one, I was not supposed to climb trees. Mr Philip told me that it was not godly for girls to lift themselves into branches as a monkey would. Or come home wet from the stream, our bellies full of star apples, raspberries... I had washing to do in the outhouse sink, 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 in... Little girls did not climb trees! 'Principle, he bellowed at every meal. We must all have principle' (Levy 33-34).

However, the most striking aspect of the novel is the way in which the Jamaicans regard England and how the English think about Jamaicans. The Jamaican characters regarded England highly. Britain was called "The Mother Country" and the "Mother". Hortense admired the British culture, especially their literature. It was one of her dreams to move to England. Similarly, Gilbert could not adjust to Jamaica. He had served in the RAF and upon returning to Jamaica, found it difficult to adjust to the lack of opportunities in Jamaica. Note the following excerpts from the novel:

"She looked to me for all her knowledge of England. 'Miss Jewel; I told her, you should learn to speak properly as the King of England does. Not in this rough country way. 'Teach me nuh, Miss Hortense?' I taught her the poem by Mr William Wordsworth that I had learned to recite at school." (Levy 36).

Hear me now - a loud clear voice that pronounces every p and g and all the letters in between. I begin to recite the canals of England: the Bridgewater canal, the Manchester-to-Liverpool canal, the Grand Trunk canal used by the China firms of Stoke-on-Trent.... If I was given a date, I could stand even taller to tell

you some of the greatest laws that were debated and passed there.

And not just me. Ask any of us West Indian RAF volunteers Ask

(Levy 117-118).

Both Gilbert and Hortense had bitter experiences of racism. Even in Jamaica, Hortense was constantly reminded of her identity and how she should be glad that she had a lighter complexion than the others. Note the following excerpts from the novel:

“She took a long breath and said, ‘Have you seen Sugar? She’s one of you.’”

(Levy 12).

“.....the taxi driver said. ‘Just go and ring the bell. You know about bells and knockers? You got them where you come from? Just go and ring the bell and someone’ll come.’ Just ring the bell.’ He mouthed the last words with the slow exaggeration...” (Levy 14).

“‘Would you be so kind as to tell me where I might find the toilet?’ Jean, frowning, says, ‘What? What? This is not the toilet.’ Then seeing me, ‘Thank bloody God! Gilbert, can you help me? This one thinks I’m a bloody toilet.’”

(Levy 25).

However, Hortense looked down upon the people of her own country if they had darker skin. The Eurocentric notion of color and race determining superiority was clearly embedded into the minds of young people like Hortense. Nevertheless, people like her found it difficult to be treated properly and therefore, she constantly sought the attention and validation of those she considered superior. Note the following excerpts from the novel:

Miss Newman, who believed coloured girls had a better understanding of these sorts of things, being less civilised and closer to nature, would write in my margins that I was astute... There were sixty pupils in the first class I had to teach... Sixty nappy-headed, runny-nosed, foul-smelling ragamuffins. Sixty black faces... 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... (Levy 56).

"I hungered to make those children regard me with as high an opinion as I had for the principal and tutors at my college. Those white women whose superiority encircled them like an aureole, could quieten any raucous gathering by just placing a finger to a lip." (Levy 57).

"My complexion was as light as his; the colour of warm honey. It was not the bitter chocolate hue of Alberta and her mother... What, after all, could Alberta give? Bare black feet skipping over stones." (Levy 32).

"I could understand why it was of the greatest importance to her that slavery should not return. Her skin was so dark. But mine was not of that hue - it was the colour of warm honey. No one would think to enchain someone such as I." (Levy 59).

Gilbert also underwent several instances of discrimination. Recalling his past, he reflects on how Jamaicans in general were treated during the war, even though they were fighting for the same alliance. There are a couple of instances in the novel where Gilbert and his fellow soldiers (Jamaican) were treated like monkeys or apes: "Oi, darkie, show us yer tail" (Levy 117). The men were constantly reminded of their identity and how they were always inferior. If

ever the bare minimum act of good deed was done, the white men made sure the Jamaicans were aware and grateful. Note the following excerpts from the novel: “He was shouting now. 'You will mix with white service personnel. Have you boys any idea how lucky you are? You will not be treated as negroes!’” (Levy 108).

‘You see, your American nigger dont work. If his belly's full he won't work. When he's hungry again then he'll do just enough...I am loyal to my flag,but you would never catch no self-respecting white man going into battle with a nigger...’We do not mix the negro and the white races here because it lowers theefficiency of our fighting units. Your American nigger ain't really cut out to fight... We West Indians, thinking ourselves as good as any man, would have wandered unaware, greeting white people who would have swung us from the nearest tree for merely passing the time of day with them. (Levy 110).

Gilbert submitted a job application in 1948. He spends an hour discussing their wartime experiences with the interviewer. In the end, the interviewer declines him since the factory employs white women. He has similar experiences at other job interviews as well. He eventually secures a position as a post office driver. Gilbert is scheduled to accompany a young man on his route one morning when his partner is out ill. The young man gives Gilbert a quick glance before declining to ride with him. Gilbert is removed from the route and assigned to a different task while accepting responsibility for the mishap. Gilbert forgets about Hortense by the time he gets home, where she was cleaning the floor. Insisting that he did not bring her to England "to clean a floor," he yells at her to stand up.

However, there is one instance that stands out in the novel. In chapter 32, while he was walking down the streets of London contemplating and regretting his decision to move to England, he heard someone calling him from behind; it was an old lady, most probably in her fifties. She had a black glove in her hand and handed it over to him because she thought he had dropped it. She had a genuine smile on her face and because of her kind gesture, Gilbert accepted the glove. When she realized that Gilbert was crying, she patted him and consoled him. She also offered him sweets and walked away. Gilbert was overwhelmed by this incident.

Hortense tries too hard to fit in. She always dresses up neatly and wears her best fits when stepping out. She is rather surprised when she notices that Queenie wore dirty and ugly coats, just like the others. While she stares at others' dresses, Queenie mistakes Hortense's surprise to be at the marketplace and thinks that there may be no markets in Jamaica. Queenie also explains manners to Hortense which includes the notion that she should step into the road if an English person approaches on the sidewalk because she is "a visitor to this country." Hortense is shocked.

Hortense's impression of England and its people receives its final blow when she appears for an interview with the education authorities for the position of teacher. She believed that she could impress them with her letters of recommendation and wore her best dress. After an awkward conversation, she is informed that she lacks adequate qualifications for the job. Another incident when she feels unwelcome is when Queenie's husband Bernard returns from war and

asks all the non- British people to evacuate the house. There is also an incident where she is talked to inappropriately by a taxi driver, mistaking her for a prostitute.

“The letters don't matter, she told me. ‘You can't teach in this country. You're not qualified to teach here in England!...It doesn't matter that you were a teacher in Jamaica, you will not be allowed to teach here.’ She shook the letters at me. ‘Take these back. They're of no use.’” (Levy 110).

“She clung to me - her head burrowing into my neck like a chastened child. Just in time I slapped the roof of the car. Grabbed the door that the driver was rushing to close and yelled at him: Fuck off, man. This woman is not your whore.” (Levy 406).

“Queenie soon popped up behind me. More composed. ‘It's all right, Gilbert’, she said to this darkie....Scratched his head, saying. ‘Well, well.. Then the cheeky blighter put his hand out for me to shake. I just shut the bloody door on him.’” (Levy 355).

“..but did they have to be coloured? Couldn't you have got decent lodgers for the house? Respectable people?...We should move out. Get rid of all these coolies . . . the lodgers, I mean. Let them find somewhere more suitable for their type anyway.” (Levy 360).

2.2 Queenie and Bernard

Queenie and Bernard Bligh are the owners of the house Gilbert and Hortense live in. However, Bernard is an absentee figure for the first half of the

novel. In fact, Queenie turns the house into a lodge only when she realizes Bernard might never come back and that she had to take care of herself on her own. Bernard and Queenie had a complicated marital relationship, and their sexual relationship was dull and unsatisfying.

Gilbert knew Queenie before he became a lodger at her place. They had met during the war and were quite fascinated with each other. Queenie was fascinated with Gilbert because he reminded her of Michael, a man she had spent a special night with, while her husband was away.

Queenie is a nickname. She is christened Victoria Buxton because Queenie was considered "a common name" and too low class to be given officially to a baby. Her father, Wilfred Buxton, was a butcher. They also owned a farm, the produce from which was sold in a butcher's shop. She was far more sympathetic and polite to the Jamaicans than most, if not all, the other English characters. The novel opens with a prologue, which describes an incident in Queenie's life; The Butchers Association's trip to the British Empire Exhibition. The exhibitions were made up of stalls that represented different countries that were a part of the British Empire.

"Hong Kong smelt of drains, and India was full of women brightly dressed in strange long colorful fabrics. And all these women had red dots in the middle of their foreheads. No one could tell me what the dots were for. 'Go and ask one of them,' Emily said to me. But Mother said I shouldn't in case the dots meant they were ill – in case they were contagious." "Then we found ourselves in

an African village... 'She can't understand what I'm saying,' Graham explained. 'They're not civilised. They only understand drums.' (Levy 4-5).

Evidently, when they speak English you know that they have learned to be civilised – taught English by the white man, missionaries probably. So Father told me not to worry about having shaken his hand..." (Levy 6).

In chapter 16, there is a flashback from Gilbert's life during the war, when he first met Queenie. She invites him to a local tea shop. Inside, he notices that there were certain American GIs who were even more terrifying than the British officials. They become comfortable at the sight of a black man and a white woman seated together. Queenie and Gilbert realize this and decide to agitate them even more. They lean towards each other and whisper in their ears. They also take bites out of each other's food. Gilbert fears his life when Queenie leaves the shop in search of Arthur. The waitress, when paid a good tip, helps him escape.

Her relationship with Michael Roberts, who once sought refuge in her house, is a pivotal incident in the novel. Michael is the same cousin Hortense grew up with, her childhood friend. Over the years, she realized that she had feelings for him. However, due to unfortunate circumstances, he leaves Jamaica and joins the RAF. Not much is heard about him, except that he died in an unfortunate incident. This was obviously false as he was still alive. He was one of Queenie's first lodgers and they engage in sexual intercourse on their first night together, leading to Queenie's pregnancy; something she struggled with while she was with Bernard. However, Bernard who had been away for five years shows up

at her doorstep. A shocked Queenie leads him inside the house. He is surprised to see that she is with a black woman. Bernard is a rather irritating character. He is extremely racist and hostile to the lodgers. He does not like that she started a lodge and invited 'colored' people to live in it. He does not like the idea of these 'darkies' staying in the rooms that belonged to his late parents. He feels so disgusted by the lodgers that he decides to talk to his neighbor, Todd, another racist character, who is moving out because of the newly settled lodgers, instead of talking it out with his wife. He decides that he too should move out and "Get rid of all these coolies . . . the lodgers, I mean. Let them find somewhere more suitable for their type anyway. Sell the place. Move somewhere more select. Kent, maybe..." (Levy 360). He also expresses his desire to start a rabbitfarm, the exact kind of life Queenie ran away from; the only reason she married Bernard.

Bernard recalls his experiences in India during the Second World War, which he found to be very exciting. It is with one of his friends and co-partner in India, Maxi, that he hatches the plan to start a rabbit farm. However, Maxi dies under unfortunate circumstances, which has a great effect on Bernard. He studies and analyses Indian society. Like everyone else, he describes India as a breeding ground for various diseases and mosquitos. He frowns upon the condition of India. He believes that only Britain's higher intellect can save India from the Japanese. He pities that the Indians want freedom and rule on their own because he understood from the Hindu-Muslim riots that it was nearly impossible for a 'bunch of illiterates' to become rulers. Note the following excerpts:

“You can teach a dog to attack anything to the death. Any dumb animal will keep coming at you with no thought for themselves. That's not intelligence, that's obedience. But that doesn't win wars. Our superior wit will win through, I said.” (Levy 290).

Thousands were killed in Calcutta. Men, women, children, even suckling babies, it didn't matter who. They called it a riot... Muslims butchering Hindus. Hindus massacring Muslims. And who knows what side the Sikhs were on? Mademe smile to think of that ragged bunch of illiterates wanting to run their own country. The British out of India? Only British troops could keep those coolies under control... (Levy 308).

Due to the regret from not having been able to save his friend Maxi, he fights one of the young soldiers. He fails at that too, which affects him even more and he is suggested to a brothel. He ends up having sex with one of the prostitutes, only to realize that she was a minor. He regrets it even more and is consumed with guilt. His time in India becomes nothing but a waste of time. He suffers an infection in his genitals on the way home and believes he contracted it from the brothel and diagnoses it as syphilis. He feels even more guilty about meeting his wife and decided to stay underground for a while, unaware that his wife is pregnant with another man's wife. Two years later, he returns to his wife, where he learns that she has turned it into a lodge that is swarmed with colored people. Bernard reflects on one of the themes of the novel, self-delusion; he believes his wife betrayed him by inviting non-British people into their house.

Bernard does not like that he has to live with colored people as he believes that "the war was fought so people might live amongst their own kind."

However, Bernard does not learn about Queenie's affair until the baby is born. When he sees that the baby is brown, he suspects its father to be Gilbert (so does Hortense). The birth of this baby is Bernard's worst nightmare made real. He always wanted to father a child with Queenie but failed. Michael on the other hand succeeded at that failure. He was also a war hero; his adventurous stories were far more exciting than that of Bernard. "The idea that a black man should so naturally succeed where Bernard has failed is a particularly stinging blow to Bernard's identity. He has been beaten and outshined by a man he naturally considers to be his inferior" (Course Hero).

Queenie soon realizes that she cannot raise this baby as her own because of its color. She fears the stigma it would have to face and begs Gilbert and Hortense to raise him as their own. Bernard disagrees and assures Queenie that the baby has a home. Queenie argues that there is no way she and Bernard can raise the baby. Finally, Hortense and Gilbert agree to raise him and move out of the house. While gathering the baby's things, Hortense finds that Queenie has left a load of cash and a photo of hers. She quickly hides them, knowing that while the cash can satisfy the baby's material needs, Hortense is the only person who can provide him with emotional support as she too was born out of an interracial affair and was given away to be taken care of. However, she knew that the baby would be loved and taken care of as her own.

The next chapter gives a brief idea about Card's *These Ghosts are Family*; the predicament of Jamaicans in America; their lifestyle and the discrimination against them.

CHAPTER 2

Understanding *These Ghosts are Family*

The second book under study, *These Ghosts are Family* is a historical fiction novel by Maisy Card, published on March 3, 2020, by Simon & Schuster. It received positive reviews from sources such as the New York Times Book Review as well as the Kirkus Reviews. Entertainment Weekly, Millions, and LitHub named it the most anticipated book of 2020, and Buzz Magazine named it the Top New Book of the New Decade.

The novel starts with Stanford Solomon, a dying 69-year-old man deciding to confront his family about his 30-year-old secret; that he is Abel Paisley who lived as Stanford right after the death of the original Stanford Solomon so that he could start fresh. The novel zigzags back and forth in time, between Abel's relatives in Harlem, Jamaica, Brooklyn, and Newark. The novel further unravels the history of racism and the slave trade in Jamaica through the diary entries of a white plantation owner by the name of Harold Fowler and the confessions of Louise Paisley and Peta-Gay, two characters of great significance. Through a series of twists and turns, questions of identity and origin haunt the people involved.

The first instance of minor racism noted in the novel is in the very first chapter of the novel when Abel Paisley is mistaken for his Jamaican peer, Stanford Solomon, who dies in an unfortunate event at work. He was crushed by a container that was being lowered onto the ship. But the white superiors believed

that it was Abel who died and proclaimed him dead. Note the following excerpt from the novel:

“It was like one of those movies where the dead person's spirit stands by watching as a crowd gathers around his body. But no, you were certain, it wasn't your body.....You almost laugh now when you think of it - the one time racism worked in your favor. The captain had gotten his wogs confused, looked you right in the eye, and mistaken you for the other black guy.” (Card 3),

There is a minor reference to Marcus Garvey and major references of Haile Selassie and Rastafarianism. Abel's neighbor, Roman, criticizes the adoration Jamaicans have for the Queen of England who is symbolic of colonialism, while looking down on leaders of their own race. This is significant because Jamaica had just gained independence from the British Empire in this context. Note the following excerpts from the novel:

“Not that me believe in that madman business, but I want to see. Fi me father was a Garveyite back in the day. Him did always say we all fi go back to Africa.”

“Look how jamaican people prostrate weself every time one cousin of the white queen come down from England. The same queen whose ancestors them did put we in chains," Roman says, his voice rising. "Why we nuh make the same fuss when one black king come, when we a nation of black people?" (Card 36).

There are also instances of discrimination and segregation of certain classes of people. Interestingly, this happens within the black community.

Jamaicans, although recently liberated from the clutches of the white man, do not seem to be kind to their servants and house helps. One of the most important characters in reference to this topic is Bernard. He was the yard boy of Vera, Abel's first wife. Physically, mentally, and sexually, he was exploited by Vera. Apart from that he was treated poorly by Vera's children and neighbors. Note the following excerpts from the novel:

...they only spoke to him when they needed help with dirty jobs - disposing of a dead dog or slaughtering a goat...if he stood in the vicinity of their playing children, they wouldn't go back in their houses. They would rather let their rice pots burn on the stove than take their eyes off his movements, see if he was watching their children. (Card 61,62)

“‘You know, Bernard, in Egypt, when the pharaoh dead, the royal servant them did bury with them master,’ Vincent had said over breakfast, laughing.” (Card 54)

“When she was alive, Vera had never let Bernard enter her room...so when he walked over and ran his fingers along the white sheets, his heart raced like he was trespassing...” (Card 56).

But what were the conditions of the so-called masters of Jamaica anywhere else? Miserable. Be it Britain or America, they were constantly discriminated against. They never had high-profile jobs; only something to earn their daily bread and butter. Note the following excerpt from the novel:

...we'd had to leave in the first place, abandoning our education, our almost-white, brown, and high-yellow privilege, and spend all of our money on

visas and plane tickets and American clothes, and now we were nothing. The next day we'd go back to our real lives in New York, Miami, Toronto, London.... Over foreign, we were the Bernards - we were the underclass; we were home healthaides, janitors, and nannies.... it was all his (Bernard's) fault. If people like him would have stayed in their place, then we could have stayed too. (Card 83).

“In Jamaica she'd always had servants, after all, helpers who took care of her more diligently than her own mother.....No one had told her that in America, ‘home health aide,’ to many people, was just another way to say ‘maid.’” (Card 86).

There is a small incident in the life of Irene, Abel's and Vera's daughter, who works as a health aide for a woman named Betty. She usually took up role-play as a pastime, mainly because it was advised by her therapist. Once, she took the role of a fourteen-year-old British servant, Elias. This role gave her the freedom to call Irene a ‘black bitch’, which could be an implication of the strength of racism in Britain and the stigma non-whites face daily. Note the following excerpt from the novel: “‘The roast ... If I get in trouble, I'll tell them it was you ... you black bitch!’” (Card 92).

One of the most significant characters in the novel is Debbie Norgood. It is through her ancestor, Harold Fowler's diary entry that we get an insight into the history of slaves and plantation workers in Jamaica in the 19th century. She was a white woman approaching her thirties, who was initially unaware of her ancestral history. She seems completely liberal towards blacks, which requires a special

mention since she was constantly surrounded by people who were racist, to say the least. That, however, never affected her or changed her attitude toward her non-white peers. Note the following observations made by her:

.....Many of her white classmates, however, had deep roots in the South. Some of their families still owned the land that belonged to their slaveholding ancestors. Most were apologetic, while some were openly hostile when anyone suggested that they had something to apologize for. She remembers a boy who liked to brag that he was descended from Robert E. Lee jumping up from his seat during a class discussion about reparations, pounding on the desk, and shouting, 'Look, did I enslave anybody? Did my parents? My grandparents?' Debbie always thought getting defensive was the worst reaction a white person could have. Just admit it and say sorry, she'd thought. (Card 99).

3.1 Harold Fowler's diary entries

Harold's diary entries are the single most important aspect of the novel. It provides us with a realistic insight into slaves in the 19th century working in plantations owned by Europeans.

Harold and his brother had slaves. Their father and grandfather owned the plantation before, but they were absentee landlords. Harold was the first to live in Jamaica, to make a life there. It was a sugar plantation. It was the eighteenth century; that's how those places functioned. They used slaves... Things didn't work in the West Indies like in the South. There weren't a lot of white women. People mixed over there. They had arrangements. Some of the planters took up

with black women while they were away from their families. (Card 107)

The diary entries are absolutely disturbing. In fact, Debbie feels ashamed of her past and ancestry so much that she refuses to accept that it's her past too. Within a span of a few entries, the reader understands that the female plantation owners were subjected to rape at least every day.

The first diary entry that Debbie reads is from 12 June 1813. It describes how he punishes one of his servants, a small girl by the name of Maddie, for stealing honey from his kitchen; he pours the entire jar on her feet, knowing that it will attract all kinds of insects and rodents. "As I sit in my study and write this, I can hear her screams. If I cannot teach her, then the mosquitoes, the rats, the fire ants swarming her feet will (Card 98). The next diary entries are from 15 November 1815. His father has bought his children a girl of fourteen years from Iceland, Katrin. She was 'offered' to Harold's brother Enoch, but since he refused, she was given to Harold, and he married her. She refused to let Harold even approach her chambers when she was sick with malaria. Nevertheless, she did not like the black servants attending her. They have a child together, a girl named Peta-Gay, and her gender upsets Harold. On one occasion, he overhears his servants calling Katrin a witch and has them instantly flogged. Although he is married, he engages in sexual relationships with other servants. He has one of them, Florence, flogged for not coming to his room when summoned. There is also another disturbing episode of punishing Maddie when she tries to reveal to

Katrin that Maddie has given birth to Harold's child. "I found Maddie washing clothes by the river. I crept behind her and pushed her under the water. Let her thrash until her body became still. Took her on the bank and revived her. Told her that was the last piece of gossip I expect to hear she's spread." (Card 119). Two of his servants Cleo and Florence run away, although they return and are punished. Florence is pregnant and after giving birth, her child is sold to Mr. Paisley. She is later found guilty of poisoning Harold's food and is hung. Katrin gives birth to a boy, Harold Fowler II. She drowns herself in the river a few days later.

The most disturbing element in the diary entries is the tone in which Harold has written them. Never in these writings has he regretted his attitude and actions. He writes as though he is providing notes to his descendants on how to treat slaves. The level of normalcy with which these actions are described is also extremely irritating.

Another very important piece of writing is the confessions of Louise Marie Paisley and Peta Gay. Peta Gay is Harold and Katrin Fowler's daughter, whereas Louise Paisley is Mr. Paisley's ward. The identities of Louise's parents are unknown to the reader in the first half, but for anyone who has read Harold Fowler's diary entries, the pieces of the puzzle slowly fit into place; she is MacDaniel and Florence's illegitimate child. After the birth of the child, she was given away to Mr. Paisley to be taken care of. Although she wasn't ostracized or shunned, she was subtly discriminated and segregated against. She wasn't black, but she wasn't as fair as Peta-Gay. It could be this realization that makes her

behave almost slave-like with Peta. However, this does not imply that she wasn't an elitist. Surprisingly, Peta Gay, whose parents were both white and plantation-owning Europeans, did not have such inhibitions as Louise did. When Louise realizes that her father could be Mac Daniel, who at the time was shunned for revolting against the plantation and was a prisoner who had escaped shackles, she was horrified; more frankly put, she was disgusted by the fact that she could have been born to someone who was so 'lowly'. Since the slaves were constantly tortured by their masters, every time the echoes of a rebellion were heard, the masters feared for their lives. When Peta-Gay's cousin came over during the rebellion, she advised her not to step out and said

...pointing to Gerard, our butler, who immediately turned and bolted the other way, 'should find sympathy for those held slaves and take a cutlass to your throat while you are sleeping? Who will protect you?' I knew Gerard was scared of his own shadow. I doubted he would ever lay a hand on me. (Card 216).

But Louise slowly realizes that the story about her parentage could be true and that her mother might have been a slave under Peta-Gay's father. She also notices that her best friend's attitude towards her has undergone a small change. When she asks Mr. Paisley about her parentage, he confesses the truth. But he also does something very boorish; he proposes to her. He promises to take her away from here, and that no one had to know; she could live as his wife. He reminded her of her mother, who was always extremely beautiful. He also tries to kiss her and tries to rape her while she's asleep. She runs to her friend to tell her everything. But to her dismay, Peta-Gay advises her to take up the offer. She

realizes that she isn't safe with anyone. The only person who could be trusted was her biological father, MacDaniel. Therefore, she hatches a plan to light the Fowlers' house and runs away with her father. But she is soon caught, although her father admits to the crime to save her. However, her fate was also sealed forever. Note the following excerpt from the Spanish Town Chronicle on May 1832:

Louise Paisley, the colored woman convicted of arson and attempted murder and scheduled to be executed in one week's time, has been resentenced, following the arrest and confession of the convict William MacDaniel. However, while the court previously had due cause to believe Paisley was a free quadroon woman, new evidence presented by Harold Fowler, owner of Warm Manor Estate, has shown she was never properly manumitted and therefore should have been treated as a slave when tried previously before the court. As Mr. Henry Paisley was murdered by Mr. MacDaniel shortly after the fire, there was no one who could rebuke the claim. The court has ruled that Louise must serve twenty-four months hard labor, following which she should be considered property of Mr. Fowler and returned to his custody. (Card 244).

It is also to be noted that Louise Paisley is the protagonist, Abel Paisley's great-grandmother.

The next and final chapter of the project analyses the primary texts *Small Island* and *These Ghosts are Family* using the Critical Race Theory and Robin Cohen's *Global Diasporas: An Introduction*.

Chapter 3

Theoretical Analysis and Substance

4.1 Analysis based on Cohen's *Global Diasporas*

Robin Cohen in his work *Global Diasporas: An Introduction* identifies nine key characteristics of global diasporas, which are as follows:

Dispersal from an original homeland, often traumatically, to two or more foreign regions alternatively, or additionally, the expansion from a homeland in search of work, in pursuit of trade or to further colonial ambitions, a collective memory and myth about the homeland, including its location, history, suffering and achievements, an idealization of the real or imagined ancestral home and a collective commitment to its maintenance, restoration, safety, and prosperity, even to its creation, the frequent development of a return movement to the homeland that gains collective approbation even if many in the group are satisfied with only a vicarious relationship or intermittent visits to the homeland, a strong ethnic group consciousness sustained over a long time and based on a sense of distinctiveness, a common history, the transmission of a common cultural and religious heritage and the belief in a common fate, a troubled relationship with host societies, suggesting a lack of acceptance or the possibility that another calamity might befall the group, a sense of empathy and co-responsibility with co-ethnic members in other countries of settlement even where home has become more vestigial, the possibility of a distinctive creative, enriching life in host countries with a tolerance for pluralism (Blackman).

It is to be noted that the timelines of both *Small Island* and *These Ghosts are Family* are different. It is also to be noted that while in the former, the characters migrate to the UK, in the latter, the characters migrate to the US. Nevertheless, both migrate in search of better opportunities than the ones available in their own countries but are disappointed. Therefore, it isn't a traumatic dispersal from the homeland, but rather a deliberate migration by one's own will in the hope of better prospects. In both works, it is noteworthy that the characters look down on their homeland rather than idealizing it. They do not wish to return to Jamaica until they realize that they are unwanted in these foreign lands. In *Small Island*, Gilbert and Hortense eventually return to Jamaica, unlike in *These Ghosts are Family* where the family settles in the US, despite living in poverty and disgrace.

However, while Cohen categorized the different types of global diasporas, he included the Caribbean community under the 'Deterritorialized diaspora'.

4.2 Analysis based on Critical Race Theory

Critical Race theory is an academic concept that is more than 40 years old.

The core idea is that race is a social construct and that racism is not merely the product of individual bias or prejudice, but also something embedded in legal systems and policies. Scholars of CRT say that race is not "biologically grounded and natural", rather, it is a socially constructed category used to oppress and exploit people of color; and that racism is not an aberration, but a normalized feature of American society. The basic tenets of critical race theory, or CRT, emerged out of a framework for legal analysis in the late 1970s and early 1980s

created by legal scholars Derrick Bell, Kimberlé Crenshaw, and Richard Delgado, among others. A good example is when, in the 1930s, government officials literally drew lines around areas deemed poor financial risks, often explicitly due to the racial composition of inhabitants. Banks subsequently refused to offer mortgages to Black people in those areas. CRT also has ties to other intellectual currents, including the work of sociologists and literary theorists who studied links between political power, social organization, and language (Sawchuck).

In the context of this theory, focusing mainly on the aspect that racism is purely social and a construct and not inherited through blood or family, the two novels can be analyzed. This is very significant because while reading the novel it might strike the reader as to why not all white people are racist or why black people have accepted their inferiority. It should be understood this way: the generational internalizing of the self and the other, the dominant and the submissive, the black and the white, society has constructed who deserves what and how much. This is particularly evident in the characters of *Small Island*, Queenie and Bernard, who have conflicting and diverse attitudes towards the Jamaicans and of *These Ghosts are Family*, Debbie and her ancestors. Debbie's case is interesting because one might think that she has inherited a lot of racism because her great-great-great-great-grandfather, Harold Fowler, was a wealthy white plantation owner in Jamaica and tortured and raped his slaves. When CRT and other genetic studies assert that race is a social construct, the age-old notion that blacks are inherently criminals is completely shattered. This further proves

that there are good and bad people everywhere and that the color on your skin doesn't necessarily have to reflect your character.

Perhaps the most provocative argument offered in support of this thesis was the suggestion by Derrick Bell, an intellectual forefather of CRT and the first Black-tenured law professor at Harvard University, that the U.S. Supreme Court's landmark decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), which overturned the segregation-supporting "separate but equal" doctrine established in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), occurred when it did because (1) elite whites were concerned about potential unrest among Black former soldiers who had fought bravely for their country in World War II and the Korean War but were now expected to return to lives of oppression and exploitation by whites; and (2) the world image of the United States as an egregiously racist society threatened to diminish American influence among developing countries and to undermine the country's strategic efforts in the Cold War against the Soviet Union (Britannica).

Gilbert had great difficulty finding jobs even though he fought for England in the war. Note the following excerpts:

If the Almighty perusing that list in the celestial book, was to have told me, One day. Gilbert Joseph, you will be pleased that by your name, in the list of achievements, is written only the one word ... driver.... In five, no, in six places, the job I had gone for vanish with one look upon my face. Another, I wait, letter in my hand, while everyone in this office go about their business as if I am not there.... Until a man come in agitated. 'What're you doing here? he say to me. '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 257-258).

This wasn't the case with just Gilbert. Most of his Jamaican friends who served in the RAF faced some discrimination or the other and were rejected at workplaces.

Sixth, and finally, the "voice of colour" thesis holds that people of colour are uniquely qualified to speak on behalf of other members of their group (or groups) regarding the forms and effects of racism. This consensus has led to the growth of the "legal storytelling" movement, which argues that the self-expressed views of victims of racism and other forms of oppression provide essential insight into the nature of the legal system (Britannica).

Harold Fowler's diary entries may have been fictional, just like Florence or Maddie; but their experiences were very much real. There is no doubt that thousands of slaves during their work at the plantations were tortured or raped, in a similar way or even worse. Therefore, these diary entries are not just important in the context of the plot, rather, they serve an even bigger purpose; they have unified and given a more distinct voice to the violence that was committed against slaves in plantations set up by Europeans in America in the 19th century.

Conclusion

It is evident that *Small Island* portrays more racism than *These Ghosts Are Family*, which is proof enough that racism toned down considerably in the later half of the 20th century. Whilst we see how Americans absolutely despised the black soldiers in *Small Island*, a drastic change is described in *These Ghosts are Family*. People fear doing or saying anything that could be deemed even remotely offensive. However, in the former novel, the blacks were denied jobs, in the latter they had to take up lowly jobs. Their representation in workplaces and offices was disturbingly low.

5.1 Some other points of convergence

- Narrative techniques and structure of the novel: Both the novels use a clear technique of non-linear narration; *Small Island* shifts between the present in 1948 and during the second world war, primarily, while *These Ghosts Are Family* revolves around nine different years/time periods. In the former, each chapter is each character's perspective; Hortense, Queenie, Gilbert, and Bernard, and the chapters are named after the character it represents. It is confusing as to who the narrator is in the latter novel, although for a larger part, it seems like an omniscient narrator and not one of the characters.

- Usage of the Jamaican language: Both novels have numerous dialogues spoken in the Jamaican dialect. It is technically termed 'Jamaican Patois'. Although it uses the Standard English vocabulary and alphabet, the pronunciation and structure are very different. Some of the usages in the novels include, 'Sheep? Dem nuh have none ah dat in Jamaica?', 'Leave the chickens alone. You hear me,

nah?', 'Him plane soon land come morning. Not that me believe in that madman business, but I want to see. Fi me father was a Garveyite back in the day.' Some other words to be noted are 'limey', which is an American slang nickname that has been around since the mid-19th century to denote a British person, and 'American GI'. The term G.I. has been used as an initialism of "Government Issue", "General Issue", or "Ground Infantry", and was used by the logistics services of the United States Armed Forces.

- Comparison between Debbie Norgood (*These Ghosts Are Family*) and Queenie Bligh (*Small Island*): These are two characters that provide us with an anti-normative perspective of the white man on racism and slavery. The diary entries of her ancestor made Debbie puke; she felt disgusted. It horrified her that her father justified the torture and abuse just because it was common in those days. She felt that the worst response to slavery would be pinning it on your ancestors and defending yourself. She was uncomfortable when she realized there was only one black worker at her workplace.

Similarly, Queenie did not bother spending time with a black man in the 1940s, although she was surprised when her father-in-law brought a black man as their first lodger. When she realized that several white American GIs were staring at her and Gilbert sitting together, she tried to agitate them even more. She was attracted to a black man, Michael, more than she ever was to her husband.

This project intended to analyze the conditions of Jamaican immigrants in the UK and the US by comparing two works set in these locations, only in different time periods.

5.2 Jamaican Americans today

As of 2019, their total population in the US is 1,171,915, which is 0.36% of the U.S. population. A majority of them live in places like New York, Florida, Connecticut, Georgia, and New Jersey, while they are smaller in number in other parts of the country, including Pennsylvania, Maryland, Massachusetts, and California. They speak English, American English, Jamaican English and Jamaican Patois. Although they are predominantly Protestants, some adhere to Catholicism, Islam, Rastafarianism, and other faiths. Caribbean immigrants perform better than the general immigrant population in terms of high school graduation rates. In 2019, Jamaican Americans had a median household income of \$62,044, higher than the American average of \$57,761. Jamaican Americans had a poverty rate of 11.2%, lower than the American average of 12%. Jamaican Americans have one of the highest rates of homeownership among Latin American and Caribbean immigrants in the US. Be it in the field of entertainment, science, sports, music, or politics, they have carved out a niche for themselves in the modern world.

5.3 British Jamaicans today

As of 2007, the total population in the UK is 300,000. A majority of them live in places like Greater London, Birmingham, Liverpool, Manchester, Nottingham, Bristol, Sheffield, Leeds, Newcastle, Brighton, Leicester, and Wolverhampton. They speak English, British English, Jamaican English, and Jamaican Patois. Although they are predominantly Christians, some adhere to Islam, Rastafarianism, and other faiths. Jamaicans have been constantly targeted

ever since their settlement in Britain, which is explained by the series of attacks and murders and the riots which resulted from the discrimination against them. Many Jamaicans live in the UK having no legal status, having come at a period of less strict immigration policies. Jamaica was placed on the Non-Suspensive Appeal list when restrictions on UK visas came into place, making it more difficult for Jamaicans to travel to the UK. The community has been able to influence the entertainment and fashion industries, although not as much as in the US.

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