

**TITLE PAGE**

**BLACKNESS AND ROLE ASSIGNMENT IN ANDREA LEVY'S *FRUIT OF THE LEMON AND SMALL ISLAND***

**A RESEARCH PROJECT**

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**CERTIFICATION**

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## **DEDICATION**

This is dedicated to JEHOVAH JIREH, MY DEPENDABLE REALITY.

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It was like a dream but now, it is a reality. Although, it was not easy but there are some people that volunteered to lead me across the ocean of difficulties, while some made provision of walking stick that supported me. Firstly, I acknowledge the immeasurable mercy of my God, the Almighty, the maker and the finisher of all good things, for his infinite mercy and provisions throughout this Masters Degree programme.

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## ABSTRACT

Blackness has continued to grow in meaning such that its meaning can be described as ambiguous. Blackness in a racist environment dominated by whites assumes meanings that are negative. In a racist environment, blackness is seen as an anathema. To clarify the concept of blackness, the researcher emphasizes that blackness transcends just the physical colour of the skin. There are many that cannot be physically described as black but are considered black because of their ancestry, genetic history, geographical location etc. A black person can be equated with the 'Other' in Simone de Beauvoir's term. The National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders in America opines that 'our nation is moving towards two societies, one white, one black- separate and unequal' the most fundamental is the racial attitude and behaviour of whites towards the blacks' (Bradford Chronicles 238). A black person in Britain and other white dominated societies is a subalternized person whose identity is defined by another; a person denied of self. This imposed or constructed definition of blackness leads to stereotyping and role assignment. In literary criticism, role assignment on the basis of blackness is manifested in several forms in literary texts. This study examines what blackness means to the characters and the consequent role assignment as contained in Andrea Levy's two novels: *Fruit of the Lemon* and *Small Island* using the critical race theory. At the end of this research, it was discovered that coloured people are seen as second class citizens in white dominated societies.

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## Chapter One

### Introduction

#### 1.1 Background of the study

Who taught you to hate the texture of your hair? Who taught you to hate the colour of your skin to such extent that you bleach to get like the white man? Who taught you to hate yourself, the shape of your nose and the shape of your lips? Who taught you to hate yourself from the top of your head to the sole of your feet? Who taught you to hate your own kind? Who taught you to hate the race that you belong to so much that you don't want to be around each other? you should ask yourself who taught you to hate what God gave you.

-Malcolm X

The import of Malcolm X's speech delivered on May 5, 1962 is an apt description of this study on colour and its dynamics. Colour politics is directly related to skin pigmentation and its concomitant stratification which both function as a result of race consciousness in a multiracial society. America and Europe are examples of societies with multiracial distribution. In this situation, the black race is the worst hit because of the joint effort of Trans-Atlantic Slavery and other historic events that necessitated the mass migration of the black people from Africa to America and Europe. For these black immigrants and their descendants in America and Europe, racism is an everyday reality made manifest in different dimensions and experiences of people's social existence. The colour hierarchy that values light complexions over the dark one specifically affects people with black skin as they are often treated and evaluated based solely on their physical traits.

Therefore, blackness acquires negative connotations in the European psyche as early as the third century. Stratification based on skin colour started during the Trans-Atlantic

Slave period. The institution of slavery is justified by a belief system that marked whiteness as superior to all (Hill Mark 84). The consequence of this nefarious system has had a devastating effect on the psyche of even the people with shared ancestry. For instance, the mulattoes who have a deposit of black gene in their blood tend to deny every affiliation with blackness because of the implication of affirming the identity. In the words of Franklin Frazier, he says that the mulattoes are conscious of the distinctions between themselves and the dark slaves and believes that their white blood has placed them on a better position when compared with people of pure black ancestry. The people of African descent have been regarded by whites as black whether they are of mixed African ancestry or not. To be black in colour or to be of African race is to be dirty, ugly, evil, deadly and devilish while to be white is to be clean, beautiful, good, lively, pure, innocent and godly. This shows that *colorism* a term coined by Alice Walker in 1982 is still a sensitive and complex phenomenon in the lives of black people in Diaspora.

Similarly, Frantz Fanon as contained in *The Construction of Identity* in Andrea Levy's *Fruit of the Lemon* through her work recorded the psychological damage suffered by the colonized people. She notes that the colonialists perpetuated the belief that *white* is the *norm* and *black* is the *Other* (Magdalena 5). The people of African decent have internalised white values to the extent that they turn to skin bleaching in order to be accepted into the mainstream of this society. True beauty is now given to fair people. For instance, in the world of modelling, white female models occupy the top strata in the Western societies while black females occupy the bottom rung. Dami Akinusi, discussed in *Layers of Blackness: Colourism in the African Diaspora*, confessed as a producer of television documentary on bleaching on how she tries to bleach her own skin as a teenager. For her, [She] was branded too dark by people that [she] met at the time [and] contemplated was [she]

too dark to be successful? Too dark to be pretty? All of this different thing (cited in Gabriel 44.)

This same issue of negative connotation of blackness is what led Michael Jackson to change his original skin colour, which is medium brown during his youth to be fair because he wanted to be accepted by the white folks. He even created a dimple in his chin and changed the shape of his nose to look pointed just like that of the white. J. Randy Taraborrelli believes in his article "The Michael Jackson I Knew" that Jackson thought that his skin condition messed up his whole personality. He goes further to say that as a child, Jackson thought that he was ugly, his skin too dark and his nose too wide which made his insensitive father and brothers to call him "Big Nose". Jackson told his associates that "the greatest joy [he] ever had is in knowing [he] had a choice about [his] face." He described himself as a "work in progress". It has always been a mystery to many why Jackson, king of pop, changed his skin from black to white. Some argue that it is due to a disease called "Vitiligo" which causes white splotches on the skin. But this research has unveiled that it is due to one cause, racism. This is because his social acceptance and social relationship never improved after he transformed his skin to white, which shows that it is not about the colour per say, but about the stigma of being black in a racist white society.

Similarly, racial interaction and relationship became even worst for black people during the Enlightenment Age. The Enlightenment Age which took place between the late 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> century, advocated freedom, democracy and reason as the primary values of the society, making a clear boundary between Europeans as possessors of intellect, morality and beauty and Africans as primitive, backward and ugly. This ended up creating the concept of European racial superiority (Gabriel 43). This situation was philosophised and strongly justified by the leading 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> century philosophers like David Hume

and Georg Hegel. For instance, in Deborah Gabriel's reading of David Hume's philosophy, she maintains that:

I am apt to suspect the Negroes and in general all other species of men to be naturally inferior to the Whites. There was never a civilised nation of any other complexion than White; there are Negro slaves dispersed all over Europe, of whom none discovered any symptoms of ingenuity. (43)

Consequently, Deborah Gabriel enunciates that Hegel's view about the black race in quoting Hegel who observes that "Africans are less than human, because they are perpetually in a child-like state of unconsciousness where they are unaware of their existence as human" (Qtd in Gabriel 45).

This practice of judging black as inferior and seeing them as the "Other" has psychologically damaged the victims thinking, they no longer value or see the worth in them. In their struggles to recover from the damage caused by centuries of enslavement comes the issue of colour, which is another pernicious and internalised form of racism, where you are heavily judged based on your skin colour. The colour black becomes devalued that the shade of their skin literally controls their condition and future prospects; this brought more agony and psychological trauma on blacks in Diaspora. This explains why at the United Nations World Conference Against Racism in Durban, South Africa, in 2001, the conference president, Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, says in his closing statement "the systems of slavery and colonialism had the degrading and debilitating impact on those who are black" in an addendum, he makes himself clear that remedial action is necessary to correct the legacy of slavery and colonialism and all other forms of racism. This is to show the damage that the denigration of blackness has had on the psyche of dark-skinned. In the words of Marcus Garvey of 1923, he asserts that

Some of us in America and West Indies and Africa believe that the nearer we approach the white man in colour the greater our social standing and privilege and what we should build up an aristocracy based upon caste of colour and not achievement in race. (Gabriel 7)

Blacks in Britain who are brought up to believe England is their mother country are disappointed, because they find post-war London prejudiced and unwelcoming. Britain arbitrarily established two racial divisions- white or coloured (Hiro 24). The blacks in Britain are heavily judged by their skin colour. They are more disheartened when they remember that their relatives fought for Britain in World War II coupled with the fact that they are brought up in colonial schools to revere Britain. Britain shows West Indians and anyone who is not white that they do not belong and had never belonged in spite of their colonial education stressing loyalty to the British crown.

Andrea Levy made it clearer when she says: "My parents came from a class in Jamaica called 'the coloured class'. They came to Britain with a kind of notion that pigmentation represented class. They didn't necessarily have more money or education, but because they were somehow closer to being white, this was seen as a badge of pride. My parents arrived here and were surprised to discover that they were considered black. No matter how light-skinned her parents were, theirs was still considered the only black family on their council estate near Arsenal" (Magdalena 5).

Having seen all these, the interest in Andrea Levy's *Fruit of the Lemon* and *Small Island* is specifically on the role assignment. This is because blacks in Britain have been assigned some degrading roles not necessarily because of colour but the composition of their race, of which colour is one part. Characters such as Faith, Wade, Mildred, Constance, etc (in *Fruit of the Lemon*) and Gilbert Joseph, Hortense Joseph, etc (in *Small Island*) are assigned

certain roles which are less beneficial when compared to the ones attributed to the dominant(s) in their society. It is disheartening that British still see the black race as a slave and insignificant creature, who must die wretched doing degrading and menial jobs. These degrading roles shall be discussed fully in the textual analysis which appears in the chapter four of this research.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Andrea Levy's *Fruit of the Lemon* and *Small Island* have been studied in the light of racism, treatment of the characters, otherness, quest for self, identity, alienation, hybridity, journey motif, while some have taken the biographical study of the two texts under study. However, this study explores the idea of role assignment as seen in the two texts. Here, the task is to examine what blackness means to the characters and the consequent role assignment as contained in Andrea Levy's two novels: *Fruit of the Lemon* and *Small Island* using the critical race theory. These roles reveals that a black person living in whites dominated societies is a subalternized person whose identity is defined by another; a person denied of self.

## **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to present a critical analysis of blackness and role assignment as seen in Andrea Levy's two novels, *Fruit of the Lemon* and *Small Island*. The intention is to study the kind of roles, positions or duties given to people of black colour or African descent in English society. The study also intends to find out how selected characters in the texts under study have been disappointed, oppressed, subjugated and exploited by their whites counterparts through the kind of roles assigned to them as a result of their complexion as showcased in the two texts.

#### **1.4 Scope of the Study**

This research cover instances of blackness and show the roles and status of people with black skin especially as it is showcased in Andrea Levy's two texts *Fruit of the Lemon* and *Small Island*. The reason for limiting the investigation to these two texts is to prevent the project from being ambiguous and to allow a detailed thematic preoccupation of these two texts with regard to the positions the black people occupy in the society they found themselves.

#### **1.5 Significance of the study**

This research paper will contribute to the existing public knowledge on Afro-Caribbean literature and black British literature. It will also add to the already existing knowledge on the two texts and serve as a guide for other researchers who would like to carry out more investigations on the topic under study.



## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 Introduction

Andrea Levy's *Small Island* and *Fruit of the Lemon* have been read and discussed by a lot of critics from diverse perspectives. Some critics see these novels as Levy's biography while some critics read them from the standpoint of racism, hybridity, identity, alienation and many more that characterize the works. However, the interest of this chapter is to present these critical views.

#### 2.1 REVIEW OF ANDREA LEVY'S *FRUIT OF THE LEMON*

In "Telling Her a Story: Remembering Trauma in Andrea Levy's Writing", Ole Laursen argues that *Fruit of the Lemon* is Levy's effort to unveil the traumatic collective histories and legacies of slavery, colonialism, and post migration to Britain (2). Laursen argues that the black race has experienced suffering in its various shapes and sizes. They have been subjugated, relegated, dehumanized, oppressed and exploited both physically and mentally during and after the slave period. Therefore, the history of the black race has been characterized with colonialism and slavery leaving them with the legacy of thinking less of themselves. Similarly, Laursen opines that black people's migration to Britain and other English societies in the post war days produced a historical rift between the collective, shared memory of slavery and colonialism and the experience of racism in contemporary Britain (7). Because of this historical rift, the post colonial subjects in the English societies never understood these traumatic histories and the way their present society sees them; this explains why Laursen asserts that Levy's interest in bringing these histories to light is brought about by the loss of commemorative and narrative tradition caused by post-war migration (1). Faith's identity crisis as seen in the novel is as a result of Faith's parent's inability to acquaint Faith with these traumatic histories and their characteristics. Hence, Faith has little or no

understanding of how modern racism is rooted in the traumatic histories of slavery and colonialism. This, to Laursen explains the eventual breakdown of Faith (the main protagonist in the novel) after a series of racial experiences (7). It then becomes imperative to Laursen that the memories of slavery, colonialism and migration should be passed on from generation to generation. This, he sees as a great tool to maintain and renew identity, thus creating a collective and shared cultural identity. Quoting Paul Gilroy, he stresses that the telling and retelling stories of collective traumatic experiences such as slavery, colonialism and migration are essential to cultural identity (4).

In addition, he states further that *Fruit of the Lemon* is Levy's effort to project her personal experiences and the history of the entire Caribbeans that is characterized by racism and discrimination (8). The issue of race and racism is not a new thing in the English society and it has equally gained ground in the minds of scholars. According to Laursen, Levy as a post colonial subject has been saddled with racism and discrimination in the British society. In addition to that, she is not properly educated with her past just like her fictional character Faith does. Throughout the novel Faith struggles to fit into a society that sees her as an "Other" which results in her identity crisis. Though Laursen fails to detach the analysis of the text from the author's perspective, he nicely concludes by asserting that *Fruit of the Lemon* should not merely be examined as a socio-historical text but as an aesthetic oeuvre that memorializes the experiences of slavery, colonialism, and migration (10). From Laursen's perspective on the novel, his emphasis is on the importance of passing on the memories of slavery, colonialism, and migration to the post colonial subjects in the English societies which will enable them to confront and overcome the trauma of modern racism in Britain deviates from the argument of the present study which depicts that Faith's acknowledgement of her historical background does not place her on a better position in the English society.

Moreover, Faith's knowledge of her past at the end of the novel does not in any way change the way the English society sees her neither does it improve her social status in Britain.

For Maria Magdalena, *Fruit of the Lemon* is an autobiography of Andrea Levy (3). To buttress her point, she adds that Levy brings to limelight her experiences of racism, discrimination and her journey to find her inner self in a society that does not acknowledge her existence because of her race. In her exact words, she says:

The book describes a British black woman's journey towards her inner self, in a land that does not always acknowledge her existence and it is, in my opinion, autobiographical to a certain extent. Levy declares: "there's a section where I look back at the family tree of the main character, Faith. A lot of the work was me plucking up my mother if she would tell me something about her childhood." (3)

She blames the identity crisis that is suffered by black American and black British on colonialism which instills in them that their history before the advent of white rule was dominated by barbarism. The colonized as a result imitate the colonizers lifestyle which she describes as "mimicry"

Furthermore, Magdalene stresses that Faith is made to see how her world is racialized by the way her white friends interpret their shared moments. In one way or the other, Faith is made to understand that she is black and does not have a place in Britain. She further says that, this is why her parents try to convince their daughter to always stay close to her own kind. However, Faith's parents' unwillingness to reveal their own disillusionment to their children, especially Faith and the persuasions she gets from her parents to marry from her own kind adds to Faith's identity crisis. The reason for Faith's parents' migration to Britain from Caribbean is being hidden from Faith.

Using the post-colonial theory, she brings out the concept of otherness and hybridity through the character of Faith in the novel. She stresses that due to the great value and

attention given to whiteness by the society which is totally different from blackness results equally to Faith's identity crises. Faith who is seen as the "Other" fails in her attempt to blend with the society which leads to her hybrid identity. She is neither here nor there. Magdelene states further that for blacks to escape supremacy of the white, they have to find their roots, which explains why Faith has to embark on a journey to find her root, making her to regain her true self.

From Magdelena's analysis in her article "The Social Construction of Identity in *Fruit of the Lemon*" it is obvious that she is unaware of the death of the author as soon as a piece of work is given birth to. This explains why she believes vehemently in her analysis of the novel that the story is Levy's life story. Therefore, she channels her analysis of the novel around the author's background, which I think ought not be. She fails to remove reality from art. This research tends to feel that gap. Secondly, she uses the postcolonial theory in her analysis of the novel, while this present study will apply critical race theory in the analysis of the text.

Still on the issue of identity, Chukwumezie T.M.E discusses identity crisis in relation to alienation and racial memory in his essay "Alienation, Identity Crisis and Racial Memory: The Realities of Blacks in Diaspora in Andrea Levy's *Fruit of the Lemon*". He is of the view that physical (geographical) and psychological (mental) separation from one's cultural home will definitely result to alienation that now manifests as identity crisis (9). To make his assertion clearer, he says that Faith, the protagonist in the novel is considered alienated because right from her primary school days, her parents consciously do not want to acquaint her with her history or the realities of who she is. Therefore, Chukwumezie sees racial memory as the only therapy to understanding one's true self and identity, especially for the slave descendants born in Europe by migrant parents who came to England during the Windrush era. Standing on that assertion, he opines that the blacks in Europe after the Windrush era faced heavy discrimination economically and socially. This discrimination based on race

according to him breeds alienation which will definitely result to identity crisis. In a way of conclusion, he says that racial memory is the only solution to alienation and identity crisis. Using the character of the protagonist, Faith, he is of the view that Faith regains her true self when she embarks on a journey back to Jamaica in search of her root. Therefore, it is only good knowledge of one's root that can disentangle one from the web of identity crises. This shows that for one to know her true identity, the past cannot be separated from the present as the two work hand in hand. Maria Magdalena supports this idea when she says in her essay, "The Construction of Identity in Andrea Levy's *Fruit of the Lemon*" that we cannot move forward into the future without a good understanding of our past. This present study tends to add that knowing one's historical background or true identity does not in any way give a black man who lives in the English society the same privilege that the natives have neither does it put a stop to the issue of racism. Racism is engraved in the fabric and system of [any English] society (Richard and Stefancic 45).

The issue of identity is equally addressed by Sebnem Toplu in his essay "Home (land) or 'Motherland': Translational identities in Andrea Levy's *Fruit of the Lemon*". He agrees with Chukwumezie that, good knowledge of one's history is a great force in identity building. Throwing more light on this, he says that Faith's identity crisis in the novel is as a result of the little knowledge she has about her history. This ambivalence created by her alterity is duplicated by racial and gender discrimination. Thus, she fights both racism and her parent's gender discrimination. In her confused state, she neither belongs to her ancestral homeland (Jamaica) nor to England, the legendary "motherland" of her ex-colonies. Toplu states further that Faith finds her inner self when she embarks on a journey to Jamaica, which suggests or shows that places play a significant role in identity formation and also in the function of homeland and motherland for the translated hybrid society (2). Quoting Roger Bromley, she says that home is the place one starts from (2). Thus, she asserts that home is at the center of

Andrea Levy's third novel *Fruit of the lemon*. Toplu's analysis of the text centers on the significant role places play in the formation of identity and the function of homeland and motherland for the translated hybrid society. This study however looks at the implications of one's identity considering the various positions and roles these black Britons are assigned in the English society. This study will also equate these roles and positions with those of the natives to bring to light that these positions and roles have something to do with race and identity.

In an illuminating study, Helena Kostohryzova opens up a discussion on Andrea Levy's *Fruit of the Lemon* in her essay: "The Immigrant Search for National Identity in the Novels by Andrea Levy and Zadie Smith." Here, the emphasis is on the need for the immigrants to know and understand their national identity. Briefly, he argues that the immigrants, especially the second generation (Levy's generation), suffer from "multiculturalism" which leads them not only to search for their personal identity but equally their national identity (54). Using the novel's protagonist, Faith, she says that Faith does not only embark on a quest to know herself but also to acquaint herself with her people. From this perspective, there is a reasonable degree of similarity from the reviews above, which is different from this present study that centers on role assignment, and the reviews done before; they all look at the question/quest for identity or discovery of identity while this present research looks at the implication of one's perceived identity.

Gideon Uzoma Umezurike in his essay, "Peregrination and the Formation of Personality in Andrea Levy's *Fruit of the Lemon*" moves away from identity crises and submits that the novel centers on peregrination and the formation of personality. Umezurike argues that Levy's characters represent the common (racial) history of black people who unconsciously peregrinate from one part of the world to another. This racial history influences their lives, leading to their different journey motives in search of their inner selves

(4-5). Using the fictional characters in the text, Umezurike shows how the characters embark on their journey for different reasons. He states further that this "collective unconscious" impulse or desire which causes them to embark on a journey to different parts of the world ends up changing their personalities and thus, they become people who "think, see things and live as different from the way they use to" (14). For an instance, he says that Faith's Parents are representation of the Caribbean who peregrinate abroad because of what they consider "oppressive, limiting nature of life in Jamaica and the need to overcome choicelessness" (5-6). Similarly, Faith embarks on a journey back to her homeland or ancestral home for a reason, which is to regain her true self. In Umezurike's analysis of the novel, he dwelt much on the journey motifs of the fictional characters, he never looks at or scrutinizes the kind of degrading jobs the English society has assigned to black immigrants which have to do with their race not necessarily that they cannot handle qualitative positions better than the natives.

## **2.2 REVIEW OF ANDREA LEVY'S *SMALL ISLAND***

In her essay entitled "England of Andrea Levy's *Small Island*: Dreams and Realities", Usha Mahadevan believes that *Small Island* is Levy's attempts to unveil in reality the situations the immigrants find themselves in England after World War II especially the coloured. Mahadevan says: *Small Island* focuses on the diaspora of Jamaican immigrants who sail to England with a lot of hopes and dreams only to find that the England they arrived is not the land of their dreams (1).

Focusing on the protagonists in the text, Mahadevan brings to limelight the dreams and great expectations the coloured have on the mother country and how they are disappointed upon their arrival to England. The opposite of their expectations becomes the reality. She says that the dreams and high hopes Hortense, who is one of the protagonists has for the mother country shatters as she arrives England. To Gilbert, who is also one of the

protagonists in the novel, the post war England of 1948 is not the England of his dreams. Despite his supports to the mother country in her time of crisis, his dream to study law is aborted. Quoting Elwood, Gilbert's cousin, Mahadevan says that Elwood teases Gilbert thus: "You no study Law yet? Me think you come back a judge. You know tell me the mother country no keep their word?" (Page 4) Mahadevan's perspective to the text shows that the blacks feel disappointed in Britain because they believe that their help to the mother country in time of her crisis will place them on a better position after the war. His ideology on the concept of disappointment deviates from this present study which depicts that it is all about race. Therefore, this present study tends to add that the negative interpretations given to the black race is responsible for their shattered dreams in England which Mahadevan never emphasized on.

For Alicia E. Eliis in her essay: Identity as Cultural Production in Andrea Levy's *Small Island* sees the text as a history book which explains the windrush migration and its aftermath especially on the part of Afro-Caribbean and other colonial subjects (3). He explains that the term "windrush" which is a historical event, symbolically marks not only the rise of multiculturalism in Britain but also the racial/ethnic and gender conflicts in Britain during the post World War Era. According to him, the experiences of the British colonized subjects after the war is never what they expected from the mother country. In their hybridized state, they are made to understand that they never belong and will never notwithstanding the promises made to them during the war. He argues that a close study of the characters in the text shows that Levy retells these stories through her fictional characters in the text. A story that represents her history and that of the Afro-Caribbeans (2) For instance, he asserts that the brief but significant interaction in the "Prologue" as can be seen in the text not only structures Queenie's (one of the protagonists in the text) narratives but also tells part of a greater story of historical encounters in Britain and throughout empire. Summarily, he says that *Small*



*Island* does show that new ways of belonging must linger in the imaginary until they are ready to be embraced as new realities, which calls attention to the unfinished and ongoing process of identity formation in Britain. This present study neither talks about the rise of multiculturalism and identity formation in Britain nor the historical tone of the text. The main concern of this research is solely based on people of colour and their roles in the English society.

Just like Alicia E. Ellis, Sandra Courtman in her essay: "Contextual Reading of Beryl Gilroy's *In the Praise of Love and Children* and Andrea Levy's *Small Island*" analyzes *Small Island* from the historical perspective, which tells of the experiences of women during the windrush era from the perspective of women. Courtman argue that the experiences of women and their connectedness to the arrival story are never made visible in writing. The only thing we read and hear of is the experiences of men during the Windrush era. Therefore, Andrea Levy's *Small Island* unveils the experiences of women during the Windrush generation which solves the invisibility of women during that epoch (87).

Focusing on the experience of women in the text, Courtman exposes how relationship is built on prejudice during the Windrush era. She argues that British colonial subjects especially the Afro-caribbeans are heavily judged based on their physical traits, laying much emphasis on colour. It is obvious that Sandra in her analysis does not only see the text as being historical in nature, he also sees it as an avenue Levy uses to unveil the experiences of women in that era. Therefore Sandra is not interested in the kind of roles the blacks (both male and female) occupy in the English society which is the gap this research tends to fill.

Similarly, Claudia Marquis observes in her essay: "Crossing Over" that Levy's texts tell the story of the beginning of the diasporic shift that makes thousands of black West Indians migrate from Caribbean to Britain, thereby bringing the past into memory. This

shows that he sees the texts as history books like other critics as can be seen above which is different from this present research. He explains more that Levy's *Small Island* and *Fruit of the Lemon* explain what colonial inheritance means for postcolonial subjects who are seen in the web of identity crisis due to the crossing over from home to the motherland (England) hence, the title of this essay (34). They struggle from hostility, segregation, and identity crisis to mention but three. For instance, Claudia says that Faith's discovery of the histories concerning several of her family members whose faces she sees on the photographs as she tries to arrange them connects her to her traumatic inheritance, which serves as an example of postmemory.

Linda Cinkova in her Master's thesis: 'West Indians Experience in Britain in the Second Half of the Twentieth Century: Bittersweet Homecoming' opines that *Small Island* and *Fruit of the Lemon* are not only Levy's personal experience in Britain but also her attempt to show the experiences of the first and second generation of West Indians in Britain with close attention to prejudice, stereotype and discrimination. Linda argues that the presence of discrimination, stereotype and racism in Britain explains why the protagonists in the two texts have difficulties to assert their rights and live like normal human beings in Britain. Hence, she blames the mother country for disappointing the black people after helping them to win the Second World War (29).

Cinkova concludes by saying that Levy challenges stereotyping with her novel *Small Island*. According to Linda, Levy twists her characters actions and beliefs, deconstructing their ambivalence and contradictory attitudes. Queenie and her husband Bernard for an instance harbour prejudice in many ways against the blacks, but it is surprising that they both have affair with the same people they abhor. Queenie with Gilbert (the black Sergeant of the British Army) and Bernard with an Indian teenage prostitute (34). This study, however, argues that the

difficulties the black people experience in the texts make them understand that the English society does not value the black race, not necessarily that the mother country fails in keeping to their promise.

Furthermore, Ilona Haapanen, in her article "Whose Island is Small?" asserts that Levy addresses the issue of racism, identity and diaspora in the text (4). According to Ilona, Great Britain is still not free from racism even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Moving back to her personal experience in Britain, she says that she is not all that welcome everywhere she goes in Britain even though she has the same skin colour as the natives (4). This shows that it is not all about the skin colour per se, but race. Using Gilbert as a character in the text, she shows how racism is the order of the day in Britain. Gilbert faces racism at the cinema with Queenie and her father-in-law who eventually dies as a result of the fight between black and white US servicemen. The fight starts as Gilbert refuses to sit at the back with other blacks. Similarly, it is this same racism according to Ilona that makes Gilbert react and tell Bernard to his face that he is nothing but a racist when he makes an ugly statement over Queenie's black child (525).

Furthermore, Ilona opines that the racist experiences that Gilbert and his wife Hortense share are also shared by other blacks who migrate to England in search of a better life. She says for instance that Gilbert's Jamaican friend Eugene is being accused of attacking an old English lady, because according to the lady, Eugene's skin colour frightens her. This assertion by the lady makes the police arrest Eugene. However, Christians are not exempted as they ask a devoted Christian to go back to his local church, reason being that his skin colour is too dark to mingle with them as they worship God. She ends by saying that *Small Island* is a historical novel that unveils the ugly experiences of the black immigrants in Britain which racism is one of such experiences. Parker, Kenneth supports her by affirming

that, Levy's *Small Island* has the historical facts that shed light on a topic (racism) which has not been generally known by the public. Indeed, Haapanen through the incidents above clearly illustrate the ugly attitudes toward the blacks in England, showing that racism and segregation are openly admitted to exist and the blacks are being depicted as the being inferior. As Stein Mark points out that despite the support Britain gets from her formal colonies during her time of crisis, the black are disliked and less welcome in Britain. In support of Stein's assertion, Lima Maria H. says that "Britain as a "mother" country has "left" many of its children (by virtue of empire) orphaned, since it has rejected them as Other when they arrive from their Caribbean Islands" (59).

One interesting thing about Ilona is that she removes the author's background, history and personal experiences from her analysis of the novel, even though the text echoes those. She says, there are enough similarities among Gilbert, Hortense and Levy's parents which shows that Levy tries to recreate her history but she treats these characters as solely fictional beings. However, Ilona, in her analysis fails to look into the different roles given to black people and the reason(s) behind such roles. Secondly, she uses cultural studies in her analysis of the text, whereas this present research makes use of the critical race theory in the analysis of the text which is different from that of Ilona's.

From the foregoing, it is obvious that a lot of studies have been carried out on *Fruit of the Lemon* and *Small Island*. These researches have been carried out in the light of racism, alienation, hybridity, racial memory, multiculturalism, journey motif, quest for self, history, Levy's biography, otherness, treatment of characters and identity. However, studying the texts in the light of role assignment is the gap this research intends to fill.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

As a literary tool which will be used to analyse Andrea Levy's *Fruit of the Lemon* and *Small Island*, this research is anchored on the critical race theory. Critical race theory is a movement by a group of scholars and activists who took it upon themselves to study extensively and transform the relationship among race, racism, and power. With this, one can say that critical race theory is a theoretical lens by which to examine the impact of racism on blacks in diaspora or former British colonial subjects. It is equally an academic movement that looks at the society and law through a racial lens. Angela Harris in her article: *Critical Race Theory* says that critical race theory investigates a paradox: how racism persists despite its nearly universal condemnation by state policy and by the norms of polite society? Rejecting the conventional liberal position that racism survives only as a relic from a less-enlightened time or as a characteristic of poorly-educated or troubled individuals, indeed perhaps by integral to social practices and institutions (5). Derrick Bell and Angela Harris equally define critical race theory as a theory which is committed to "radical critique of the law and radical emancipation by the law." (Bell 4). This theory which began as a movement in the law has spread beyond law into literature read in departments of sociology, Comparative Literature, Cultural Studies, Education, English, History, Anthropology, and Political Science.

Critical race theory started in the 1970s and 1980s as Derrick Bell who is popularly known as the father of the theory, law professors, legal scholars, and activists like Alan Freeman, and Richard Delgado across the country became disillusioned with the results of the civil rights movement. They were disheartened and subsequently pointed out that whites

continue to wield disproportionate power and enjoy superior standard of living. Other scholars like Charles Lawrence, Kimberle Crenshaw, Mari Matsuda, Neil Gotanda, Eric Yamamoto, Robert Williams, Kevin Johnson, Juan Perea, Margret Montoya, Francisco Valdes, and Patrick Williams later joined them in this task. Patricia J. Brainard in his dissertation: "White Lies: A Critical Race Study of Power and Privilege" says that this group of scholars assume the task of questioning how the law, which claims race neutrality, conspires to perpetuate the conditions of racial oppression rather than champion the deconstruction of those conditions (26). Critical race theory as a movement did not just start on its own. It was borne out of critical legal studies and radical feminism. It also draws its strength from theorists and European philosophers. Some of these theorists and European philosophers are Jacques Derrida, Anthony Gramsci, W.E.B. Dubois, Cesar Chavez, Sojourner Truth, Frederick Douglass, and Martin Luther King, Jr. Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic in their book *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction* explain that:

From critical legal studies, the group borrowed the idea of indeterminacy- the idea that not every legal case has one correct outcome. Instead, one can decide most cases either way, by emphasizing one fact differently from the way one's adversary does- the group also built the feminist insights into the relationship between power and the construction of social roles, as well as the unseen, largely invisible collection of patterns and habits that make up patriarchy and other forms of domination. From conventional civil rights thought, the movement took a concern for redressing historical wrongs. (5)

In order to achieve the above aims, several conferences and meetings were held by this group of scholars but their first conference was held in 1989 at a convent outside Madison, Wisconsin. In these several conferences held by these scholars, they discussed public and internal problems and struggled to clarify central issues (4). Articles and many

books treating different topics like crime, gay-lesbian issues, the black-white binary, intergroup tensions, critical race practice, activism and so on is being published from these conferences and meetings organised by these group of scholars. Some of the books produced or published by this group of scholars are adopted in courses in more than one hundred colleges and universities around the world.

Critical race theorists believe in certain things which form the basic tenets that guide the framework of critical race theory. A thorough understanding of the beliefs and principles that must have shaped and informed critical race theory will pave way for understanding in totality the dynamics of racism and the privilege the society gives to the white as against the black folks. One of the basic tenets of critical race theory is that it acknowledges that racism is engrained in the fabric and system of the American society (Bell 13). For this reason, a racist does not need a prophet for him to understand the fact that racism is present and dominant in American society. On the centrality of racism in America, Dei, Karumanchery and Karumanchery Luik assert that:

Race is real! As a concept, race is complex and ever changingí but it is realí in fact within the mainstream discourse, it has become almost stylish to suggest that race does not really exist, that a colour-blind policy is the best, which is no salience to skin colour. Unfortunately, such negations and dismissals only serve to down play the significance and reality of òracial existenceö and oppression. As the axiom asserts, denying a problem does not make it disappear. (21)

Critical race theorists use the above fact to examine and analyse power structures and they find out that power structures are based on white privilege and supremacy to the detriment of people of colour. Just as Karumanchery acknowledges that race is real and central in

American society and not only on individuals, critical race theory comes to challenge that fact, and their aim is to bring to limelight that racism resides in American social system rather than in individuals. Therefore Derrick Bell urges the civil right activists to accept the clear fact that racism is a permanent feature of American society which is a normal and natural thing that everybody is aware of. This normalcy of racism in English societies according to Delgado and Stefancic makes it almost impossible for the White people to see, but the raw truth is that racism exists even in our psychological mindsets (7). With this, critical race theorists believe that since racism is embedded in our thought processes and social construction, then racism cannot be totally removed from the English society. In their opinion, they said that it is only aggressive, colour-conscious efforts to change the way things are, that can bring a positive change to racism (Richard and Jean 45).

Similarly, the belief that racism is addressed only when there is an interest convergence between the White majority and the people of colour; when it is in the best interest of white people to address it is another principle of critical race theory. Patricia, Jones in reaction to this asserts in her dissertation: *White Lies: A Critical Race Study of Power and Privilege* that:

Sometimes solutions to problems or conditions happen because of a moral or ethical desire on the part of all the parties to resolve the issue. Sometimes solutions take place because it is the best self-interest of the party perpetuating the condition or the party that has the power to resolve it. (42)

This shows that racism can totally be removed in a society that is predominately white but because the White majority benefits from it, it becomes a difficult thing to deal with. Marginalization of people of colour can come to an end if one, the Whites are ready to accept the bitter truth that racism exists in their country, two, if they are ready to address the issue of



racism morally without bringing in their self-interest. They must rise up and say no to racism rather than pretending that it does not exist because of its benefits.

Race as a social construct rather than a biological or genetic difference is another principle of critical race theory. Race and racism are intricately woven into the fabric of American life. As Ladson-Billings (48) asserts that "race continues to be a significant factor in determining inequality in the United States, and this is easily documented in the statistical and demographic data" (Tate 12). Race as a concept has been defined by a critical race theorist as a "social construction" products of social thoughts and relations" (Delgado & Stefancic, p 7)

This explains and points to the fact that race is not the state of skin colour, physique, and the texture of hair but is solely on how we treat each other. With this, one can understand and argue that race has nothing to do with someone's personality, intelligence and moral behaviour as black race has been socially constructed as people who have nothing to offer to society and world at large. However, if one believes that race is a social construction, then perhaps one can also believe racism and privilege can be deconstructed. (Brainard 43)

Another principle of critical race theory is the principle of voice authority. The question is who has the right to voice out or describe the experiences of racism? Is it the victims of racism or the perpetrators of racism? It is only the one who wears the shoe that knows exactly where it pinches, therefore, critical race theory gives voice to the victims of racism and not the perpetrators of racism. This, they do by narrating their ugly experiences of racism through storytelling and counter storytelling. Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic assert that:

Stories serve a powerful psychic function for minority communities' stories give them voice and reveal that others have similar experiences. Stories can

name a type of discrimination; once named can be combated. Powerfully written stories and narratives may begin a process of adjustment in our system of beliefs and categories by calling our attention to neglected evidence and reminding readers of our common humanity. (66)

Daniel Subotnik shows in his article: “*What’s Wrong with Critical Race Theory*” how a Columbia university law professor, Patricia Williams unveils the devalued condition of blacks in America and the absolute necessity of a corrective response through her story book *The Rooster Egg*. This law professor is disheartened when she observes in a shop that black dolls are sold at a very cheap rate when compared with the white ones. Similarly, she tells of how she came to adopt a child and learns that the fee for the coloured is half of what it supposed to be. She voiced out angrily saying that colour does not matter (688). The problem has been that the White majority deny the fact that racism exist in their country, and so they tend not to listen to the people of colour as they narrate their experiences of racism. If at all they do, they are likely to make a ñrace cardö accusation (Hook and Wise).

Differential racialization is yet another principle of critical race theory. The critical race theorist found out that the stereotypes of racial subordinates groups always change as soon as there is a shift to the immediate needs of the White majority. Delgado and Jean in reaction to this note that:

Popular images and stereotypes of various minority groups shift over time as well. In one era, a group of colour may be depicted as happy-go-lucky, simpleminded, and content to serve the White folks. When conditions change, that same very group appear in cartoons, movies, and other cultural scripts as menacing, brutish, and out of control, requiring close monitoring and repression. (Page 8)

From the above assertion, the Whites who see themselves as the dominate society racializes different minority group at different periods to suit their needs as it arises. That is why; one minority group will be so wonderful today and very important to the white folks, but tomorrow, the same people who sang their praises will turn around to see them as insignificant and worthless people just because they have gotten what they need from such group at that moment. This explains why Blacks and black-Americans were very useful and important to Great Britain during World War II. After the war, the table quickly turned around to depict the black people as devilish group of people who does not have self worth. Similarly, when white people took native lands, they depicted the Indian as vicious warriors and when reparations and broken treaties were contested in court, the images changed to portray American Indians as drunks and lazy or comical icons in full headdress (Patricia 45). Based on this assertion, the White majority justified the broken treaties from this group of people whom they labelled incompetent.

Coming to the issue of intersectionality which is the last principle of critical race theory, the pioneers of this theory is of the opinion that race alone cannot account for disempowerment. Therefore, the principle of intersectionality seeks to examine critically the issue of race, sex, class, sexual orientation, and national origin and how their combination plays out in different settings. That is to say that the need of a Latin female is totally different from that of a Black male.

Critical race theory has received a lot of criticism by some legal scholars just like critical legal studies did fifteen or twenty years ago. Some of the areas they pointed out are on the issue of storytelling, matter of voice, the critique of merit, truth and objectivity. Daniel Farber and Suzanna Sherry in their recent book *Beyond All Reason* accuse critical race theorist of radical multiculturalism and of using personal accounts and narratives to make their view known to the public. They equally accuse them of having no respect for truth and

the conventional idea of merit. They argue and point out that if the minority groups are being neglected as the critical race theorists claim, then, how can they explain the successes the Jew and Asians who are of the minority groups have both in their business and in their educational pursuit. With these they believe that these theorists are lying against these minority groups. In reaction to this, critical race theories make it obvious that Farber and Sherry do not understand and cannot distinguish properly the criticisms of standard and that of the individual who performed well under that standard. If Jews and Asians performed well under an unfair system, is to their credit, what of other minority groups? Did they also perform well under an unfair system? Therefore, critical race theory opines that merit should be given to whomever that merits it regardless of where the person comes from.

Similarly, Daniel Farber, Suzanna Sherry, Judge Richard Posner and other scholars equally criticised critical race theory for using storytelling and narratives to build cohesion with the minority group as against the stories set as a standard in the minds of people by the dominant group. Funny enough, Judge Richard Posner labels it the ‘lunatic core.’ In his words, he asserts that, these stories which the critical race theorists tell may not even represent the experiences of the groups in which they belong. To them, they tell such stories to gain sympathy from the audience. Douglas E. Litowitz brings to limelight his dissatisfaction with storytelling when he quotes and expands the problems Daniel Farber and Suzanna Sherry have with this principle in their easy: *Telling Stories Out of School: An Essay on Legal Narratives*. He says:

First, the storytellers view narratives as central to scholarship, while de-emphasizing conventional analytical methods. Second, they particularly value stories from the bottom – stories by women and people of colour about their oppression. Third, they are less concerned than conventional scholars about

whether stories are typical or descriptively accurate, and they place more emphasis on the aesthetic and emotional dimensions of narration. (520)

In reaction to the above assertion, Douglas points out that though the stories might be fascinating but it can be dangerous as well. This is because, as lawyers, they seek doctrinal solutions to problems and they move above listening to stories to filter it (such stories) through the framework of legal doctrine. Therefore lawyers look beyond stories to question of doctrine, policy, and argument (521). To him, a critical race theorist needs to clarify issues on the principle of storytelling and narrative because, if a set of story makes us to identify more with the people of colour or women as the case may be with their sympathetic stories, there is still the possibility that another different set of stories can equally make people less sympathetic. For instance, he paints a picture where black thinkers such as Shelby Steele and Stephen Carter use the same tool (narratives) to send a conservative message that is in contrast with the narratives of critical race theories like Derrick Bell and Patricia Williams. Furthermore, he unveils another loopholes of this principle by saying that legal storytelling plays upon emotions instead of reason. This means that it gives people no room to reason and apply legal doctrines on an issue before conclusions are being made. He laments that he wants the Critical race theorist to understand that storytelling is not inherently liberating. It is neither liberal nor conservative, neither constraining nor freeing.

Douglas concludes by advising the minority law professors should spend their time writing a well researched law articles instead of writing stories. In the same vein, he says that it is disheartening that critical race theorists do not understand the value of constitutional doctrine. In his article *Some Critical Thoughts on Critical Race Theory* he says that it pains him that doctrine is understood by Derrick Bell as merely instrumental, which is prone to manipulations. To him, this means that the only goal of critical race theorist is to bend the law to suit people of colour only. He angrily unveils the praises Derrick Bell gets from Alan

Freeman who is one of the pioneers of critical race theory for his lack of doctrinal argument thus:

Bell's approach to legal doctrine is unabashedly instrumental. The only important question is to whether doctrinal developments have improved, worsened, or left unchanged the actual lives of American blacks. Bell eschews the realm of abstract, a historical, normative debate; he focuses instead on the relationships between doctrine and concrete change, and the extent to which doctrine can be manipulated to produce more change. (522)

These scholars go further to argue that this act of storytelling does not only lack the analytical rigor but it suppresses discussion and debate when the storyteller claims that he or she is in the best position to understand the issue on ground probably because of his or her background. Therefore, they question the critical race theorist for giving voice to the victims of racism and not the perpetrators of racism, reason being that the recipients are the only that can really explain their situation better. The critics of critical race theory are more concerned in the nonchalant interpretation of objective truth given by the critical race theorist. To the critical race theorist, they believe that truth is a social construct which is made or created to suit the desires of the dominate group.

Another phase of critical race theory criticisms is on the issue of interest convergence principle which advocates that white will only look into the issue of racial injustice if only they will benefit even greater from it. The pioneers of this theory such as Derrick Bell, Richard Delgado, Alan Freeman among others believe so well that civil rights laws are never to the benefit of the blacks, rather is to advance the interest of the White folks. To support this assertion, the theorist points to the fact that some of the decision made like that of *Brown V. Board of Education* (the crown jewel of U.S supreme court jurisprudence where the court

unanimously ruled that separate but equal public schools for blacks and white were unconstitutional) was not to solve the problem of racial injustice but they used it as a tool to win the cold war. Douglas E. Litowitz in his article *Some Critical Thoughts on Critical Race Theory* says that such claim by the Critical race theorist is so strange to him because the decision made was to solve the problem of racial injustice and not to win the cold war. He points to the fact that the Voting Rights Act, Title VII, fair housing laws and prohibitions on red-lining are to advance the interest of the black folks when it comes to the issue of racism. He also mentions that the court's decision in *Brown V. Board of Education* in Topeka, Kansas is a proof that their system is fair and just to all, including the people of colour. Therefore, the decision in *Brown* is not in favour of the cold war neither was it made to advance the interest of the dominant white majority.

Having gone this far, our discussion on the roles given to the black folks in the English society in relation to the *Fruit of the Lemon* and *Small Island* should be explored in line with Derrick Bell's ideology of the critical race theory, which states that racism is a permanent feature of any English society. The reason is that in both texts, black characters are given less beneficial roles and position not because they are not qualified to occupy better positions, but because of their race and its components. Furthermore, the theory would not only help understand the kind of privilege the society gives to the white folks, which is not to the benefit of the black folks as can be seen in the two texts under study.

### **3.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study undertakes dualistic approaches. The primary sources consisting of Andrea Levy's novels: *Small Island* and *Fruit of the Lemon* and the secondary sources consisting of the scholarly published and unpublished works of researchers, library and internet resources. Moreover, the researcher will rely on Derrick Bell's assumptions which

are under the Critical Race Theory. These approaches hinge on differential racialization and permanence of racism in the English society. His ideologies will be used as an analytical tool to discuss the roles given to Blacks in English society. Derrick Bell opines that though white people deny the existence of racism in their society, the truth remains that racism is permanent and dominant in the English society. He therefore makes it clear to the whites and people of colour that racism cannot be totally removed from the English society because it is embedded in their thought processes and social construction. This explains why the black Britons find it difficult to adapt in Britain as can be seen in Andrea Levy's two novels: *Fruit of the Lemon* and *Small Island*. Their race and the components of that race place them on certain degrading roles which their effort cannot change. Their race has cost them good jobs; it has prompted their rejection as tenants from certain housing and location.

Therefore, applying Derrick Bell's assumptions on differential racialization and the permanence of racism in the English society will make it clearer why the black characters in the novels are placed on certain roles in Britain. From these degrading roles, Faith, Gilbert, Hortense and other black characters in the novels understand that they are different from the natives by the virtue of being black.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

Blackness has continued to grow in meaning such that its meaning can be described as ambiguous. Blackness in a racist environment dominated by whites assumes meanings that are negative. In a racist environment, blackness is seen as an anathema. To clarify the concept of blackness, it is imperative that the researcher emphasizes that blackness transcends just the physical colour of the skin. There are many (Coloured) that cannot be physically described as black but are considered black because of their ancestry, genetic history, geographical location etc. A black person can be equated with the 'Other' in Simone de Beauvoir's term. The National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders in America opines that 'our nation is moving towards two societies, one white, one black- separate and unequal' the most fundamental is the racial attitude and behaviour of whites towards the blacks' (Bradford *Chronicles* 238). A black person in Britain is a subalternized person whose identity is defined by another; a person denied of self. This imposed or constructed definition of blackness leads to stereotyping and role assignment. In literary criticism, role assignment on the basis of blackness is manifested in several forms in literary texts. This chapter shall examine what blackness means to the characters and the consequent role assignment as contained in Andrea Levy's two novels: *Fruit of the Lemon* and *Small Island*.

#### **4.1 BLACKNESS AND ROLE ASSIGNMENT IN ADREA LEVY'S *FRUIT OF THE LEMON***

*Fruit of the Lemon* strongly suggests the harsh attitude of the white towards the black in relation to their day to day activities in the post Second World War England. Through the experiences of Faith (the central character of the novel) and her parents, Levy shows how blackness leads to stereotyping and subsequently role assignment in Britain shortly after the Second World War. Therefore, the exploration of role assignment is woven around Afro-Caribbeans in the novel. Wade Jackson and his wife Mildred who are black immigrants learnt

that the whites expect them to be subservient, stupid and behave like second class citizens upon their arrival in Britain. Taking up the role of the 'Other' in Britain (Coloured), the whites expect them to feel inferior, poor and settle for the lowest paid jobs without complaints. This explains while Faith's parents (Wade Jackson and Mildred Jackson) struggle to earn a living since the only available jobs for their kind are the degrading and less beneficial ones like: domestic servants, waving trains off at underground stations, working for a builder, painting, hanging wall papers and working as an orderly. Some of the jobs are not only disheartening but tiring ones. The normalcy of racism in Britain which is one of the key principles of critical race theory makes Donald, Wade's brother to leave Britain back to Jamaica where he can at least be treated as human and take up a better job with more pay since he can no longer cope with the tiring job he does in Britain which the pay barely puts food on his table (10). It is this same frustration and psychological wound that blacks encounter daily in racist South Africa that makes novelist Peter Abraham to leave the apartheid system at the age of nineteen. He says:

I had come away charged with bitterness against the whites of that land in particular and all the whites in general. Life there had allowed me no self respect, no dignity. I had left suffering from colossal inferiority complex, and carrying a huge chip on my shoulders. ( Miller. *A Critical Survey of South African Poetry in English* 146)

The society's (Britain) prejudice-based pressure does not allow anyone to rent a house to a black person. Wade upon arrival in England had to share one room apartment with his brother Donald for many years. Wade laments: 'I never thought that I'd end up living like [this] in England. Mildred [does] not like living in a room with two men' (9). The societal pressure which is full of racism forces them to mingle only with 'their kind.' The natives through their attitude unconsciously exhibit that they cannot live on the same street as blacks or have any relationship with them. This explains why Faith's parents plan and want Faith to

marry Noel, a black man. They persistently frown at Faith who seems unaware of the racist environment lives in, and decides to move in with some whites friends. Wade asks her daughter thus "Your friends, any of them your own kind? I mean any of them?" He looked around himself to see if anyone was listening then whispered, coloured? (28). Ruth, Carl's girlfriend supports Wade when she tells Faith that "she needs to spend more time among [her] own people" (142). From Wade and Ruth's advice to Faith it is clear that mingling among your kind is a tradition in English society and blacks who wish to stay in their community must respect and accept the role of associating and uniting only with their kind.

Faith, a black Briton understands that she lives in a racist society when the bully white boys insult, mock and make fun of her parents who come to Britain on a banana boat. They do not stop at making fun of her parents; they equally raise racial abuses on Faith by calling her darkie: "Faith is a darkie and her mum and dad came on a banana boat" (3). As Mullaney argues, this banana boat is a great symbol, not only that it invokes the terrible memories of the middle passage, but it continues to link generations who are brought into a new relations by legacies of slavery (11). Thus, it is unsurprising that the little children at that early stage of their lives are racist. This is because racism is present and dominant in their society. Therefore, the bully boys tend to practice what is rampant in their society. Faith, Levy's protagonist who does not see herself as the "Other" believes that everyone is the same and should be treated as a human being even though she exists in a society where black Britons are seen as second class citizens.

As Faith begins to apply for jobs and attend job interviews, she understands the true meaning of blackness and the implications of being black in Britain. Faith who does not attach any meaning to blackness discovers that white people do and intend to deny her the right to work in certain places even though her certificate qualifies her to work in good companies and occupy a better position in such companies like every other white in Britain.

Faith struggles to get a job as a textile designer after her undergraduate programme in fashion and textile. She gets fired immediately from her job as she runs into her employer, Oliver kissing a man in the office. Oliver who is expected to feel remorse for such an act sacks Faith showing off the white superiority over the blacks. This feeling of superiority among the whites places blacks on roles where justice is denied. The white society robs Faith, who represents the black race the right to question her boss action neither can she get justice in Britain because the natives are racist. I strongly believe that Olivia could have expressed regrets and tender an apology to Faith for such an outrageous display in the office rather than firing Faith if she is not a black person. This kind of experience is terrifying as the expression of racial hatred has never ceased to grow and gets no chance to die (Malcom X). Faith moves on to apply for the position of a dresser in BBC Television which is a position that is reserved for the whites. Lorraine tells Faith "they don't have black dressers" I don't mean to be horrible but that what's happens here. Haven't you noticed there aren't any coloured people dressing? White actors don't like coloured person putting on their clothes on them" (70-71). The phrase "that is what happens here" and Lorraine's explanations to Faith who aspires to be a dresser forgetting her role in Britain as a result of her colour is an indicator that racism is common in Britain. From Lorraine's assertion, it is clear that an average white person will definitely not allow a black person to dress him or her up in the costume department. Therefore, Faith is forced to accept the role of dressing pets, a teddy bear for children's TV (which is kept for her kind) instead of human beings after being kept in the pool for three weeks doing nothing.

The sitting arrangement in the office tells Faith that she is not part and parcel of the British society as she once thought. Since blacks do not have a place in the costume department, there is no provision of seats for blacks; hence Faith has no place to sit. She is not allowed to sit anywhere that pleases her in the office. Faith says as she wants to sit down,

Mr Henry directs her "not there, dear, that my seat. I got up and move to the next chair. Well you could sit there but I am sure madam would have something to say about it" (35).

Nelson, another black character in Andrea Levy's *Fruit of the Lemon* is sent out of St. Mary Catholic School on the basis of blackness. According to the school authority, the school is built for "civilized" people. Prof. Obiechina observes that the popular image of Africa in Europe is that of primitive place with primitive irrational people on whom should be imposed the civilizing will of Europe (*Cultural Nationalism*, 25). Whites all over the world especially those of Europe and America, pick upon this to look with contempt on blacks. This means that black people who have been defined as "uncivilized people" are not expected to attend the same school as the white people. Moreover, white parents will not stand the shock of seeing their children mixing up with black children. Nelson is therefore denied the right to education. As a second class citizen in Britain, the only role the blacks are expected to play is doing whatever pleases the white man without complaints.

The change in white's attitude towards the coloured according to their immediate need according to Derrick Bell, the father of critical race theory is exemplified in Andrea Levy's *Fruit of the Lemon*. Earl a black man who has been in the Air Force during the Second World War returns to the white society after helping the whites to win the war is shocked to the marrow towards the roles being assigned to him in New York. He finds it very difficult to get a good job with good salary. After several attempts he resorts to being a labourer and a carpenter which are for his kind. Richard in *Black Boy* by Richard Wright affirms this experience when he asserts: "We black boys worked for long hard hours for what few pennies we earned and we are edgy and tense" (206). Earl becomes worthless to the white people as soon as the war is over just like Gilbert another black character is in Andrea Levy's *Small Island* who becomes worthless and treated like trash immediately he removes the RAF uniform.

In Britain as can be seen in the novel, roles cannot be achieved rather they are ascribed. This is because by virtue of being black, the English society has already assigned certain roles to a black man who sees himself in white society without regard to merit. Ruth, Carl's girlfriend tells Faith that whites have been oppressing the blacks for hundreds of years with no sign of stopping; they think that blacks are stupid which make them treat us like dirt (140-142). The phrase "with no sign of stopping" is in line with Derrick Bell's (the father of critical race theory) assumption that racism is a permanent feature in any English society. The permanence of racism or the normalcy of racism in Britain has psychologically affected Faith's thinking to the point where she abhors being black or be treated harshly because of her race. As Richard in *Black Boy* laments after he understands his roles as a black in America: "I know what wrong with me, but I could correct it" (117). In the same vein, Faith, after encountering series of racism in Britain laments "all I could see is a black girl lying in a bed. I do not want to be black anymore. I just wanted to live" (160). She cannot get her desired job in Britain, she cannot freely interact with the whites, she keeps on seeing the injustice blacks pass through every day in Britain and most painfully Simon, a white man leaves her to marry Marion because of her race. All this frustration makes her understand what it really means to be black in Britain and how Britain detests black people. Faith says "Ruth [is] right. Ruth [is] absolutely right. What it all comes down to the end is black against white. It [is] simple. It [is] so simple" (159). From all indication a black man in a racist environment is a person denied of self. Bigger in *Native Son*, a novel by Richard Wright sums the position of blacks in diaspora thus: "We are black and they are white. They got things and we ain't. They own the world" (48).

#### 4.2 ROLE ASSIGNMENT IN ANDREA LEVY'S *SMALL ISLAND*

Role assignment is one of Levy's paramount concerns in *Small Island*. This is because restriction of one's right and freedom as a result of one's ethnicity is like a norm in Britain as well as other English societies. Blacks in the world of the novel are oppressed, subjugated and placed in certain roles by their white counterparts. Differential racialization which is one of the key principles of critical race theory is being explored in *Small Island*. To white people, blacks have no right of existence in their societies except when it is to their benefit. In the novel, *Small Island*, the blacks who actively supported the British during the Second World War are loved, respected and not ridiculed. They are treated like humans and not like dogs during the war. Native British are very kind and grateful to the black for coming into their country in a bid to help them in the Second World War:

í a trickle of the villagers approached [the blacks]. Most of them nodded as they pass. An old man with a face as a dry riverbed shook us all hearty by the hand in turn saying, òwe-æ in this together, lad, we-æ glad to have you here- glad to have you here.ö (*Small Island* 138)

Black women in the novel also support the idealized white image just like the male counterparts. For instance, Hortense and her friend Cecilia who represent the black women are busy knitting socks and hats for the soldiers. They equally donate money just to see that the British Empire- òtheir Empireö wins the war. Immediately the war ends the attitude of the white Britons towards the black characters in the world of the text changes too. Smith notes that experience and acquaintance with people of African descent during the war surprisingly does not have much influence on the British population in terms of reception of the new colonial immigrants into major society (229). Gilbert who renders military help to the British Empire comes back to Britain in search of a better life is amazed that the natives are not

receptive as they are to the blacks during the war time (Smith 227-229). The natives do not want to see or interact with black people whom they love so much during the war. Britons do not need the black man anymore and they do not want to give them free hand to a successful living in their country let alone the basic human rights. This zero need of a black man in Britain leads to stereotyping and role assignment. Gilbert however is in danger of being reduced to semi-slave since all what the white is best at doing is to reduce the blacks living in their environment to nothing.

In the same vein, the feeling of racial superiority in *Small Island* drives the natives to presume ignorance, backwardness and lack of sophistication on the part of the coloured (Usha 2). The white characters in the novel see the black characters as inferior and they try to show their superiority. The conversations between Hortense who just arrived in England and the taxi driver make her understand the extent the English society looks down and underestimate people of colour. The driver who picks Hortense as she arrives in Britain shows off his white superiority over the coloured as he says to Hortense do you know about bell and knockers? You get them where you are coming from? Just go and ring the bell, someone will answer the door (*Small Island* 17). Similarly, Mrs. Bligh who assumes that coloured people are backward educates Hortense on unnecessary things at every stage as she believes that such things do not exist from where she comes from. Hortense says:

Then [Mrs. Bligh] tells me loud for all to hear, 'This is bread.' She think me a fool that does not know what is bread? ...Mrs. Bligh was a punctilious teacher. The shop meat is in the window, she tells me is the butcher. That one with pretty cake is the baker. And each time she tell me she want me to repeat the word. Instead I tell her 'I know we have these shops in Jamaica' she nod. She say good. then seeing a shop selling fish, she tells me this is the fishmonger. (332-333)



Graham sums it up when he tells Queenie and Emily that black people are not civilized in any way, apart from drum, a black man has nothing to offer (*Small Island* 5).

Furthermore, due to the permanence of racism in Britain, there is a constant differentiation among people in the world of the novel by referring to people of colour as 'Your kind' or 'The likes of you.' This shows that racism is truly a norm in Britain where we have 'Us' and 'Them'. Nigger, sambo, jigaboo, coon, darkie, jungle boy, dogs, wogs or coolies are some of the numerous racial slurs used on the black immigrants just to show them that they are not part of the British society. The usherette at the cinema for an instance forces and uses racial slurs on Gilbert who refuses to sit at back of the cinema. Racial fight breaks out as the usherette tells him that the back seat is kept for his 'kind' not the front seat. Moreover, Hortense, a black immigrant hardly believes that the British people can address thus. She is verbally abused and being stared at by children even by the grownups just because she is black. A small blond child points and yells at Hortense thus:

Look! She is black. Look, Mum, black woman! she nearly pushed the pram into a lamppost before leaning forward to admonish the pointing child. Don't point, Georgey. She's not black-she's coloured. While from the other side of the road came shouting. Uncouth and raucous. 'Golliwog, golliwog.' It was three young men. Holding up a wall they yelled through the funnel of their hands, 'Oi sambo! yeah you are a darkie. We're talking to you. (334)

A white child as shown above can insult a black person openly at will without reprimands by an elderly person. The mother of the small boy does not bother to tell her child to desist from such an act rather she tells him to use the word 'coloured' instead of 'darkie.' Hortense is shocked to the marrow not only that a small boy uses racial slurs on her but that the men who are around join the boy in that bad act instead of correcting the boy. Hortense

still trying to recover from the shock gets the worst hit when Mrs Bligh tells her to always step off from the pavement if there is not enough room and allow a white person to pass first.

í as a visitor to this country [you] should step off the pavement into the road if an English person wishes to pass and there is no sufficient room on the pavement for [them] both. Hortense not believing what [her] ear was hearing asked, I. a woman should step into the busy road? [Bligh] nodded. (335)

From the incident above, Hortense understands that Britain does not need her neither is she welcomed in Britain as a black person and if at all she insists on staying, she must see herself as a second class citizen and play her roles perfectly. W.E.B Du Bois in *An ABC of colour* writes:

í the problem of the twentieth century [is] the problem of the colour line, the question of as to how far the difference of race-which show themselves chiefly in the colour of the skin and the texture of hair-will hereafter be made the basis of denying to over half the world the right of sharing their utmost ability the opportunity and privileges of modern civilization (20).

The presence of these roles makes no room for the blacks to assert their rights and live like normal human beings in Britain.

Gilbert who is one of the protagonists in *Small Island* finds it difficult to get a good apartment in Britain since the natives see the blacks as worthless people full of animal desires. Upon his arrival, Gilbert lives in an overcrowded room with other Jamaican men, beds are swapped according to each person's work shift. Gilbert says "Places are hard to come by, especially for coloured boys" (*Small Island* 54). The accommodation problem is so bad that many black Jamaicans end up in hostels (Sewel 38). The natives believe that the

coloured people coming from a primitive place to England will definitely turn Britain into a jungle; hence a separate place is kept for them. Queenie Bligh, a white landlady who is Gilbert's good friend during the wartime manages to give Gilbert a small and shabby room at a high rate (three pounds a week) which becomes Gilbert's living room, bathroom, bedroom toilet room and kitchen all together. Not only that the rent is high, Gilbert maintains the house and works on the Landlady's garden. Hortense, as being part of the Empire thinks that her husband will own or rent a big house with doorbells and fireplace just like the natives is disappointed after seeing the room, she asks her husband "Is this the way the English people live? Hopeless Gilbert says we are lucky, places like this are hard to come by" (*Small Island* 29). Seeing that racism is the cultural habit of the natives, Bligh loses her respect and reputation among her neighbours for renting a room to a coloured man (187). Bernard, Queenie's husband, upon his return from the war becomes mad at his wife for accommodating a black man in his house. He threatens to push them away from his house:

What are you thinking of Queenie? Listen to me Bernard. I had to get lodgers. I had no idea where you were. There was no one going to look after me. I had to bring people in. Queenie, but do they have to be coloured? Couldn't you have got decent lodgers for the house? Respectable people?... well they will have to go now I'm back. Mr Todd is moving to Orpington with his sister. [Mr Todd] says the street has gone to the dogs with all these coloureds swamping the place. Get rid of all these coolies the lodgers I mean. Let them find somewhere suitable for their type anyway. (436-437)

The above conversation shows that Bernard is worried and angry about coloured tenants since accommodating a coloured person robs a white person his respect from his fellow whites in Britain. Similarly, the above conversation reveals that finding an accommodation and sustaining the accommodation is a big problem to the coloureds in Britain. Mr Todd

leaves to Orpington with his sister because it is a taboo for a white person to live close to a black person in the world of the novel let alone living in the same lodge. Bernard a racist sees black people as worthless people who do not deserve to be respected neither do they have respect. In fact, to him, blacks are *õdogsö* therefore; they do not deserve to live in a decent and good house or live among the white people. Bernard quickly blames his wife for driving Mr Todd and his sister from the lodge by accommodating the coloureds. All these constant differentiations and difficulties the coloured have to assert their right in a racist society leads to self-pity, regrets and the feeling of alienation from natives.

Consequently, living in a society where racism is the order of the day makes it difficult for blacks to get a good job in Britain. Settling for the lowest paid jobs after series of rejections is not only disheartening to the coloured but the roles they play in their various work places are the degrading roles. The best, beneficial and managerial positions are reserved for the native while the less beneficial and tasking ones are reserved for the black people. This inhuman attitude towards the coloured people does show how unwanted the coloured people are in Britain. Having stayed in Britain for a while, Gilbert and Hortense start to apply for jobs to earn a living. Hortense who thinks that she is part of the Empire, meaning that by right she is a Briton thinks highly of herself. She tells her husband thus:

My two letters of recommendation each contained words that would open up doors of any school to me! Miss Morgan, the formidable principal at my college, declared me highly capable. And highly capable expert I felt. This is the day I [am] going to present myself for a position as a teacher at the offices of the education authority and no pained-face, fool-fool man [is] going to imperil my elation. (*Small Island* 488-489)

Hortense is shocked at the indifferent attitude she receives as she enters the office. The white people in the office do not take notice of her presence neither do they reply her greetings. She manages to introduce herself to a woman who she mistakes her smiles as welcoming.

I am a teacher, I said, intending to carry on with some further explanation. But I was startled to find myself timorous in this woman's friendly presence. My voice flattered into a tiny squeak. I took a moment to cough into my hand. Having composed myself I began. I am a teacher and I understand this is the place at which I should present myself for a position in that particular profession. Through this woman's warm smile I detected a little confusion. Too well bred to say "what?" she looked a quizzical eye on me, which shouted this word just as audibly. I repeated myself clearly but before I had completed the statement the woman asked of me sweetly, did you say that you are a teacher? (*Small Island* 452)

In line with the above, the attitudes the natives exhibit at the office shows that race is not only a social construction but it is embedded in their thought processes. As Hortense manages to hand in her recommendation letters from Jamaica to the woman who reluctantly takes it from her, demands to know where Hortense comes from which is very important to her than reading the letters given to her;

What are these? She asked. These are my letters of recommendation. One you will see is from the headmaster at which interrupting me I where are you from? She asked. I am from Jamaica, I told her. She leaned back on her chair and instead of opening the letters she began playing with them- flicking the paper against her fingers. And where did you train as a teacher? Her comely smile belied the rudeness of her tone. And I could not help but not that all gladness had left her eye and remained only at her mouth. I trained at the teacher-training college in Constant Spring, under the tutelage

of Miss Morgan. Is that in Jamaica? Yes. Well, I'm afraid you can't teach here, and passed the unopened letters back to me. (*Small Island* 452-453)

Hortense who has not really understood her role as a black person in Britain tries to explain the content of the letter to the woman since she has vehemently refused to open and read the letter gets the greatest shock of the day when she is told that she cannot teach in this country because she is not qualified to teach. Not qualified here means that Hortense as a black person cannot apply for a position meant for the natives. It does not mean that Hortense is not capable of occupying such a post. To show that race is a social construction, as Hortense takes her leave, the woman tells her 'the letters don't matter. It is the decision of the education authority. I can do nothing to change that. And I'm afraid, neither can you' (*Small Island* 454).

Gilbert on the other hand attends several job interviews with high hopes that he will get a well paid job, gets rejections in return. Gilbert applies to work in the capacity of a store man, the interviewer dismisses him thus:

You see, we have white women working here. Now in the course of your duties, what if you accidentally found yourself talking to a white woman? I am afraid all hell would break loose if the men found you talking to their women. They simply wouldn't stand for that. As much as I'd like to I can't give you the job. (*Small Island* 312)

It can be deduced from the above that the interviewer tries to pass his racist attitude to the men who would not want to see their women working in the same place with blacks instead of accepting the fact that all are racist including him. Gilbert therefore goes home devastated. His blackness has cost him the job in Britain. Funny enough, another interviewer who is a Christian denies Gilbert a good job by asserting that his partner does not like black people.

For this society, being a Christian is not a barrier to racism, exhibiting racist character is the white man's way of life.

Another office I am invited into, the man asked if I am a Christian. Let me tell you after a few weeks back in this after-the war England. God slipping from me like a freshly launched ship. But I said yes. The man starts praying among the telephone and blotting-pad. He invites me to join him. I need the job so I lowered my head. At the end of praising the Lord together he tells me that he cannot employ me because his partner does not like coloured people. I nearly knock him into an early meeting with the Almighty when he called God to bless me as I left. (312-313)

*Small Island* records that Gilbert is turned down in all the good jobs that he applies for in Britain. He becomes devastated and frustrated just like his wife Hortense. At times the people he meets at various offices do not even notice his presence. Surviving in a racist environment like Britain becomes a huge task for him. Gilbert says:

In five, no, in six places, the job I had gone for vanishes with one look upon my face. Another, I wait, letter in my hand , while everyone in this office go about their business as if I am not there. I can feel them watching me close as a pickpocket with his prey until a man comes in agitated. "What're you doing here?" He said to me. We don't want you. There is no job for you here. I'm going to get touch with that labour exchange, tell them not to send any more of you people. We can't use your sort. Go on, get out. The girl at another office looked on me with such horror. (*Small Island* 313)

As they face rejection after rejection, they come to the conclusion that there are boundaries they cannot cross as blacks living in Britain no matter what their qualifications say about them. Equally, the various nonchalant attitudes Gilbert and Hortense get in their bid

to secure a good and desired job in Britain shows that getting a job in Britain is not by merit but by being white. Hortense denial of teaching appointment irrespective of her two recommendation letters and training in that field quickly reminds Gilbert of his old RAF friend who gets a job as a History teacher not necessarily that he knows his onions in history but because he is white. Having known this, Gilbert gets a job at the post office as driver, which is meant for migrant labour force.

Having secured a job, Gilbert faces a lot of prejudice at the office. He is being yelled at unnecessarily. Verbal and physical abuse become part of Gilbert because he gets that on a daily bases from his, boss and co-workers. His colleagues at the office never address him by his name rather "Oi you" becomes the preferable way of addressing him. As Gilbert drives, the foreman keeps commanding, instructing and directing Gilbert daily as if Gilbert does not know how to drive or the route. Gilbert says "He believed I as a foreigner, did not know or could ever learn the route. Every day the same way and every day the same instruction. Left hereí right nowí round the roundabout" (314). This is an indication that the white look down on coloured people and underestimate their skills. Stereotyping the blacks as weak, incapable and worthless is highly degrading and adversely affects the mindset, motivation and maximization of the blacks in Britain. At a point Gilbert feels nostalgia. The practice of racism in Britain which is the right of every Briton has reduced Gilbert to nothing and less human. Gilbert's partner refuses to work with him because he is black. Gilbert complains:

Seeing me, the young man approaching my van stooped dead. I greeted him with a smile. But suddenly his forehead was frowning- two sharp parallel lines dramatically creasing on his foreheadí he shouted what the hell is going on here? [a] coon? í [I] don't want to work with him. And at that moment I longed to be once more in Jamaica. I yearned for home as a drunk man for whiskey. For only there could I be sure that someone looking on my face for the first time would regard it without any



reaction. No gapes, no gawps, no cussing, no looking quickly away as if seeing something unsavoury. Just a meeting as unremarkable as passing your mummy in the kitchen. What a thing was this to wish for. That a person regarding me should think nothing. What a forlorn desire to seek indifference. (*Small Island* 315)

At King's Cross where Gilbert goes to pick a post sack, confused on the right sack to pick, he politely asks a group of white people to help him with the right sack. They pretend as if nobody is talking to them. Immediately Gilbert picks the wrong sack, they all shout out 'look a darkie is stealing from the railways' 'Oh what is this coon doing now?' 'Gilbert regardless of the racial slurs pleads with them again to show him the right sack for the post. Instead of answering him, they chuckled and asked him when he will go back to the jungle where he belongs, showing how unwanted he is in Britain. As his co-workers rain insults on him, he knows that he does not have the right to strike back for fear of losing his job. He leaves crippled with shame as they tortured him:

'what else could this Jamaican man do? I dropped my head' and then I cringed craven until my submission caused this man to leave hold' I stood pitiful as a whipped dog' I kept my eyes at his feet' and went about my business with gunfire of cuss words popping and pinging around me, while the postal sack and aching shame stooped me double. (315- 318)

Other black characters in the text are equally placed in the same role just as Gilbert and his wife Hortense. They are verbally and physically abused by the white Britons. Gilbert tell of his coloured friend Eugene who is accused of attacking a Briton old lady just because the old lady confesses that she is frightened by Eugene's skin colour. Consequent upon that, Eugene is arrested without hearing from the accused showing that there is no justice for a black man in Britain. Similarly, Gilbert's former RAF comrade who is a devoted Christian is

asked by the church community not to come to services anymore because of his ethnicity. If discrimination is seen among Christians who preach equality, it does show that racism is a norm in Britain (326). Toward the end of the novel, this racism is extended to an innocent black child who is mistakenly born by Queenie, Bernard's wife. She is in a serious dilemma on what to do with this black child. To her, keeping the black child will deny her of her social right as a citizen because the British society has made it impossible for a native to have a relationship or marry a black man let alone giving birth to a black child. Queenie explains to Bernard why they need to give the black child out to Gilbert and Hortense thus:

[You] really have no idea why we two white people could not bring up a coloured child. You might think you might do it now but what about when he grows up and people will snigger at you in the street and ask all sort of awkward questions. Are you going to fight them? Are you going to punch other dads cause their kids call him names? You will be angry with him [because] they will whisper about as you as you went by all because you had a coloured child I can't face it. (520-521)

Queenie therefore denies the new born baby his right to be raised well by his mother. Since it is a taboo for Queenie, a white to raise a black child neither will the black child be accepted in Britain's orphanage homes, Queenie decides to give the black child to Hortense since Hortense is his kind. Gilbert out of anger tells Bernard who thinks that the black child will be better off begging in the gutter than entrusting the upbringing of the baby to Gilbert and his wife thus:

You know what your trouble is, man? He said. Your white skin, you think it makes you better than me. You think it give you the right to lord over a black man. But you know what it makes you? It makes you white. That's all. White. No better, no worse than me- just white listen to me, man, we both just finish fighting a war- a bloody

was- for the better world we wanø see. And on the same side- you and meí fighting for the empire for peace. But still, after all that we suffer together, you wanø tell me I am worthless and you are not. Am I to be servant and you are the master for all time?

*(Small Island 525)*

Gilbertø expression of his anger above is not only meant for Bernard alone but for the entire whites who make racism part of them showing that the blacks are used by the white at will to satisfy their selfish interest. The Second World War and all the promises that came with it which made the blacks take part in it were never kept for one day rather it is just a prank played on the black people to join the British military in the war. The sacrifices the blacks made to the British Empire by being actively involved in the war and helping to put the post-war London in shape are never appreciated rather, the blacks are treated as second class citizens. All the black characters in the two novels have no legal coverage, no justice, no freedom, no decent jobs and apartment.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

#### 5.1 SUMMARY

Blackness and role assignment are among the concepts inherent in Andrea Levy's *Fruit of the Lemon* and *Small Island*. This study vividly shows that racism is still a permanent feature in English societies. It equally brings to light what blackness means to white people. To them (white people) blackness connotes evil and has nothing good to offer to their society or even to the world at large. With these negative assumptions, they see blacks living among them as inferior and worthless people who are created to obey the white man's orders while they (whites) parade themselves as superior beings. Regarding the black race as being inferior and treating them as one in English societies affects them psychologically. They no longer see the worth in them since they are always silenced, down-trodden, degraded and oppressed in English societies.

Andrea Levy's *Fruit of the Lemon* and *Small Island* portray a society that is hostile to people of colour. From the textual analysis, it is obvious that racial segregation is the major stumbling block to the survival and advancement of people of colour in English societies. Characters such as Faith, Wade, Mildred, Constance, etc (in *Fruit of the Lemon*) and Gilbert, Hortense, etc (in *Small Island*) are regarded as second class citizens and at such, dislodged to the margin. These black characters have no right to fight for justice as they are verbally and physically abused daily by their white counterparts. They are equally denied the right to education as Gilbert in *Small Island* is denied the right to be a lawyer while Nelson could not be admitted into St. Mary School because of his colour and race. Faith as a dresser dresses only pets instead of actors as no average white person will allow a black person to dress him or her up.

In a similar vein, the black characters in the two texts could not get a good apartment as landlord and landladies refuse to accommodate them because of their race. Each of the black Characters ends up living in one room apartment with his family where they pay heavily as against their whites who live in luxuries. Wade laments that he never thought that he would end up living like this in England. However, getting a good job with a good pay becomes difficult, all the lucrative jobs are being reserved for their white counterparts. They end up settling for menial jobs that barely put food on their table. As can be seen in chapter four of this thesis, Earl becomes a labourer and a carpenter, Gilbert becomes a mere driver, Hortense and Mildred are banned from becoming a teacher and a nurse which have been their childhood dreams.

All these limitations to good living and successes that blacks suffer from in the world of the texts show that blacks are seen as second class citizens. And as a second class citizens they do not have right to education, good house, good jobs neither do they have right to fight injustice all because of their God given race.

## **CONCLUSION**

Having observed what blackness means to white people and the consequent roles they assign to blacks living in their environments in Andrea Levy's *Fruit of the Lemon* and *Small Island*, I would say that truly the white people do not see or treat the black people living in their societies as human beings. However, being aware that nobody has the right to choose the race in which he or she desires to be born into. It is appalling that one is defined negatively and made to suffer unduly for coming from a particular race. From the analysis of this work, it is obvious that blacks in diaspora suffer unduly and denied access to good living not necessarily that they committed any offence but by virtue of coming from the black race. They have been oppressed, subjugated, dehumanised and exploited both physically and

mentally by their white counterparts to a point that it affects them (blacks) psychologically. This explains why Faith, one of the protagonists in *Fruit of the Lemon* shouts that she does not want to be black anymore when she understands her place and position as a black person in Britain. Her (Faith) pains increase the more when she realizes that there are certain heights she cannot attain as a black person living in a racist environment no matter how hard she tries.

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