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Cultural Identity in a Postcolonial Context in
Andrea Levy's *Small Island* (2004)

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Requirements of Master Degree in Literature and Civilisation*

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Dedication

I wish to dedicate this work to:

- *My father and my mother with gratitude and love.*
- *My sister “Yamina”.*
- *My brother “Bachir” and his lovely wife “Fatima”.*
- *My nieces and nephews: “Saïda”, “Khadidja”, “Amira”, “Ines”, “Amar” and “Ahmed”.*

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Abstract

This study examines the themes of culture and identity in a postcolonial context using Andrea Levy's novel *Small Island* (2004) as a case study. It seeks to understand how these themes are elaborated throughout the novel, relying on a set of theories and key concepts established by postcolonial pioneer writers and critics. The approach adopted is descriptive analytical, which is suitable for such topics. Moreover, the analysis of the characters, mainly the blacks, alongside with the setting and the language used, paves the way for the application of Stuart Hall's theory of cultural identity. This literary theorist had provided an unique and a distinctive view concerning the reconstruction of cultural identity, which will be examined in Levy's novel. In the novel, Hortense Robert is characterized as a black woman, who at the same time acts like a white woman, and who perceives herself as British. She was born and raised in Jamaica, and then immigrated to Britain. She is the best character that represents properly the cultural identity's view of Stuart Hall. In this sense, Hortense is the one that represents the two simultaneously operating axes that frame the Caribbean cultural identity; the axe of similarity and the axe of differences. In addition, her identity holds the three presences that Stuart Hall had already displayed in his view: the African, the European and the American presences. Therefore, *Small Island* proves to be a suitable corpus for the application of several postcolonial theories in general, and Stuart Hall's theory of cultural identity in particular. The application of such theories on postcolonial novels provides a clear reading of the literary works, in addition, the engagement in a study that combines literature with aspects of history, politics, and humanities, results in the raising of the public awareness about today's most important issues.

Table of Contents

Dedication	I
Acknowledgements	II
Abstract	III
Table Of Contents	IV
General Introduction	1
Chapter I: A Theoretical Overview Of Culture, Identity, And Cultural Identity In A Postcolonial Context	
Introduction:	7
1.1 A Theoretical Review Of The Postcolonial Theory	7
1.1.1 The Issue Of Culture And Postcolonialism	9
1.1.2 Culture Defines Postcolonialism	9
1.1.3 The Postcolonial Critics And The Concept Of Culture	10
1.2 Understanding Identity In A Postcolonial Context	15
1.3 Cultural Identity: Theorizing Stuart Hall's Cultural Identity	16
Conclusion:	22
Chapter II: A Postcolonial Reading Of Culture In <i>Small Island</i>	
Introduction	23
2.1 A Plot Summary	23
2.2 <i>Small Island</i> As A Postcolonial Novel	25
2.3 Context, Themes And Techniques	26
2.4 Culture In <i>Small Island</i>	29
Conclusion:	41
Chapter III: An Examination Of Cultural Identity In <i>Small Island</i>	
Introduction	42
3.1 The Meaning And Significance Of The Novel's Title	42

3.2 Identity Crisis In <i>Small Island</i>	43
3.3 Signs Of Cultural Identity In <i>Small Island</i>	50
Conclusion.....	55
General Conclusion	56
Works Cited.....	59
Appendices	62

General Introduction

One of the major preoccupations of the contemporary postcolonial cultural studies is to investigate and examine the encounter with the colonial country and its legacy on the natives. This complex contact between the colonizer and colonized has resulted in a variety of topics that have come to the forefront such as the construction of identity, culture, racism, gender, class, and multiculturalism. Additionally, the postcolonial body of criticism holds a variety of theories and key concepts generated by a variety of thinkers and cultural theorists and critics mainly Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak to name few. These writers and others have contributed to the postcolonial cultural studies by introducing concepts related to identity, particularly cultural identity.

Postcolonial cultures and identities were strongly affected by the process of colonialism. The colonial policy aimed primarily at the exploitation of the resources and treasures of the colonized countries as well as at the expropriation of their cultures and identities. Edward Said's oriental studies, based on Foucault's notion of power and knowledge, clarifies better the Western imperialist logic and its attempts at positioning and representing the 'East' as nothing like the 'West'. By maintaining this division, the culture of the colonized peoples changes to become submissive, subordinate, inferior and a product of mimicry. Moreover, the contact zone between the coming culture of the colonizer and the native culture of the colonized, according to Bhabha, constitutes a third space where a third hybrid culture emerges. This new emerging culture combines the set characteristics of the two cultures. Nevertheless, identity falls into 'crisis' when the colonized is in state of 'in betweenness', when he doesn't recognize where he belongs or what makes him who he is. As a consequence of a long contact with colonial rule, people, due to the colonial hegemony,

General Introduction

accepted the colonizer's ideology and set of conventions and became accustomed to it. After the departure of the colonizer, formerly-colonized people sought to immigrate to the Mother country with high aspirations of assimilations and integrating into it, however, this was not the case. Of course they were rejected and pushed to the periphery, the thing that caused them a fragmented and dislocated identity. The postcolonial scholarship came in this sense to account for the inequalities that beset nationhood in the post-independence era, an era of uneven industrialization and globalization and also to help them in their ongoing claim for their identity, self-discovery, and self-identification.

In the modern world of today, the conceptualization of cultural identity had shifted to become fragmented, unsettled, unstable, and in a continuous interplay with history, culture and power. Globalization, standardization along with modernization, intend to dismantle what characterizes each nation, group or person, and attempt to erase what distinguishes individuals, it seeks to neglect all kinds of identities for a certain economic and political purpose. Thus, claiming cultural identity is a very important task in the sake of maintaining the subject's essence.

The postcolonial era unfolds the ambiguities, the ambivalent state of the post-colonial societies and nations, cultural chaos and identity crisis as a result of the meeting of different cultures. Another cultural legacy of British colonialism is the English language and the English literature. Many of the former-colonized societies had produced a range of postcolonial writers and novelists who by a large extent appropriated the colonizer's language and engaged in the project of producing literature and writings about the history of colonization from the perspective of the colonized nations. A counter-thesis and a counter-discourse that intends to undermine the European justifications for colonialism and instead reveal the true face and imperial zeal of the assumed 'civilized West'.

General Introduction

In this sense, Black British literature is enigmatic in its nature. It refers to the kind of literary productions written by the sons and daughters of formerly-colonized, which were either British-born or immigrated at a young age to Britain. The Black British literature reflects the major postcolonial themes and issues, and also demonstrates a sharp critique to how the Europeans represented the non-Europeans as 'other'. The main political project behind these writings is to create 'a new frontier', that is to say, to invent a bridge to move from the dominated marginalized circle into the dominant central circle. In addition, it aims at giving voice to the unvoiced subjects to speak their experiences and struggles during the colonial era as it also serves as therapeutic remedy that attempts to heal the traumatic memories of the colonial experience that affect the subject and serves as an obstacle that prevents him from moving and crossing border to find his true-self. In this respect, a range of novelists whom we can label as Diaspora novelists use their literature as a means to account for the once-colonized and brutalized population's life-experiences and also to bring about some truths that were neglected and discarded by Grand Narratives of the past. These novelists also intend to develop the public readers awareness about the present day issues resulting from immigration, and multiculturalism.

Andrea Levy is an example of such novelists, who took literature as a mirror to account for the real Black Caribbean experience of slavery, immigration, race and gender discrimination. In her novels we find a recurrent exploration of themes of race, ethnicity, injustice, fragmented identity, mixed culture, and the failure of assimilation. *Small Island*, is her fourth and most important novel where the author focuses mainly on immigration, the first encounter between the 'self' and the 'other', racist awareness, intolerance within white British society, identity loss, and finally self-discovery and self-identification. Such a complex network of concepts surely needs further exploration.

General Introduction

This study aims at examining the themes of culture and identity in a postcolonial context using Andrea Levy's novel *Small Island* (2004) as a case study. It seeks to understand how these themes are elaborated throughout the novel, relying on a set of theories and key concepts established by postcolonial pioneer writers and critics. The approach adopted is descriptive analytical, which is suitable for such topics.

In order to answer the research problematic, a hypothesis is developed as follows: in the novel, Hortense is the one that represents the two simultaneously operating axes that frame the Caribbean cultural identity; the axe of similarity and the axe of differences. In addition, her identity holds the three presences that the scholar had established in his view: African, European and American presences.

Therefore, *Small Island* proves to be a suitable corpus for the application of several postcolonial theories in general, and Stuart Hall's theory of cultural identity in particular. The application of such theories on postcolonial novels provides a clear reading of the literary works, in addition, the engagement in a study that combines literature with aspects of history, politics, and humanities, results in the rising of the public awareness about today's most important issues.

Since the primary focus and major aim of this study is to examine Hall's theorizing of cultural identity in the novel, the following questions can be asked: how Stuart Hall's view of cultural identity is displayed and explored in *Small island*? And which one of the character represents it appropriately?.

Actually, a number of critics have already approached the theme of culture and identity from different perspectives. Mike Philips, puts it aptly in *The Guardian 2004*, the latter argues that Andrea Levy relies heavily on historical facts which gives her distance, while accounting for the effects of the colonizer's culture mainly, aspects of race

General Introduction

discrimination on the colonized and his culture. He sees that, the novel is an exclusive depiction of un-pleasant racist moments in the period. Moreover, Alicia E. Ellis, in her essay *Identity As A Cultural Production In Andrea Levy's Small Island*, argues that Small Island combines in an excellent way notions of truth, knowledge, culture, and identity by emphasizing on the relations between fantasy and the real, the past and the present, home and away. Alicia further maintains that Small island creates a common narrative of nation and identity in order to explore and understand the black people's experience and struggle in the metropolis. A third review concerning the novel was established by Rachel Slater in her essay entitled *Politics and Culture: Review of Andrea Levy, Small Island*, where the latter maintains that Small Island traces the birth of multi-ethnic diversity of modern Britain, tackling at the same time the fraught relationships between the British 'Immigrants' and society as a whole. Moreover, the cultural critic adds that what the novel examines is an experience that is culturally inflected from a variety of perspectives which contributes to the feeding of discourses around race and class in Britain. Hence, many scholars examined the themes of race, culture and identity, yet no one previously tackled the novel using Stuart Hall's theory on Cultural Identity. In this respect, Stuart Hall, a Jamaican cultural critic and political activist, generated a very controversial and interesting theory in his outstanding book entitled *Cultural Identity and Diaspora*, where the latter demonstrates a new and unique view concerning the questions of identity, its origins, and reconstruction. In the analytical readings of ethnic literary productions, Hall's view reflects a coherent and fruitful analysis that contributes to the awareness of one's history and also constitutes an eye-opener on today's politics, systems and (re)orientations. Hence, the focal point is to explore in particular the traces of cultural identity as defined by Stuart Hall.

In order to reach the objectives stated earlier, a qualitative method is employed, through the analysis of the black characters in particular such as Hortense, Gilbert, and

General Introduction

Michael. In addition, to the analysis of the setting and its significance; what it metaphorically represents or stands for in the novel. The examination of language, the author's employment of different tongues, different dialects were also of an important use in the sake of tracing differences among characters.

The study is divided into three chapters. Chapter one will offer a theoretical background of the context and conditions of postcoloniality, wherein an examination of culture and identity in postcolonial context is provided through the collection of a range of definitions, key concepts, and views of various postcolonial critics and literary theorists on the two concepts, this is included in part one and two. Part three is completely devoted to introducing the concept of cultural identity and then choosing one view concerning the concept that belongs to the cultural critic Stuart Hall. Chapter two and three will be the analytical parts of the dissertation. The second chapter, will be divided into two parts, part one will include an introduction to *Small Island*, the case study, in addition to exploring how the novel is postcolonial. . Part two will be devoted to examining the signs of culture in the novel. The third chapter, will deal with the examination of the signs of Stuart Hall's cultural identity in the novel.

Chapter I

A Theoretical Overview of Culture, Identity, and Cultural Identity in a Postcolonial Context

Introduction:

This chapter will be divided into three sections. In the first part, there will be a theoretical background of postcolonialism and the issue of culture in postcolonial context. This will be done through the collection of number of definitions and reviews of scholars specialized in the field. Moreover, it will particularly demonstrates the major postcolonial critics and their views concerning the question of culture. The second part will be devoted for the discussion of the issue of identity in the postcolonial conditions. While the third part will provide an overview of cultural identity in general and Stuart Hall's theorization of cultural identity in particular.

1.1 A Theoretical Review of the Postcolonial Theory :

The term “post-colonial” indicates a period of history. Its obvious indication refers to “a period coming after the end of colonialism”. The conditions in which one era is over and the beginning of another cannot be simply put into the surface in unproblematic fashion. Hence, the postcolonial conditions and circumstances are what determine the significance of the term otherwise it would be of nonsense (Childs & Williams 2).

Before the 1970's, the term postcolonialism characterized simply the era during which many colonized nations around the world took their independence from their European colonizers such as Britain and France. However, by the 1970's it turned to signify the emergence of a critical theory and criticism which focuses mainly on the study of the colonialism aftermath effects and legacies on the colonized nations and countries.

The postcolonial scholarship is concerned with the study and examination of the economic, political, cultural and psychological effects of the colonizing powers on the formerly-colonized nations and countries. In this respect, both of the literary critics and scholars Bill Ashcroft, Garth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffins, provided a brilliant and notorious definition of the concept in the opening chapter of their book *The Empire Writes Back (1989)*, they state, “ we use the term ‘post-colonial’, however, to cover all culture affected by imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day. This is because there is a continuity of preoccupation through the historical process initiated by European imperial aggression”(Ashcroft et al 2).

As a general domain of cultural and intellectual inquiry, postcolonialism investigates a range of discourses and issues that relate to the construction of national identity, race, ethnicity, immigration and multiculturalism. In this stream Ashcroft and his colleges, provide a clear indication of the major commitments of the postcolonial theory, they argue that it encompasses the following topics:

migration, slavery, suppression, resistance, representation, difference, race, gender, place, and responses to the influential master discourse of imperial power such as history, philosophy, and linguistics, and the fundamental experiences of speaking and writing by which all these come into being.(Ashcroft et al 2)

Additionally , the theory was built upon the theories and views of writers and literary theorists and critical thinkers from non-European perspective. These foundational postcolonial scholars’ influence was unprecedented in the field of cultural studies, brilliant pioneers and figures such as Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak, alongside with Frantz Fanon, Aimee Cessaire and others.

The main aim of the postcolonial scholarship is to question the power of dynamic especially between imperial metropolis and its peripheries, to examine the cultural effects of

colonialism on the colonized societies and to re-examine and to re-assess the universal official narratives and assumptions produced by the West on its 'Other'. In addition, it aims also to create a reading of the literature produced outside the European canon that is constrained by Western culture and values. (Bressler 113)

1.1.1 The Issue of Culture and Postcolonialism :

Postcolonialism nowadays has become an overlapping field of cultural studies that offer a critical analysis of the history, culture, literature and modes of discourse of the empire's ex-colonies in the world. According to postcolonialists, the detachment and uprootedness of the colonialists political and economic effects may be easy, however, the most difficult task is to break off or uproot the 'tangible or intangible' control of culture. Therefore, culture is a prominent theme and the main preoccupation of the postcolonial studies and scholars. (Young 7)

1.1.2 Culture Defines Postcolonialism:

The concept of culture is often regarded as an important key factor that defines Postcolonialism, in addition to the essential role it plays in distinguishing the literary theory from its forefathers : imperialism, colonialism and neocolonialism. In general the term imperialism is derived from the word empire and indicates the latter's direct engagement in "the process of acquiring territories and lands from vulnerable countries either through direct conquest or through maintaining political and economic influence" (Young 7). Likewise, colonialism is regarded as the exercise of power to control the territories and lands in a direct and formal manner using all the violent and aggressive means of torture possible in the aim of disfiguring and subjugating the colonized nations as well as expropriating and exploiting their resources. Both of terms emerged as a way of imposing control and dominance over the subjugated nations using cruel means and corrupted institutions, and both terms are concerned

with the economic and political side as a primer focus. As for the term neocolonialism, it identifies itself with the period of post WWII, where the processes of decolonization took place. As for the neocolonialist process, it is regarded by Young as a “continuation of traditional colonial rule by another means” (ibid), this can be phrased as the project of the extension of an informal and indirect political and economic control of the empire’s overseas colonies. Nonetheless, gaining independence and political sovereignty did not mean for the ex-colonies their full breaking with the mother country, for they still prone to the colonial cultural hegemony. All of the three terms mentioned above have been concerned either with a direct or indirect political and economic dominance and control over their colonies. However, when it comes to postcolonialism, there is a different focus, the latter identifies itself and concerns its scholarship with culture, intellectual and spiritual realm. Accordingly, the postcolonialists have concluded that the act of uprooting the colonial culture and its effects on the formerly-colonized countries is not that simple, they claim that –in the postcolonial theory- they are in the stage of decolonizing minds and cultures. Therefore, postcolonialism is different from imperialism, colonialism, and neocolonialism for its major focus on culture. (Wang 651)

1.1 .3 The Postcolonial Critics and the Concept of Culture:

Since culture has been one of the major inconsistencies that the postcolonial theory intends to explore, many of the postcolonial literary theorists, critics and novelists frequently discuss and shed light on the clash between cultures in their works.

The postcolonial theory had been grounded on the views and assumptions of three pioneers and their important theoretical basis. Namely, the French philosopher and historian Michel Foucault and his theory of power and discourse¹. Second, the Italian Marxist

¹ Foucault ‘s relations of power and discourse contributed heavily in the unveiling of how knowledge and discourse are hugely manipulated by the peoples who have access to power and how the latter impose their

philosopher and communist Antonio Gramsci and his concept of “Cultural Hegemony”². And finally, the Martiniquais philosopher and psychiatrist Frantz Fanon and his psychological theories and views concerning the racist culture of the colonizer.

Likewise, there are also three other founders and influential representatives most active in the postcolonial arena, brilliant figures such as Edward Said, Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak. The three of them are descendants of former British colonies and belong to either Indian or Islamic background. They share a common life experience that is totally different from their compatriots and their western natives.

a. Said and Orientalism:

Edward Said, a Palestinian American literary theorist, political activist, and one of the leading postcolonial cultural critics of the last quarter of the twentieth century. He is most famous for his creation and introduction of the Oriental studies, which are mostly founded on the basis views of Marxism³, and on the remarkable Foucauldian analysis of the relation between power and discourse. (Childs & Williams 97)

In his famous book, ***Orientalism (1978)***, Said intends to explore the nature of the hegemony of the western imperialist culture and the European representations about the East, that is to say, he examines the European discourses on the ‘Orient’, which he argues that it is “that semi-mythical construct which since Napoleon’s invasion of Egypt in the late 18th century has been made and remade countless times” (Said 6). He adds in the same sense that:

Western representations of the Orient, no matter how well intentioned, have always

culture and thinking because of their economic and social status, in other words, it serves to show how and why one culture is dominant over another.

² the Gramscian approach suggests that a society which holds a cultural diversity can be ruled and dominated by one of its social classes. The term Hegemony indicates a sense of a dominating class that holds on power convincing the dominated population that the interests of the ruling class is better for the whole community, it is realized without violence, instead through acceptance and the persuasion of other people who are lower in class.

³ Marxism, a body of doctrine developed by Karl Marx, and to lesser extent by Friedrich Engels. It is a theory and method of working-class, it criticizes the development of class society and especially of capitalism.

been complicit with the workings of Western power. Even those Orientalists who are clearly sympathetic of Oriental peoples and their cultures cannot overcome their Eurocentric perspective, and have unintentionally contributed to Western Domination.”(ibid)

Therefore, Orientalism of Europeans is well-made system that seeks to impose certain standards and universal ideas and representations about the non-western nations in the sake of imposing dominance.

Furthermore, Edward Said argues that, as a consequence of many years of colonial rule, ‘The West’ has had a significant amount of power in dictating global culture than ‘The East’. More precisely, he claims that ‘The West’ essentially took away the ability of ‘The East’ to represent or define itself, and that instead ‘The West’ came to define the ‘The East’ in a manner that was useful for its own terms and imperialist aspirations. In his own words, Edward Said states that “ The imaginative examination of things oriental was based more or less exclusively upon sovereign Western consciousness out of whose unchallenged centrality an oriental emerged”(Said 206). In this sense, the central point of Said’s thesis is that, in a global culture dominated by ‘The West’, ‘The East’ has usually been presented by ‘The West’ as being illogical, mysterious, strange, and driven by base human passions. In contrast to this, ‘The West’ views itself as logical, cultured, and, mostly ,the norm. (Hamadi)

By doing so, the West created a political and economic system that intends to control the East politically, economically and culturally. In short, Said’s scholarship tries primarily to highlight the inaccuracies of wrong assumptions produced by the west through creating ‘Orientalism’ as a foundation text in the field of postcolonial cultural studies.

b. Bhabha and Hybridity

A “middle-class Guajatri and English-speaking Parsi, already a minority in the Indian context”, this is how Bhabha locates his own history as that of someone from border position

(Childs & Williams 122). Like the majority of the postcolonial intellectual migrants, Bhabha had an effect on the postcolonial theory, he coined a number of the field's theories and key concepts, such as 'third space', 'hybridity', 'mimicry', 'ambivalence' and others. According to Bhabha, this range of concepts provide a description of the ways in which the colonized peoples have resisted and agitated against the colonizer's cultural power. (Ashcroft et al 108)

Furthermore, Bhabha's main interest is culture and its relationship to the power and domination and subjugation of the colonizer. In his book, *The Location of Culture (1994)*, he attempts to discuss the idea that the 'dominated' tends to 'mimic' his 'dominant'. Additionally, he believes that the contact zone between two different cultures will lead eventually to the creation of a third space, 'an interstitial space' between the binary opposition category of the colonizer/colonized, this space is called a hybrid culture (Ashcroft et al 110). In this respect, Bhabha maintains, in the same book:

It is significant that the productive capacities of this third space have a colonial or postcolonial provenance. For a willingness to descend into that alien territory may reveal that the theoretical recognition may split the space of enunciation may open the way to conceptualizing of international culture based not on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the diversity of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture's hybridity. To that end we should remember that it is 'inter' –the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the in-between space –that carries out burden of meaning of culture. (Bhabha 38)

In short, his postcolonial critical studies and core concepts have become touchstones for debates over colonial discourse, anti-colonial resistance and postcolonial identity. (Childs & Williams 123)

c. Spivak and the Subaltern Voice

A female Indian scholar and literary theorist, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak is considered the first feminist theorist in the postcolonial theory. Her most ambitious and best representative work is the essay “*Can the Subaltern Speak?*”(1983) (Childs & Williams 157).

Like the major postcolonial theorists, her theories were indebted to the European philosophy as Marxism and Feminism⁴. Her major area of interests expands to include social classes taking the theory of Gramscian Hegemony as a ground and a guiding line. The literary theorist is famous for broadening the concept of the “Subaltern”⁵. She adopted this term to refer to anyone who is subordinate in rank, status or importance and also refers to any member of a group that because of their class, gender, race or cultural background (or a combination of these) has little access to the mechanisms of representation and power in any given society.

Furthermore, she maintains in her essay, “On the side of the international division of labour from socialized capital, inside *and* outside the circuit of epistemic violence of imperialist law and education supplementing an earlier economic text, *can the subaltern speak?*”, (qtd in Postcolonialism : Said & Spivak), here Spivak refers to how the practices of imperialism and education such as language and discourse can be used as means to maintain power and control over the subordinate colonized peoples within colonized countries. In the title of the essay, the literary critic does not interrogate their ability to speak, but rather, she questions whether the “subaltern” can have a voice despite his different identity and whether his voice is heard through academic discourses of the West.

⁴ The theory of political, economic and social equality of the sexes. Also a movement organized actively on behalf of women rights and interests.

⁵ the term is taken from a military jargon, and which means the lowest class in the military rank which was put by Gramsci

1.2 Understanding Identity in a Postcolonial Context:

It is widely acknowledged that the question of “identity” is one of the most controversial and debatable issues in the postcolonial era and literature due to its crisis in all postcolonial states, countries and societies. An important definition of identity is provided by Oxford English Dictionary, which puts identity as “The fact of being who or what a person or a thing is”, however, in a postcolonial context, identity is still a far-reaching and complex concept that cannot be easily defined or explained. In this respect, Kobena Mercer confirms that “identity only becomes an issue when it is in crisis, when something assumed to be fixed, coherent and stable is displaced by the experience of doubt and uncertainty” (Mercer).

In postcolonial terms, the identification of a person or a group or a nation is frequently linked to the “Other”. Phrased in other terms, the previously-colonized persons, groups or nations are aware of themselves ‘us’ in the light of their “Other”. Therefore, otherness represent a very crucial characteristic in recognizing the identity of oneself in postcolonial conditions. This very otherness also is twofold “both identity and difference, so that every other, every different than and excluded by is dialectically created and includes the values and meaning of the colonizing culture even as it rejects its power to define”(Dizayi 2015).

Nevertheless, the question of identity has been vigorously debated by postcolonial scholars, who represented and expressed their views and discussions concerning its formation, reconstruction and conditions. In this respect, the philosopher Frantz Fanon had explained in his famous work, *Black Skins, White Masks*, the idea that in the light of the impact of colonialism and the changes formed by the experiences of immigration, why the black people felt that they ought to “wear white masks to get by Europe”, further, he examines the conditions through which they have to “bend one’s identity as so to appear to colonizer to be free of all taints of primitive native traits”(Fanon 117)

Moreover, Said's central viewpoint concerning the construction of identity is paraphrased by Ashcroft and his colleagues in their book, *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts* as, "the ability to resist, to create oneself as postcolonial, anti-imperialist subject and this recreation of the self needs to be contextualized because it is the construction of identity that constitutes freedom and human beings are what they make themselves even if they are subjects of repressive discourse" (Ashcroft et al 112).

Another significant view about the emergence of identity is established by the postcolonial theorist Homi Bhabha. In his book *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha had provided a remarkable idea concerning the construction of identity. He suggested that there is a space emerging in the contact zone between the colonizer and the colonized, which results in a hybrid identity, that accommodates the set of characteristics of both identities, this kind of identity soon falls in crisis. In his book, he maintains, "this interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains the difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy" (Bhabha 4).

In fact, his views were totally opposed by the European logic especially for the creation of an interstitial space between the opposing category of colonizer/colonized for it had been widely known that the binary was established by the 'West' to refer to the most extreme form of difference, where the first term is always the most powerful and dominant at the expense of the second which is less powerful and subordinate. (Ashcroft et al 10)

1.3 Cultural Identity: Theorizing Stuart Hall's Cultural Identity

Cultural identity can be defined as an "identification with, or a feeling of belonging" to a particular group or community. It is related to the range of categories such as nationality, ethnicity, religion, class, generation, and locality. Cultural identity is more associated with

how individuals or groups perceive and conceive themselves, moreover, it is constructed upon how the members of a particular group share collective knowledge, language, education, manners, ceremonies, gestures ,celebrations, aesthetics, norms, and customs.(Chen)

In the modern world we live in, the notion of one coherent, stable identification of individuals had been challenged by modern scholars and replaced by a new form of identification that is hugely affected by the rapid social and cultural transformations provoked first by the processes of modernization, urbanization, and standardization and later by the process of globalization. The latter imposes a new ‘civilizationa’ milieu where we find people, cultures and communities mixed and melted, resulting in new common product that neglects individualism.(Petvoka & Lehtonen 16).

In postcolonial context, the question of cultural identity and its understanding had been a prominent task of the postcolonial theorist to investigate and for the writers to reflect in their literary productions. In the wake of the twentieth century, an age of progression and globalization, many scholars presented their views and interpretations concerning the origin and the foundation of cultural identity, however, their views, although considered correct, have some contradictory ideas. In this light, the Jamaican Stuart Hall is one of those critics and cultural theorists who hold this very sense of contradiction while analyzing the concept of cultural identity. His theories on the concept are new and enriching and contributed to the better understanding of the concept and of history and had a significant reflection in the reading of literary works produced by writers of Black Diaspora such as Andrea Levy, Zadie Smith , Monica Ali and others.

In this respect, Stuart Hall is a cultural theorist and political activist, who had produced many works concerning the questions of identity. He came to prominence thanks to his new theories about cultural identity, which were well-presented in his most popular selected essays: *Cultural Identity and Diaspora*.

In his selected essays, Stuart Hall represents a new different approach of viewing cultural identity. He relies heavily on the idea that “instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact, which the new cultural practices then represent, we should think, instead, of identity as ‘production’ which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within , and not outside, representation”(Hall 222). By this claim, the latter intends to challenge the very authenticity and authority and the idea of coherence, stability and similarity to which cultural identity lays claim.

According to this cultural pioneer, there are at least two possibilities of viewing and thinking of cultural identity. The latter demonstrates that the first position is somehow related to the standard way of viewing the concept, he defines it as, “...one shared culture, a sort of collective, one ‘true self’ hiding inside the many other more superficial and artificially imposed ‘selves’, which people with shared history and ancestry hold in common”(Hall 223). The first definition here, provides a sense of ‘oneness’, i.e., the cultural identity reflects a sense of shared cultural codes and common historical experiences which represent ‘us’ as ‘one people’ characterized by a stable, unchanging and continuous frame of references and meaning, despite the shift that is occurring in our history and world. Furthermore, Hall argues that this very sense of ‘oneness’-neglecting the other differences- is what constitutes the essence of the black experience.

Nonetheless, Hall presents a second related, but, different and more important definition of cultural identity, stating that, “...as well as the many points of similarity, there are also critical points of deep and significant difference which constitute ‘what we really are’; or rather –since history has intervened- ‘what we have become’. We cannot speak for very long, with any exactness, about ‘one experience, one identity’, without acknowledging its other side - the ruptures and discontinuities which constitute, precisely, the Caribbean’s ‘uniqueness’ ” (Hall 225), here, the second position suggests a new and more challenging

view of the concept. In this sense, cultural identity is related to two matters, it is on one hand a matter of 'becoming' and on another hand a matter of 'being', thus, it is linked to the future as well as to the past. In other words, cultural identity is no longer seen as something already exists, instead, it comes from somewhere, does not transcend time and place, and has its own history, and, similar to any historical object, it engages in the process of shifting and undergoing transformation. In short, cultural identities are prone to the continuous 'play' of culture, power and history. The significance of the second viewing position lays in that it contributes to the proper understanding and interpretation of the 'traumatic character of the colonial experience'. These colonized were labelled as 'different' and 'other', moreover, the representation by the western regimes had the power to make them see and experience themselves as 'Other' (hegemony). Based on Foucault's famous couplet power/knowledge, every regime of representation is, therefore, a regime formed by power. However this knowledge is intrinsic.

Hall continues in his book, to argue that the idea of otherness "as an inner compulsion" contributes heavily in the changing of our understanding about the concept of 'cultural identity'. That is to say, cultural identity, in this perspective, is not a fixed or stable subject at all, but rather influenced by the plays of history and power of culture. He carries on by suggesting that cultural identity is not a mere fact that is universal or a transcendental spirit within ourselves which was not influenced by the march of history, it is also not a fixed origin that would constitute for us a final or an absolute return, it is nothing like 'once-and-for-all', and certainly it is never close be a 'phantasm'.

In short the second sense of cultural identity is, though not familiar and represents an unsettled state of subject, it is controversial and interesting view that provides a clever and straight ground to understand the origins and the formation and transformation of the identity

of blacks. In this perspective, Hall claims the following statement, “if identity does not proceed, in a straight unbroken line, from some fixed origin, how are we to understand its formation?” (Hall 226), therefore, the focal point is the area of “difference and discontinuity” that the latter emphasizes in the coming points of his view.

As a suggested answer to the inquiry raised above, the scholar hypothesizes that the identities of the black Caribbean people are ‘framed’ by two axes or vectors, which operates at the same time: the axe of which represents point of similarity and continuity; and the axe which represents the difference and rupture. In other words, the Caribbean identity is seen, by now, as ‘product’ of the dialogic relationship between the two axes. Thus maintains the notion of ‘different from yet related to’, i.e., the hypotheses suggests that the first axe reminds us of the past and shared heritage, while the second proves the reference of the uniqueness of the experience shared and the discontinuity.

Nonetheless, Stuart Hall, with the conception of ‘difference’ sees it is possible to think again of the ‘positioning’ and ‘repositioning’ of Caribbean cultural identity as linked to what he had borrowed from the Negritude⁶ poets, Aimee Cesaire and Leopold Senghor, as ‘presences’: *Presence Africaine*, *Presence Europeenne*, and finally the most ambiguous presence at all *Presence Americaine*. In this vain, Hall confirms that by establishing these three crucial presences, he is collapsing other cultures present in the Caribbean such as Chinese, Lebanese, and Indian, and also by putting the third presence as ‘Americaine’ he refers, not to the first world sense on which they “occupy the rim of its North”, however, to second broader sense that means ‘The New World’, *Terra Incognita*. (Hall 229)

In brief, *presence Africaine* represents “the site of the repressed” (Hall 230), which is muted due to the powerful experience of slavery. In fact, Africa was present in all levels of

⁶ Literary and ideological movement led by French-speaking black writers and intellectuals from France’s colonies in Africa and the Caribbean in 1930. The movement is marked by its rejection of European colonization and its role in the African Diaspora. It expresses pride in African heritage, culture and values, as well as “blackness”.

life of slaves through all forms possible like language, clothing, oracles, songs, rituals, beliefs, traditions. However, it is the presence that is unspoken and unspeakable in the Caribbean culture. Therefore, Hall claims that, “it is the absence/presence of Africa, in this form, which has made it the privileged signifier of new conceptions of Caribbean identity”(Hall 231), by this he means the factual truth that everyone in the Caribbean, shall, sooner or later discover the African presence in his identity regardless of the diversity or ethnic backgrounds that exist within that society.

Second, *Presence Européenne*, which represents the second complex term in the equation of identity. It represents Europe as the state of “endlessly speaking” unlike the silenced Africa. Due to its roots of power, European presence constitutes an interruption to the innocence, objectivity, authenticity, and ‘truth’ of the discourse. It plays the role of the *dominant* in the Caribbean Culture because of its grabbing on power and authority. The European regimes of representations intentionally spread their logic of race, binary oppositions, and divisions in order to position the black subject within its colonial discourse, and literature .

Thirdly, *Presence Américaine*, or the ‘New World’ presence is not concerned with power as much as it concerns itself with the place, ground or territory. Hall describes it as, “the juncture-point where the many cultural tributes meet”(Hall 334), it refers to the ‘empty’ land –which had been emptied by the colonial existence-which hosts strangers from every part of the globe. In the same stream, all peoples that collided there whether whites, blacks, Chinese, Indians, Jew, Dutch, Portuguese, or others, do not belong to the territory. In this respect, Hall argues that the ‘New World’ is the space where Africa encountered the West as well as the place of continuous displacements of the original ‘pre-Columbian’ inhabitants

such as the Arawaks⁷, Caribs⁸ and others who were permanently displaced from their homelands and replaced by other people from Africa, Asia and Europe. Therefore, the New World Presence, Terra Incognita, can be considered as “the beginning of diaspora, of diversity, of hybridity and difference”(Hall 235).

To sum up, the concept of cultural identity through the lens of Stuart Hall is represented in a very unique and controversial fashion that goes hand in hand with the modern thinking and the changes in the world we live in. Through his theorization, the latter intends to challenge the traditional conceptualization and views about the question of identity, moreover, his view, although it complicates the former perceptions, it provides a satisfying understanding of the concept especially when it is employed in literary works, like novels or in the cinematic domain like films.

Conclusion:

This chapter provided a theoretical background of the postcolonial theory and its main occupation with concepts of culture, identity, and cultural identity. This theoretical overview will make the analysis of the novel based on clear visions of what the postcolonial theorists and cultural critics generated as views concerning the aforementioned concepts. The concepts defined in this chapter are the ones that will be tracked in the novel, in other words, the task will be mainly an examination of the provided concepts in the novel. The next chapter will be devoted to the discussion of what has been said in chapter one and found in the novel chosen.

⁷ Arawaks Local inhabitants of Jamaica who founded it by 700 AD, and who had been south America immigrants.

⁸ Caribs are indigenous people of the Lesser Antilles in the Caribbean

Chapter II:

A Postcolonial Reading of Culture in Small Island

Introduction:

This chapter is devoted to the analytical side of the study. It is divided into two sections. In the first part, there will be a plot summary of the novel used. Moreover, this part will deal with the reasons that made the novel a suitable corpus for the application of a postcolonial reading of the mentioned concepts in the previous chapter. It also provides a clear analysis of the major themes, techniques and the context of the novel. The second part will be particularly devoted to the examination of culture in the novel, taking into consideration the concepts related to it such as otherness, hybridity, mimicry, and hegemony.

2.1 A Plot Summary:

Andrea Levy's *Small island* tells the story of four characters, two couples. The first couple are the Jamaican immigrants Gilbert Joseph and his newly married wife Hortense Robert. The second couple are the British Quennie Buxton and her incredibly repulsive husband Bernard Bligh. The novel commences with a Prologue where the author accounts for Quennie's childhood in the country side and her first encounter with the black man at the Empire Exhibition where she, along with her family and cousins meets and learns more about the Empire's ex-colonies and their products.

The story is set in 1948 and moves back and forth between three particular moments in history, '1948', '1945', and '1940' and between three places, Jamaica, Britain, and India. And portrays the life experience in Britain during and post Second World War, of the four characters. Mainly, Gilbert, a Jamaican volunteer in the RAF, who has returned to Britain having realized, after his experience in serving in the war, that there have been no

opportunities for him back in Jamaica, and that he now ‘belongs’ to Britain. Hortense, his prissy school teacher wife, has followed Gilbert to Britain naively believing all she has been taught about the superiority of the British thinking that she will have a privileged place among them. So convinced with her belief, she falls onto disappointment later when she encounters the white British resident and be aware of their racist attitude towards her and Gilbert. Moreover, Quennie, their landlady, a white English woman, yearning for excitement who has found herself stuck in a run-down house with racist, repulsive neighbours. She used to live in the country side where she encountered Gilbert for the first time and then after they become friends. Lastly, Bernard, a foolish, stupid, narrow-minded English man who serves in the Empire’s Army in India, and after the end of the war he disappears there for two years .

After a long wait, Gilbert finally returns to Britain and begin to look for accommodation and job. Suddenly, he remembers an address that he had memorized during his years of service. The address is “21 Nevern Street,London SW5”, a ruined and nearly collapsing house, because of the Germanic bomb. The house belongs to the Bligh family, and Quennie rents it for ‘colored’ people in order to have income. Gilbert, discovers the fact that Quennie is one of the few Londoners who are actually willing to rent him a room, for, although he was accepted as a soldier during the war, once the war was over and his uniform was returned, the prejudice of his compatriots has returned. He was casted again and seen as an outsider.

When Hortense first arrives on Empire Windrush, she brings with her, a bag full of dreams, hopes and aspiration believing blindly in the idea that she’ll have the suitable life in the Promised Land that she had always dreamed of. However, this image soon vanishes as she arrives at her destination; the address of the house where she, and her husband will live. After residing in the house, she starts to see things clearly. Hortense eventually realizes that despite the fact that she was the product of Western education, and although she acquired certificates

that acknowledge her level and qualifications, she was seen as other. Moreover, her Jamaican accented English, though seemed to be perfect in Jamaican setting, the English population found difficulties understanding her speaking.

Bernard represents the English society in terms of racism, patriarchy and foolishness. His journey and experience in the East, serving on the behalf of the British troops is ironic.

In that ruined house, the four of the characters live together, each one of them, because of its other, develops a kind of social awareness and eventually come to find his true self. It is according to Starr E. Smith in an article in *Scholl Library Journal* a “masterful depiction of a society on the verge of major changes.” (Kelly 4-5)

2.2 *Small Island* as a Postcolonial Novel:

The novel can be considered as postcolonial, because it holds a range of postcolonial factors and concepts, among which are the following:

1. The story takes place in Jamaica and shifts forth to India, these two settings were previously colonized by the British colonialism, and previously colonized countries are included in the areas that the postcolonial scholarship studies. The postcolonial theory and criticism can only be applied on the kinds of writings produced in previously colonized countries.
2. The two main characters, Hortense and Gilbert, represent many of the postcolonial key concepts, mainly: hybridity, identity in crisis, agency and empowerment, hegemony, inbetweenness, quest of belonging, mimicry and others. In addition, to the influence of the colonial education on the post-independent nation.
3. The novel explores and demonstrates the effects of colonialism especially the cultural legacy, which is the main preoccupation of the postcolonial theory to investigate. It even goes further to discuss the effect of colonialism on the colonizer himself,

through the depiction of the character of Quennie, who despite the fact that she was a white woman living in a racist community towards blacks and non-Europeans in general, she becomes friend with Gilbert and succeeds to develop a link with Hortense, and even goes further to have an affair with another black that results in a illegal child. This is mainly due to her exotic desire towards her 'other'.

4. Part of the major task of the postcolonial study is to unveil the hidden truths and histories that were intentionally discarded by the Western canon, in the novel, the author tries to reveal some hidden truths about the history of British colonialism and his real face, in addition, to undermine the West's justifications by giving voice to the subaltern to speak their own experience.

Due to the several reasons mentioned above, a postcolonial reading of the novel proved to be suitable. Another crucial factor can be taken into consideration is, the language and how it is elaborated to suit the character of each one and also to account realistically for the experience and events in the story. The language used and the word diction are used mainly to show the power of the colonizer and hegemony, which are two main aspects that the postcolonial study intends to examine.

2.3 Context, Themes and Techniques:

Small Island is a beautifully crafted, tragicomedy book which provides a skilful and thoughtful portrait of a set of historical moments, themes, and techniques which make the work authentic, significant and worth studying. .

a. Historical Context:

The novel is a 'historical' novel which portrays factual moments and events from history, like the post-independence in the Caribbean, the Second World War, Britain engagement in the war in India, the Empire's decline, and the post-war Britain social

,economic and political conditions. Moreover, the novel is a high depiction of the *Empire Windrush* immigration. Historically speaking, in June 1948 the British troopship *ss Empire Windrush* arrived at Tilbury Docks in Kent carrying 492 civilian passengers from Jamaica, including Andrea Levy's father. Many of these Jamaicans were young men who served as soldiers and airmen in the WWII and were keen to return; having had a glimpse of the opportunities Britain could offer. Another historical moment depicted, is the war in India, the corrupted systems there, the manipulations and the series of theft and exploitation.(Kelly 6-7)

b. Themes:

Small Island, displays a wide range of important topics and themes such as immigration, race, identity, class, and others. For instance, it is an excellent depiction of a racist country and racist population and their violent attitudes towards the new comers immigrants, it also shows the hypocrisy of the empire in terms of words and promises. In the wartime, when she knew she was weak and unable to face the Germanic giant, she promised its colonies that if they supported her during the war and she won the war, she will grant them their freedom and sovereignty, moreover, the very troops of soldiers coming from the colonies were made to believe that they who represents the empire and they who are the true subjects who ought to protect it and save it. Nevertheless, once the war was ended, and the country is rescued, these who were supposed to be 'heroes' were neglected and returned to their casted status of being foreigners who must get back to their lands.

c. Techniques:

In terms of structure and techniques, the way in which the author structured her novel is intelligent and interesting. She begins with Prologue that provides a wonderful glimpse about the story. Then it moves to '1948', then 'Before'. The whole story switches between '1948' and 'Before' and each section of these contains a chapter with the name of the narrator on it.

That is to say, each narrator of the four tells his own version of the same story. The reason behind doing so was to avoid confusion. Moreover, the way in which the author introduces its main characters was done slowly and so delicately that makes the reader feels as if she was peeling the layers of characters and revealing them one step at time in order to show the reasons behind the choice of the characters.

The techniques used in presenting and telling the story are modernist. The author, throughout the novel moves back and forth between different places at different moments. The story is characterized by a multi-layered , discontinuous and rhizomatic plot told from different narratorial points of view.

The language is a very crucial aspect in any work of literature. In *Small Island*, the author chooses to speak each character with his or her native tongue. For instance, Quennie spoke the Londoner accent, while her husband Bernard articulated Far East accent because of his presence in India. Hortense spoke an English mixed with Jamaican accent, although the latter was believed to be fluent among her fellows, her Jamaican accented English was misunderstood among the English people. Finally, Gilbert, who did not have the chance to study, had learned his English during the war service. The way he spoke English language was so poor and fragmented. Even, Hortense's grandmother, an ex-slave was portrayed with the voice of Patois, the Afro-Jamaican local language. In doing so, the author intends to make her work more realistic, authentic with original dialogues in order to feel the experience of each one of them.

Another important point to mention is the setting. Accordingly, the story's events shift between three places, three great continents: Europe, The New World, and India. By doing this, the author tries to establish the historical and cultural link between the three places, claiming the attachment of the 'West' to its 'other'. That is to say, one cannot speak about the

history of Britain without mentioning its colonies in the Americas, India or even in Africa. Thus, Levy portrays this line in order to solidify the history, civilization, and culture of the West originated from its 'other'. In addition, the purpose behind portraying the house in that manner is, that she wanted to create a place from a space, i.e., before the coming of the white landlady, the house was bombed, and destroyed and above all empty. Then, it was used in the novel as an accommodation for 'colored' people to live in it, thus she created a place for them as a minority within the centre of the metropolis. Another idea can be attributed in this sense, is that we can consider the ruined house as the Identity of the black couple, especially, for Hortense, her identity was dislocated and fragment after she became aware of the racist attitudes and her position within the centre. It is only when she decides to leave that house holding within her arms the illegal child of Quennie, that she discovers her true-self and become in good terms with her identity and heritage.

2.4 Culture in *Small Island*:

Small Island is a clear depiction of the cultural legacy of the colonizing powers on the formerly-colonized nations. In her work, Andrea Levy intends to create a counter- history or a clarifying lens to account for the real life experience of being previously-enslaved, colonized, and oppressed by the British, and its impact on the post-emancipation society's mindset. These effects are highly shown in different ways through different aspects throughout the novel. Mainly, the black characters, the Roberts family and Gilbert Joseph are the perfect exemplification of the intersection between the colonizer's culture and the colonized. This interplay is widely depicted in terms of upbringing, education, aspirations, and life experience.

a. Upbringing:

In the post-emancipation society, where the black characters lived, Hortense was highly influenced by the culture and lifestyle of the other. Since her early ages, she used to have that pride of being the daughter of a middle-class government man who works beyond the seas. In the novel, the little Hortense shows her great admiration of her father, she states , “My father was a man of class, a man of character. A man of intelligence. Noble in a way that made him a legend. ‘Lovell Roberts,’ they whispered. ‘Have you heard about Lovell Roberts?’”(Levy 63). Here she is expressing her great joy of being the daughter of a English like noble man.

Subsequently, the idea of the ‘other’ is remarkably shown in the way Hortense, looks with inferiority to her slave-descendent mother whom she describes as ‘backward and ignorant’ maintaining that, “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 ... what, after all, could Alberta give? Bare black feet skipping over stones” (Levy 64). By providing this image, one can clearly notice that the protagonist, regardless of how young she is, has already been a subject of the Western notions of the norm. In other words, Hortense, othered her own mother and neglected her own heritage (slave ancestry), unconsciously, because she was so loaded with the culture of the colonizer, the thing that led her perceive herself as ‘superior’ to them. The feeling of ‘superiority’ was mainly because she considered herself ‘different’ than her mother or her grandmother. In this stream, she states, “I grow to look as my father did. My complexion was as light as his ; the colour of warm honey. It was not bitter chocolate hue of Alberta and her mother. With such countenance there was a chance of golden life for I”(Levy 64). This very feeling of superiority (colour based), would lead the character later to encounter shock and disappointment, it is only later in the story that she realizes that all degree shades of black

and other colours are 'othered' by the Western system; there is no such a thing called privilege of having lighter colour.

Moreover, the young character was raised in a English like family. This very act itself, is a reflected the influence of the colonial culture, i.e., her mother and grandmother saw it best for her to be brought up in an atmosphere that similar with how her father grow up. The Roberts family were her paternal cousins. She was sent to live with them because it was the logic there that a 'mulattoo' like her must not be raised by a slave-descendent dark skinned, with bared feet woman, Alberta. In this respect, she asserts, "Miss Jewel, Alberta's mother, wore her good hat and her best blouse to lead me to the house of my father's cousins. ... Alberta was to leave Jamaica and take up work in Cuba and Miss Jewel would stay as a servant of my father's cousins", (Levy 66).

Nevertheless, her grandmother, also because of her dark skin and ignorance, she would be assigned to work as a servant in the house of the Roberts (who are originally Jamaicans with black skin). Thus, this reflects the mind-set at that time after the departure of the colonizer. We can claim that even after slavery was abolished and the nation was emancipated, the traces of enslavement among the locals continued to exist, they were all the same, yet they have chosen to distinguish themselves in terms of colour, gender, education, language and class. In this vain, Fanon's ideas about the seeds of racism in the colonizer's culture and even after he is gone, how it is installed within the colonized mind-set can be the perfect argument here, the latter criticizes the Western system by arguing, "Colonisation is not satisfied merely with holding people in its grip and emptying the native's brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures and destroys it" (Fanon 170).

Thus, we can assume that the primer and ultimate goal of the colonizer was to produce people who are ‘blind followers’, ‘mimics’ by extracting them from their roots, history, origins, and culture in order to control them. Mimicry is explored in the characterization of the Roberts family, especially with the character of Philip Roberts, for instance, the family used to pray before having the dinner, which is a typical attitude of the West, in describing the scene, little Hortense says:

If Mr Philip knew the devilment I had been tricked into he would have sent me away. Little girls did not climb trees! ‘Principle,’ he bellowed at every meal. ... After he had blessed the food with a grace that sometimes went on long enough for my neck to get stiff with the prayer, Mr Philip started his sermon: ‘ Life is preparation for the day when we finally look upon the face of the Lord, our Maker.’ He rose from his seat clutching his bible like a weapon. ‘ I am the way, the truth ,and the life’. ... We kept our heads bowed to eat as Miss Ma instructed us on an appropriate table manners . ‘ Take your elbows off the table while you are eating. Hortense, please sit straight. Michael, do not put so much food into your mouth. Only a horse chews with its mouth gaping.’ (Levy 69)

Well, this is not the quite the usual scene of an Afro-Jamaican slavery descendent family gathering around the table. In fact, mimicry was not only in terms of dinning, but, in all aspects of everyday life, in clothing, speaking, and learning. However, this act of blind imitation will soon be faced with prejudices, under-estimation, and rejection in the first moment of encounter between the colonizer and the formerly-colonized. In this respect Bhabha argues that mimicry is ,“the strategy of colonial power/knowledge” in sake of getting approval and acceptance. It is considered as “ a difference that is almost the same, but not quite” (Childs and Williams86). Thus, Hortense and the Roberts family, although they

‘mimic’ the colonizer they can never fully be alike due to the colonial discourse and representation. In this case, mimicry plays the role of exclusion.

The encounter between the natives and the coming white settlers also results in the notion of ‘fascination toward the white other’. This is seen primarily in the reaction of Jamaican people each time they see the ‘Other’, for instance, Hortense’s first encounter with a white settler Mrs Ryder, made her see the woman as something exotic and fascinating, she states, “ Mrs Ryder was, without any doubt, the whitest woman I had ever seen with a movie-star accent. Her short blonde hair sat stiff as a halo around her head. Her delicate skin was so thin that in places it revealed a fine blue tracery of veins”(Levy 75). She carries on further by maintaining that the town boys “would leave their game of dominos undecided to rush to her assistance”(ibid). In seeing the ‘other’, the ‘opposite’, the blacks become so fascinated, which is again one of impacts of the western regimes of representations and systems of division.

Furthermore, the personality of Hortense is one of the complex personalities in the novel. She sees her desire, her affection, and her admiration in the shadow of the ‘other’. Fanon explains this idea in his book as, black people “wear white masks to get by Europe” (Fanon 117) For instance, since she was a child she used to admire her father’s character and appearance just because he used to represent the English like model. She frequently used to repeat the statement “ Lovell Roberts, have you seen Lovell Roberts?.” By time, when she was fifteen years old, on the homecoming day of Michael , the boy whom she was raised with; the son of the Roberts family, she kept repeating the very same statement, “Michael Roberts! Have you seen Michael Robert?,” despite the fact that only few years before she used to get annoyed from Michael and perceive him as a source of disturbance , in a scene she says, “ You are a nuisance to me, Michael Roberts,”(Levy 67).

What made her change her mind, was definitely his new look as he came for visit from boarding-school. In an interior monologue, she kept thinking of what made her like the boy so much, the very same boy that she used to avoid one two or three months ago, Hortense asserts:

was it the suit, the crisp white shirt, the brown-and-green-striped tie held in place by a pin? Was it the hat tipped at an angle on his head? His thin moustache, perhaps, or the crooked smile that lit his face. ... he stepped down from the van in his shiny city shoes. He shook Mr Philip by hand and bowed his head politely, like a man of class, a man of character, a man of intelligence. Noble in a way that made me want to shout, 'Michael Roberts! Have you seen Michael Roberts?'.(Levy 78)

Hence, Hortense indeed represents the character the most affected by the cultural legacy and the remaining mentality of the colonizer.

Another striking argument was displayed by Edward Said in his pivotal book, ***Culture and Imperialism***, where he maintains, "... only in their ex-colonies that the reality of the empire pervaded the entire culture" (Said 213). As juxtaposition on the novel, we find Said's view correct and healthy. It is true that the real zeal of imperialist system, practices and attitudes are widely seen and installed in the mind-set and culture of the colonized that later discovers the dangerous outcome of mimicking, and resembling the colonizer's culture and traditions.

b. Education:

Being the product of western education can be both a blessing and a problem. The educational systems that were present and active in the Island were aiming primarily at producing sons and daughters of the empire. Moreover, the portion of the educated population under the hands of the Europeans, grow to exclude and castoff the remaining uneducated population. By then, getting a chair in one of the schools held by westerners was considered as a privilege and source of pride. In this respect, both Michael and Hortense, viewed themselves as distinctive and hugely different in terms of how much knowledge they knew, how many capital cities' names they memorized, and how many books of literature and civilization they read, and how many new information or theory they learned. For example, Michael dared to challenge his father's faith by inquiring about the origins of mankind, claiming that he was taught at school that " Tell me ,papa, what do you think to the notion that men are descended from monkeys" (Levy 80). In addition, Hortense, while listening to her grandmother singing in the Patois language, she suggested that it would be better for her if she starts learning and speaking the language of the King. She further gave her a passage from the English Romantic Poet William Wordsworth's poem that she had learned at her school, insisting that Miss Jewel should learn to sing this kind of lyrics. In this stream, Hortense maintains, "Miss Jewel' I told her, 'you should learn to speak properly as the King of England does. Not in this rough country way' ... I taught her the poem by Mr William Wordsworth that I had learned to recite at school.

I wander'd lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host of golden daffodils."(72).

However, the poor old woman, Miss Jewel soon returned to sing in her fashion, “Ah walk under a cloud and den me float over de ill. An’ me see Miss Hortense a look pon de Daffodil dem”(ibid).

This kind of knowledge and education that was circulated in the local schools of the Island, even after the departure of the colonizer, can be considered as a cultural enslavement. A part of the colonial system is to disfigure the culture of the colonized. In this account, we can take into consideration what Gayatri Spivak had theorized as “The epistemic violence of imperialist law and education”, where she explains how the practices of imperialism and education such as language and discourse and knowledge can be used as means to maintain power and control over the subordinate colonized or newly emancipated people. In short, despite the fact that being educated and well-cultivated persons equals a good life conditions, awareness of the milieu and also a means of agency and empowerment, especially for women, education, language and knowledge of the West serves as a powerful weapon in order to guarantee the informal control and dominance of the empire over its ex-colonies. Moreover, it is also a devilish strategy in order to spread categorization and divisions within a particular one nation, so that the educated starts to see the uneducated with an eye of superiority and authority. Yet, these educated subjects can never fully be accepted within the dominant circle, or considered as British even if they have an inequitable amount of economic or educational status.

Another example of the impact of western discourse on the islanders, was Hortense’s vocabulary and word diction. The latter uses the very same binary opposition of the imperialist system such as light/bitter in terms of skin color, bright/backward in terms of educational level, for example, she says “I was used to children from good homes, fair-skinned, and high class children not sixty black faces, acting like idiots”(Levy 111). According to western law of logic, within the binary opposition, always the first term

represents the power and control while the second indicates dominated and weak status. By doing so, Hortense, distinguishes herself from her society; she perceives herself as ‘different’, since the very function of Binarism is to constitute “the most extreme form of difference possible” (Ashcroft et al 18).

c. Aspirations and Life Experience:

From a very young age, Hortense and her friend Celia Langely started to develop a desire and hopes to move and live in Britain. During her days in the formation, in Kingston, the young Hortense used to hear her friend Celia’s speeches about how it is going to be like to live in England. Celia Langely, a black Jamaican woman who always tells Hortense that, “ Oh Hortense, when I am older, I will be going to live in England. Hortense, in England I will have a big house with a bell at the front of the door and I will ring the bell ‘ding-ling’. I will ring the bell in this house when I am in England. That is what will happen to me when I am older” (Levy 2). Likewise, Hortense also admires the idea of living in England, believing it would be the appropriate place for someone educated, fluent and lighter in skin like her. An illustration for this is one scene in 1945 Kingston, Jamaica, during the final day of recruitment of soldiers from the empire’s overseas colonies in order to serve in the war on the behalf of the empire. So amazed by the scene, Hortense thinks in a loud voice, “so many men. Why must so many go?” (Levy 116), she thought that these words are only in her mind until she was surprised by Celia sombrely replying:

‘You must understand, if this Hitler man wins this war he will bring back slavery. We will all be in chains again. We will work for no pay. ‘Celia I work for no pay now,’ I said thinking of my worthless class. Perhaps she did not understand my joke, for she did not laugh or even smile. ... I understand why it was of the greatest importance to her that slavery should not return. Her skin was so dark. But mine was not that hue. ...

No one would think to enchain someone as I. All the world knows ... 'Britons never, never, never shall be slaves'.(ibid)

Here, it is clearly seen that she perceives herself as Briton, who belongs to England, and who because of her skin colour, she is the one who deserves a chance in the golden empire.

In fact, not only does she dream of living in England, but she also sees her Island (Jamaica) as small in comparison to the Mother country. She perceives the empire with an overly-romanticized view, believing she can realize her dreams only by moving on to settle there in the arms of her mother. This overly-romanticized view is a subsequent result of the 'hybrid culture' prevalent in that society, and as well as the huge impact of education and the circulated knowledge about the empire where describing it as 'the Golden Chance' will soon lead her to be corrupted, to cheat on her only friend Celia by taking off her lover Gilbert, and trying to deceive him with money in order to marry her. Her marriage with Gilbert meant for her the golden chance to immigrate to Britain, since Gilbert used to be a former British Soldier.

In addition, the idea of hegemony is expressed through the novel in the fact that the contribution of the empire's ex-colonies and the support of men she received was a part of its hegemonic strategy making them believe and accept the fact that if Britain loses the war against Germany, Adolph Hitler subsequently will turn the whole world, including them, into slaves, and Britain will not be able to help them. By pressing on them using this idea, the empire got numerous supports from men and women from the Island who were ready to serve in the war and rescue the Great nation.

Like Hortense, Gilbert Joseph also had strong aspirations to return and live in Britain, especially after his experience in the second world war. The latter after returning from the war, started to see Jamaica as 'insignificant small island' as comparison to Britain. Both and

Hortense and Gilbert's aspirations were the product of indirect contact with the "Great Empire" through reading about narratives from the Western canon, or via direct contact through having the experience to live there and frequent with the "Great Nation".

What was associated as "Greatness" to the empire and its nation soon collapsed after Gilbert and Hortense's moving and life experience there. Thus this very fact unveils the truth about Britain and the imperial system and the knowledge distributed in order to maintain people's state as mimics, subordinated, and thus easily dominated.

What Hortense kept repeating as, "Is this the way the English live?"(Levy46), "Just this! This is where you are living! Just this! You bring me all the way for just this!"(Levy 45) is definitely loaded with mixed feelings of shock, wonder, sorrow, disappointment and eventually awareness.

Actually, Hortense's reaction to the conditions where she would live with her husband; a dirty, unarranged room, in a nearly destroyed house, made her think and rethink her about the empire. Since her first foot stepping in Britain , she was faced by racial prejudices, stereotypes and under-estimation. For instance, the taxi driver that picked her from the harbour, told her when they reached their destination, " This is the place you want.... 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." (Levy 39). It is obvious that, despite the fact that she was dressing like an English lady and trying to bring her best by speaking an English like accent, he positioned her in the category of ' coloured- skinned equals primitiveness'. After a similar scenes, she finally recognized the fact that in this country, no matter of what social class you belong to, or what level of education you own, or what kind of outfit you put, or what a language you are trying to articulate, you are seen and will be always labelled as the 'other', the "opposite" and the 'different'. This is not only the

case of Hortense, Gilbert too, used to think that he is a British, since he served in the name of empire, he believed that he would be perceived as a 'hero' who saved the nation from the Fuehrer's grip. However, once the uniform was taken off, he returned to his position within the dominant circle, perceived as "dirt", "inferior" and "backward". Both of them eventually realized that their hybrid culture and longings to cross the borders and become British subject will only serve as a problem for them, since their pasts and heritages were degenerated by the practices of the colonizer; through power formed narratives or hegemonic persuasions, believing strongly in the possibility of assimilating in the English society and being perceived as the 'norm' the 'usual'. Unfortunately, this ceased to happen because of the western representations about the non-west, and because of the imperialist logic of division, as well as universal standards of European culture, thinking and world perception.

Therefore, we can maintain the fact that the colonizer will never allow the full assimilation or integration of the formerly-colonized subjects within one culture or one society because this act will primarily undermine its justifications of colonialism that is based on spreading stereotypes, representations, and discriminations. A solidifying argument is that of Bhabha who states in his book *The Location of Culture*, "The objective of colonial discourse is to construe the colonized as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin in order to justify conquest and to establish a system of administration and instruction"(70).

Conclusion:

This chapter provided a plot summary of Andrea Levy's novel *Small island* which help the reader to understand the major events and developments in the novel, so that the analysis will be clear. The theoretical background on the theory and its major interests in the question of culture and its relating key concepts that were given in the first chapter came into use in the second chapter. Moreover, the analysis proved that the novel is a postcolonial due to the fact that it contains a set of postcolonial concepts such as hybrid cultures, mimicry, hegemony, and otherness. The following chapter will look at the novel with another purpose, which is to examine the identity crisis and signs of cultural identity.

Chapter III

An Examination of Cultural Identity in Small Island

Introduction:

This chapter includes three sections. The first part is about the significance of the novel's title, it will answer the question 'why small island?' . The second part will be devoted to the exploration of the identity in crisis and identity formation in the novel. The last part will deal with tracing the signs of Stuart Hall's cultural identity view in particular.

3.1 The Meaning and Significance of the Novel's Title:

The '*Small island*' of the title refers to Jamaica , once considered as the 'Big Island' of the Caribbean but now seen as insignificant place by those who have returned from the war. The war experience made the majority of the ex-colonies soldiers perceive their own lands as small and vulnerable in comparison to the Mother Country, especially that they have seen the opportunities in Britain, which is the case of Gilbert. Moreover, Hortense used also to look at her country as inferior and unsuitable place for living. This was mainly due to the influence of the colonizer's culture, assumptions and western logic.

The title also refers to Britain reluctantly waking up to the fact that it is no longer the powerful country that rules the world, the borders of its once empire shrinking around it, due to the acts of Nationalism around the globe. In fact, losing India meant the decline and the end of the British Empire, for it represented its beating economic heart. Nevertheless, the hostile and miserable conditions of the war made the British perceive Britain as 'Small'.(Kelly 6-7)

3.2 Identity crisis in *Small Island* :

Andrea Levy's *Small Island* portrays intense and challenging moments in the construction of the identity of black Caribbean people in their homes and away. Through analysing the characterization of the black couple Hortense and Gilbert, we can assume that their identities fall under suspicion in many instants throughout the story. Thus, their identities can be considered as suffering from crisis, yet each one with a distinctive degree. According to the ideas mentioned about the crises that occur at the level of identity, Mercer proved that identity becomes an issue only when it is in crisis. In Hortense's case, her identity was blurred mainly because of being a black woman who at the same time acts like a white woman and believes, subconsciously that she is a British. Gilbert on the other hand, also have a fragmented identity because he was a black man who was treated as a white British citizen during war-times, and right after the war was over, his position was de-centred, and thus his identity was dislocated because he was repositioned as someone he believed he is not.

Actually, Hortense, is a black Jamaican woman, who found it hard to locate her own identity in the metropolis. She was born and raised in a Western like family, she was taught by English teachers, and worked as an English language teacher in her Island. She represented the model of an English lady , which was reflected in her appearance, clothing, manners, attitudes, principals, and even thinking. She spent a lot of time reading about the empire and the style of life there. The contact zone between the colonizer's culture and the formerly-colonized, which is in this case, English teachers at school, books circulated from the western canon, alongside with the Western like upbringing, had produced a hybrid identity. Hortense became aware of herself as British, especially due to her 'colour of warm honey' skin and language fluency. All these factors made the protagonist believe that there is no way that she would be otherwise than a British subject. In this respect, she maintains, "No one would think to enchain someone as I. ... 'Britons shall never be slaves'"(Levy 117). Meanwhile, she taught

at a private school and was acting as an English teacher, making comments about the black children whom she considers as “backward” and “idiots”.

It was until her first encounter with the British people in Britain, that her identity started to fall in crisis. She was so excited when she first arrived at her desired destination 21 Nevern Street, SW5 London. She expressed her joy by saying, “ Oh Celia Langely, where were you then with your big ideas and nose in the air? Could you see me there in London? Hortense Roberts married with a gold ring and a wedding dress in the trunk. Mrs Gilbert Joseph. ... There was I in England ringing the doorbell of one of the tallest houses I had ever seen,”(Levy 31)

She started to question her identity gradually, after she had encountered a British woman at the seaport, who believed that Hortense was the new servant coming from the Island on that ship. What made the woman mistakenly think that Hortense was Sugar, the nanny, was the aspect of ‘blackness’. Hortense used to perceive herself as not black, but rather a ‘lighter in skin’. However, she was perplexed when the woman perceived her as black, whether her skin was bitter, or lighter, she was seen as a black. In a scene, she says:

As my feet set down on the soil of England an Englishwoman approached me. She was breathless. Panting and flushed. She swung me round with a force that sent one of my coat buttons speeding into the crowd with the velocity of a bullet. ‘Are you Sugar’ she asked me. I was still trying to follow my poor button with the hope of retrieving it later as that coat had cost me a great deal of money. But this Englishwoman leaned close in to my face and demanded to know, ‘Are you Sugar?’. I straightened myself and told her, ‘No, I am Hortense.’... ‘Have you seen Sugar?’ she said, ‘She is like you, She is one of you. She is coming to be my servant and I am little later than I thought’.(Levy 36)

Therefore, Hortense started to recognize that despite her English like appearance, and her exaggerated English accent, she was perceived as a black woman coming to UK in order to hold the lowest categories of jobs. In fact, Hortense used to think that her language was perfectly understood and well-articulated as the natives tongue. However, she was shocked when the taxi driver could not even guess what she was trying to convey when she opened her mouth. She describes the scene in a manner that you can feel sorrow:

It took me several attempts at saying the address to the driver of the taxi vehicle before his face lit with recognition. ‘ I need to be taken to number twenty-one Nevern Street in SW five. Twenty-one Nevern Street . N-e-v-e-r-e-n S-t-r-e-e-t’. I put on my best accent. An accent that had taken me to the top of class in Miss Stuart’s English pronunciation competition. ... But still this taxi driver did not understand me. ‘ No, sorry, dear. Have you got it written down or something? On a piece of paper? ... I showe him the letter from my husband, which was clearly marked with the address. ‘Oh, Nevern Street – twenty-one. I’ve got you know’. (Levy 39)

We can trace the development in the identity of Hortense from the moment when she considered herself as a ‘Briton’, to the moment when she faced the mere reality. She became unaware to whom side she belongs. Whether she is the black Jamaican woman who married a black like her, and they are living in the worst conditions in Britain but ,they must consider themselves ‘lucky’. Or the light skinned, English language teacher, and English speaker who deserves to live a prosperous life in Britain.

Accepting the conditions, meant also accepting to live with a man that she barely knew, and who reminded her constantly about the bitter reality of England, Gilbert in a intense fight tells her:

Yes, and you know what else, Miss Stick-up-your-nose-in-the-air, you will have to

wash your plate, your vegetable and your backside in the same basin that was full with my doings. This room is where you will sleep, eat, cook, dress and write your mummy to tell her how the mother country is so fine. And, little Miss high-class, one thing about England you don't know yet because you just come off a boat. You are lucky.(Levy 61)

This touchdown with reality alongside with the racial prejudices she had endured all her way to the “shabby house”, made her realize that apparently she was standing on the wrong side of the boat. She was identifying herself with one group which initially neglected her and considered her as its “other”. She recognized that she was perceiving her presence in the light of the “other”. What represented the “norm” for her, was the English like life.

However, the latter recognizes her true-self and discovers her identity, not in British context, but rather, in her own context. She arrives at this point due to what happened between Michael and Quennie.

Throughout the novel, Michael, the son of the Roberts, moves to study in Britain and after several years, he meets Queenie, the white landlady. Because of the reciprocal feeling of fascination and exoticism towards the ‘other’, the two engage in an illegal affair, and Quennie gives birth to a black child. Michael Robert, dumps Queenie by the end, and refuses to acknowledge the child. This incident alerts Hortense to reconsider her thoughts concerning Micheal. Actually, Hortense used to perceive him as an English like model “... civilized, and a man of class” (Levy 99), the thing that made her fall in love with him, she even used to compare between him and Gilbert. The result was seeing Gilbert as “disgusting” man who “... live(s) like an animal,” (Levy 60). However, this vision soon changed, especially after Gilbert

insisted that he would raise Quennie's newborn baby. Quennie, decided to give him away, believing that it would be inappropriate to raise a black child in a white family.

It was until this very ending scene, that Hortense found her identity, her true-self. Before, she used to other and neglect her island "Jamaica", seeing it as "Small" in contrast to England, the land of "Golden chance". However, by the end she discovered what she had really wanted, and where she had truly belonged, in this respect, she maintains :

I never dreamed England would be like this. Come, in what crazed reverie would a white Englishwoman be kneeling before me yearning for me to take her black child? ... Yet there was Mrs Bligh kneeling before Gilbert and I, her pretty blue eyes dissolving beneath a wash of tears, while glaring on we two Jamaicans, waiting anxious to see if we would lift our thumb or drop it. Could we take her newly-born son and call him our own?. (Levy 745)

In the assertion above, Hortense clearly loses hope in the Great Island, and starts to perceive it as "Small". The latter finds it odd that a mother gives away her newly-born child. By this, she realizes the reality of the empire; we can consider that Quennie represents the Great Empire which looks pretty and alluring from the outside, yet cold and heartless from the inside, and the child represents the blacks with hybrid cultures and identities, who despite the strong link that attach them to the Mother Country, it is predetermined for them that they belong and do better in their homelands, with his own kind. In addition, she locates and acknowledges herself as "Jamaican" after a long denial and struggle with her views concerning her belonging. Another indication that Hortense fully found herself and accepted her heritage, race and origin, is her acceptance to her husband Gilbert, whom she starts to perceive as her beloved 'hero' during an intense dialogue between him and the foolish Mr Bligh, in her own words, Hortense describes her husband for the first time as , " for at that

moment as Gilbert stood, his chest panting with passion from his words, I realized that Gilbert Joseph, my husband, was a man of class, a man of character, a man of intelligence. Noble in a way that would someday make him a legend. ‘Gilbert Joseph,’ everyone would shout. ‘Have you heard about Gilbert Joseph?’” (Levy 749). By now, she finds her self-identification and self-discovery in the shadow of her own heritage and in the light of her black lower-class uneducated husband, whose deeds are much important than his skin, level of education or even financial status.

If one sticks to the claim expressed above, in the technique part, it may be correct to think of the setting “21 Nevern Street SW5 house, as the identity crisis of the character Hortense. Her identity went through formation stages, before coming to the house, she used to perceive herself as ‘Briton’, however, when she encountered the “shabby, nearly collapsing house, with dirty, unarranged rooms”, she started to have questions and her identity had fallen into crisis. By the end, when she was preparing herself to leave the house she found her identity, acknowledged her true-self and become prided in her heritage. In fact that is the essence of her journey in the aim of self-discovery, remediation, and eventually self-identification. In the last paragraph of the last part of the last chapter, Hortense asserts:

I held the baby awkward as I finally closed the door on that wretched little room. No compunction caused me to look back with longing. No sorrow had me sigh on the loss of the gas-ring, the cracked sink, or the peeling plaster. At the door to Mrs Bligh’s home I stopped. I tapped gently three times. There was no reply. ... She was there – I knew. ‘Goodbye, Quennie,’ I called, but still she did not come. Gilbert nearly knocked me from my feet as he rushed towards me. His shirt outside his trousers and buttoned up badly, panting like a dog.’ I have the trunk in the van,’ he said. ‘Come, hurry, nah.’ He took the baby from me. I adjusted my hat in case it sagged in the damp air and left

me looking comical. ... But I paid it no mind as I pulled my back up and straightened my coat against the cold.(Levy 755)

By this we can conclude that not only Hortense could locate her identity, but also came in good terms in her relationship with her husband Gilbert and her mother, she at last could produce a formative statement about her mother without feeling shame or inferiority, in this sense, she states, “ You wan’ hear what I know of my mummy? A flapping skirt, bare black feet skipping over stones... gentle song that whispered, “Me Sprigadee”, until my eyes could do nothing but close”(Levy 751). By doing so, it is clear that she no longer others her husband and considers him as “different” and “backward” but rather a source of pride, love, and worth, nor she neglects her origin as being slave-descendent. At the end Hortense became tolerated with her past and present, her reality and history looking forward a brighter future with her newly-formed family.

On the other hand, Gilbert Joseph’s identity also fell into a crisis. This was mainly due to his second repulsive encounter with the white British people. Actually, Gilbert had already been in Britain during the war-period where he served on the behalf of the British Empire during the WWII. During that period, he was perceived as a British subject, thus the treatment was usual. After the war was over, he was obliged to return home. After experiencing the life in Britain, Gilbert had developed a feeling of inferiority towards his Island. Instead, he believed he would do better in the Mother country.

However, when he returned to Britain in 1948, he was shocked because he was castoff . the British practiced racial and violent attitudes towards him. This fact led him recognize that, although he served in the war with courage and rescued the nation from the Germanic forces, he remained as the ‘opposite’, and the ‘other’.

He soon recovered from this crisis, and developed an awareness that he is lucky enough to have a dirty room in a nearly collapsing house at the centre of London. In this sense, he addresses his new coming wife :

‘Yes, and you know what else, little Miss stick-up-your-nose-in-the-air, you will have to wash your plate, your vegetable and your backside in the same basin that contains my doings. This room is where you will sleep, eat, cook, dress, and write your mummy to tell her how the Mother country is so fine. And, little Miss high-class, one thing about England you don’t know yet because just come off a boat. You are lucky’.(Levy 61) .

This self-recognition reflects the racist attitudes of the empire towards its ex-soldiers who were extremely faced with thankless behaviours, marginalization, and otherness.

3.3 Signs of Cultural Identity in *Small Island*:

Stuart Hall’s theory of cultural identity represents one of the interesting and brilliant views concerning the question of cultural identity. The view is somehow linked to the Caribbean people and the construction of their identities. Since the characters of Levy’s novel are Jamaicans , they represents the appropriate corpus for the application of the theory. Hortense Robert is one of the characters whose identity reflects Hall’s views. The latter had suggested that the cultural identity is constituted through having points that differentiates the person. These critical points constitute what he really are and what he have become, despite the bounds and similarities with his native culture and society.

In the novel, Hortense is depicted as a black Jamaican woman. She was born in a place where people share the same native culture, rituals, traditions, origins and even skin colour, however what constituted what she really is, is not the common characteristics that she shares with her society, but rather the points of differences and distinctions, such as language,

dressing, education, religion, and habits. For instance, both her mother and grandmother spoke Patois, also known as the Caribbean Creole, in a scene, her grandmother states, “Me nuh now, Miss Hortense. Wen me Mudda did pregnant dem she smaddy obdeah’er. A likkle spell yah no,” (Levy 72), however, Hortense, though knows the Patois language, she replied in English language, saying, “Miss Jewel, You should learn to speak properly as the King of England.”(ibid). This indicates her state of difference, and thus maintaining a cultural identity. According to Hall, this point of difference also constitute what she have become. In the novel, Hortense, have always wanted to become an English teacher. Thus this factor affected not only her past, but also her future. The latter states in the novel, “My dream was and always had been that I should find employment teaching at the Church of England school in Kingston, for it was there that light-skinned girls in pristine uniforms gathered to drink from the fountain of an English curriculum.”(Levy 138),

This assertion does not only represents her as distinctive in terms of longing to be an English language teacher, but it also suggests a second critical point of difference which is the colour of skin. It goes without saying that the Caribbean society is formed by black people, Hortense, within this black homogenous society puts herself as ‘light-skinned’. This also determines what she really is, and what she have become. For example, due to her belief that she is not like other Jamaicans in terms of skin colour, she thinks that she deserves better life in Britain. In this sense, Hortense affirms, in an interior monologue, “My complexion was as light as his; the colour of warm honey.... With such a countenance there is a golden chance for I”(Levy 64).

In addition, Stuart Hall defies the notion that cultural identity is an already accomplished fact, or an existing aspect. He instead claims that it comes from somewhere, and it has its own history. Moreover, it is always in a play with culture, history and power. In this vain, one can claim that the cultural identity of Hortense is indeed constituted through the

play of history, power and culture. In other words, the protagonist's identity is hugely affected by history. Since history is not objective, and lacks the 'truth' value, what has been circulated by the western canon is not authentic nor innocent. Furthermore, it is manipulated by power. Thus what she was reading about the empire, and the literature produced there, affected her identity in terms of seeing her own Island, husband and even mother as 'backward', 'ignorant' and 'dirt'. Second, the culture of the colonizer affected the protagonist's identity, it turned her to a mimic woman, who exaggerates in the way she speaks, behaves or even dresses in order to look like an English lady. Therefore, Hall's view is conveyed here. Hortense's cultural identity was not something she was born with, but instead it was something acquired and affected heavily by power of history and culture.

Nevertheless, the cultural scholar formulates an interesting problematic concerning the formation of cultural identity, on the basis of the idea that it does not emerge from a stable and fixed origin. Thus, he claims that the Caribbean identity is built upon two axes. One represents the similarity whereas the other indicates the differences. In the novel, Hortense's identity is also built on the same axes. An illustration of this is, the axis of similarity represents the shared native culture, the origins, the African race, the black skin, the spiritual religions and the Patois language. These factors are shared within the Caribbean Island and indicate the link with the past. On the other hand, the axis of differences refers to the impact of the colonizer's culture, light skin, English language, Christian belief, education, dining manners and even outfit. These factors embody the uniqueness of the Caribbean experience and they are linked to how her future will be like. In fact, this view does not only represent the cultural identity of Hortense, but also the cultural identity of the Caribbean Island. The Caribbean experience, and identity is, in the same manner, different from the African or the Indian experience.

Accordingly, the significance of Stuart Hall's theory lies in the way he had linked the positioning of the Caribbean identity to the three presences which were coined by the Negritude poets. He believes in the possibility that cultural identity holds the presence of the three continents which were extensively associated with the experience of slavery, transportation, colonialism and immigration. In the novel, the African presence refers to the untold stories, and repressed visions and the deliberately forgotten memories of the mother of Hortense. In the beginning of the story, Hortense refuses to acknowledge the bounds with her mother, believing that it definitely must have been a kind of mistake, being born to a bare feet slave that would eventually provide nothing but a source of shame and ignorance. This presence is muted due to the traumatic memories of the colonial practices in the Island. It is not spoken, however, it is never absent, for it is mostly represented in the language (Patois), in the songs " ...and a gentle song that whispered, "Me Sprigadee" until my eyes could do nothing but sleep,"(Levy 751) and in clothing "skirts skipping in the breeze, with bare black feet," (ibid) . According to Hall's view, the African presence is, though unspoken, it is present in all levels of life of slaves through all forms possible like language, clothing, oracles, songs, rituals, beliefs, traditions. Moreover, the Caribbean shall discover the African Presence despite the diversity and ethnic backgrounds. Indeed, by 1948, Hortense discovered her African Presence, and considered herself as slave-descendent and become able to speak about her mother and their heritage with complete satisfaction and stability, and tolerance.

The second presence is the most interesting and power formed presence. The European presence is the one that is always present, and endlessly spoken. For example, the way Hortense thinks "It is England where the shepherded is, Miss Jewel. And in England sheep live everywhere. They wear wool to keep out the winter cold," (Levy 73). The way she behaves, "I stepped back down two steps... I straightened my coat, pulling it close...I adjusted my hat,"(Levy 31), " I laughed too, so as not to give her the notion that i did not know what

she was talking about as regards this ‘white island’,”(Levy 33). The way she speaks, “Excuse me, sir, I am needing to go to the Nevern Street. Would you perchance know where is it?” (Levy 38). And finally, the way she dresses, “I was dressed in a white organza frock with blue ribbons ... and my hair was set in pigtails adorned with big white bows” (Levy 221).

These instances are clear indication of the existence of the European Presence within her identity. This is mainly due to the power and authority of the Europeans and their systems of control and dominance. This European presence is maintained particularly in the sake of making them dominated and easily controlled.

Finally, the third presence represents the setting, the territory where the presences mentioned above meet and interact. The American presence refers to Jamaica, the Island, which was perceived as “small and insignificant” due to the strong influence of the European presence within the Caribbean identity. In fact, Jamaica hosts strangers from every part of the globe. Afro-Jamaicans like Miss Jewel and Alberta’s Hortense’s mother, White British like the Ryders family who came as teachers, and Jamaican born population like Hortense and the rest of the characters. It is in this space where hybridity, diversity and diaspora began to see light. In the novel, we find that Hortense embraced the hybrid culture and hybrid identity in her Island due to the English settlers and due to the circulated knowledge from the Empire. The latter had developed a hybrid identity, not from immigrating to Britain, but only in the Caribbean island.

Hence, Andrea Levy’s novel proved to be the appropriate corpus for the application of Stuart Hall’s cultural identity. Through the analysis of the novel’s main protagonist’s character we can conclude that what the latter has suggested in his view was clearly found in the development and conditions of Hortense’s cultural identity. The theory represents a clear an outstanding view concerning the concept of cultural identity, which nowadays have

become a controversial issue due to complexities and challenges it represents in a shifting and progressing world.

The significance of Stuart Hall's theory lays in that it contributes to the proper understanding and interpretation of the traumatic character of the colonial experience. Although, it is established to account for the black Caribbean experience and their cultural identity's formation, it can also be put in a non-Caribbean context. For instance, it provides a rich and appealing understanding about the French colonial experience in Algeria. In this sense, the French colonial character also affected the construction of our cultural identity, through the notion of maintaining divisions between the Algerians, and establishing the idea of otherness as an 'inner compulsion', i.e., making us believe that we are the other inferior, and we react as such. For example, after the departure of the French colonizer, many Algerians started to perceive themselves as different, and they believed that their identities are found in a French context. Therefore, the theory applied, does not only help us to analyze literary texts, and understand their events, but also provides a clever insight on today's issues in various levels such as politics, humanities and others.

Conclusion:

This chapter explored how the identity of Hortense fell into crisis and became dislocated, due to Diaspora, and how she managed to(re)locate it and discover her true-self. Moreover, this chapter examined the signs of cultural identity of the character of Hortense through the lens of Stuart Hall, whose view is fundamentally crucial and interesting in analysing literary novels and understanding the black Caribbean experiences. In short, Hortense is the one that represents the two simultaneously operating axes that frame the Caribbean cultural identity; the axe of similarity and the axe of differences. In addition, her identity holds the three presences that the scholar had established in his view.

General conclusion

The aim of this study was to provide a postcolonial reading of the concepts of culture, identity, and cultural identity in Andrea Levy's *Small Island* (2004) using perspectives related to postcolonial theory, and tracing the signs of Stuart Hall's view concerning the formation of cultural identity. A theoretical background on postcolonialism as a literary theory, especially the related key concepts such as hybridity, mimicry, inbetweenness, otherness, and hegemony, was needed for the analysis of the novel.

The interaction and intersection between the colonizer's culture and the colonized is remarkably depicted through the characterization of the black characters, the Roberts family alongside with Gilbert Joseph. The clash between the two opposing cultures colonizer/colonized is shown in various levels in the story, mainly in terms of upbringing, education, aspirations and lifestyle. Here we find that the Roberts including Hortense are hugely affected by their contact with the colonizer's culture to an extent that this contact produced a hybrid and mimic persons. Hortense for example, because of the impact of the cultural legacy, she started to perceive herself as superior and started the process of othering other people like her mother, her husband, and even her friend Celia. This kind of hybridity that the character owns is dangerous in terms of causing her an identity crisis later in the story when she encounters the 'other'. Moreover, this mimic products are a subsequent result of the empire's hegemony that is spread through the representations, textbooks and writings of the Empire. In addition, Hortense's identity falls into crisis mainly because of being a black who at the same time acts like a white woman and believes, subconsciously that she is a British. When she encounters the white British resident, she starts to develop a racial awareness, and eventually she become able to overcome her overly-romanticized views on the empire and the

General conclusion

golden life there. It manages to locate her identity when she decides to accept her reality, history, race, origins, ancestry, and most importantly her husband Gilbert, whom she used to neglect. She leaves the house with a child of her own kind, and a tolerance with herself and a located identity that identifies her properly. She undergoes stages and obstacles before she finally realizes that her essence is contained in her acknowledging her belongings.

Cultural identity had been a very controversial and debatable issue in the recent years. Its conceptualization differs from one scholar to another on the basis of certain context, conditions and theoretical criteria. Hall's view is the most interesting and appropriate in the context of Black-British literature. *Small Island* represents the appropriate soil for the application of this distinctive and unique view. In the novel, Hortense Robert is characterized as a black woman, who at the same time acts like a white woman, and who perceives herself as British. She was born and raised in Jamaica, and then immigrated to Britain. She is the best character that represents properly the cultural identity's view of Stuart Hall. In this sense, Hortense is the one that represents the two simultaneously operating axes that frame the Caribbean cultural identity; the axis of similarity and the axis of differences. In addition, her identity represents both past and future, both similarity of oneness and uniqueness of the black experience. It holds both the links with her heritage and society, and at the same time what differentiates her from them. In this sense, we can claim that through the analysis of the character's state, we can clearly acquire a fruitful insight inside the black experience, diaspora, and cultural identity. Moreover, the character holds within her identity the three presences that the cultural pioneer has established. The silenced Africa, the active, and affecting powerful Europe, and the hosting territory, Jamaica. Therefore, *Small Island* proves to be a suitable corpus for the application of several postcolonial theories in general, and Stuart Hall's theory of cultural identity in particular. The application of such theories on postcolonial novels provides a clear reading of the literary works, in addition, the engagement

General conclusion

in a study that combines literature with aspects of history, politics, and humanities, results in the rising of the public awareness about today's most important issues.

Black-British literature's main commitment is to represent the black experience and account for the histories with small 'h' that were previously discarded and neglected by the Grand narratives of the past. The use of the postcolonial theory's perspectives, views of critics, and fundamental study key concepts contributes heavily in the undermining and subversives of the knowledge and representations of the West on the non-West. the investigation and excavation of the cultural legacy of colonialism on the colonized nations has been the major interest of this scholarship, in addition to the fundamental and crucial result behind reading the novel and analyzing the cultural identity origins and formation from the perspective of one literary theorist who is originally an Afro-Jamaican, thus, he accounts the best concerning the concept. Andrea Levy's novel, can be a good teacher and guide that provides a glimpse into the history of the empire, from the minority's perspective. It is a home for a wide range of theories , topics, issues and concerns that goes hand in hand with the modern globalized world of today. Through the application of certain theories on postcolonial novels, the level of public awareness of today's issues and most debatable topics eventually increases.

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Appendices

- Appendix A: Stuart Hall's Biography



Stuart Hall, a Jamaican-born British Marxist sociologist, cultural theorist and political activist. He was born on February 3, 1932, in Kingston, Jamaica into a lower middle-class family. He spent his childhood and adolescence in his hometown, and then moved to England where he studied and lived all his adult life “in the shadow of black Diaspora, ‘in the belly of the beast’”, (Hall 222). He wrote many books and critical essays where he represented his views and new perceptions about the question of identity, cultural identity and Diaspora and other famous works. He came to prominence thanks to his collection of essays entitled *Cultural Identity and Diaspora*. He died in London aged 82 years in February 2014.

([https://www.britannica.com/biography/Stuart -Hall](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Stuart-Hall))

- Appendix B: Andrea Levy's Biography



Andrea Levy, an English author, was born on March 7, 1956, in Archway, London to Jamaican parents who came to Britain in 1948. She gained a wide recognition as a writer with the publication of her fourth novel ***Small Island (2004)***. Most of her works intend to explore topics related to British Jamaicans and how they negotiate racial, cultural and national identities.

Levy has lived all of her life in London. After attending workshops of writing in the mid of her thirties, the latter began to write the novels that she, as young woman, had always wanted to read, the kind of entertaining novels that reflect the experiences of black Britons, which look closely and perceptively at Britain and its changing population and at the intimacies that bind British history with that of the Caribbean.

She has written five previous novels, ***Every Light In The House Burnin'(1994)***, ***Never Far From Nowhere (1996)***, ***Fruit Of The Lemon(1999)***, and her wonderful ***Small Island (2004)*** that put her in the prominence alongside with her last novel ***The Long Song (2010)***. Her second novel ***Never Far From Nowhere*** was long listed for the orange prize, and ***Small Island*** won the Orange Prize for Fiction , the Commonwealth Writers' Prize, and the

Appendices

Whitbread Novel Award and other awards. *Small Island* has been adopted into a major BBC TV drama.

Levy's first three novels were also critically acclaimed, despite the fact that the author faced rejection from the publishing companies in the early years of her career. ***Every Light In The House Burnin'*** is the semi-autobiographical story of Jamaican family living in London that shifts between the narrator's memoirs of growing up in 1960's and her experiences in the present sitting by her dying father's beside. *Times Literary Supplement* described the novel as "striking and promising debut". Moreover, the second novel ***Never Far From Nowhere*** is the story of two sisters, daughters of Jamaicans, who live on London council estate in the 1970's. One of them perceives herself as a black while the other moves to see herself as white. This novel was nominated for The Orange Prize. The third novel ***Fruit Of The Lemon*** is the story of a black Londoner who travels in a visit to Jamaica where he finds stories and histories that were unknown before and hidden about his family. It won The Art's Council Writers' Award. It is interesting to acknowledge that what motivated this author to began writing is her desire to discover her history and where she comes from. In an interview with the *Washington Post* in 2004, Andrea Levy said " I love books that you feel once you've read them that you add to the total sum of who you are. That you've learned something or you've been taken somewhere that was really worth going, because you understand something better now", in fact, this is the case with Levy's fourth and fifth novels. ***Small island*** is a commemoration of the 1948 Caribbean immigration on the famous SS *Windrush Empire* to Britain, which her father was on it. And in ***The Long Song*** , she states that while writing about slavery and forced labour she discovered her own history as an afro-Jamaican slaves descendent.(Kelly47).