Postcolonial Cultural Identity:

A Comparative Intersectional Analysis of the Creation of Cultural Identity.

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Lykke Larsen

Maria Hildur Oddershede

Masters Theses

Teacher: Torben Ditlevsen

Summary

The main purpose of this Master thesis, "A comparative intersectional analysis of the creation of cultural identity in *The Inheritance of Loss*, *The God of Small Things*, *Nervous Conditions* and *Americanah*", is to delve into the problematics there are in relation to the creation of cultural identities in postcolonial literature. For this purpose, four different novels and different authors have been chosen to bring forth a nuanced and diverse outlook on these problematics. This has been done by using an intersectional analytical frame on the novels with a focus on how different factors such as: race, gender, class, nationality, age, religion, culture, social and historical context influence and shape one another and thereby also the creation of cultural identity.

The novels chosen are: Kiran Desai's *Inheritance of Loss*, Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things,* Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions,* and finally Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah.* All four authors have received praise and acclamation on a global scale, which is why they have been chosen for this paper. To delve into these novels and their portrayals of cultural identity, different theories have been applied. Those theories are mainly focused on the creation of cultural identity and on the feminist postcolonial perspective. For this purpose, Charles Taylor, Kwame Anthony Appiah, and Stuart Hall have been chosen to explore cultural identity, and Ien Ang, Avtar Brah, bell hooks, Sara Mills, and Kirin Narayan were chosen to explore the feminist postcolonial perspective. These theories have been placed into an intersectional frame through Patricia Hill Collins and Sirma Bilge's approach to intersectional analysis, to examine the interconnections of different factors that shape cultural identity.

Through an intersectional comparative analysis of firstly, the two Indian novels, secondly, the two African novels, and finally, all four novels it became evident that all four authors differ in their social commentaries, focus points, and their underlying intentions behind their work. All four authors address the same discourses of race, gender, age, class, nationality and religion, but the hierarchical structures of these discourses vary. This is due to their different backgrounds, experiences and generations. By assessing the interconnections between the novels and the theories, this paper showcased the importance of considering all the intersecting factors that shape a person's life to be able to understand their cultural identity and their underlying reasons for their actions. Thus, to understand the creation of cultural identity it is important to not only consider factors such as race and gender independently, but instead how they intersect and affect the creation of cultural identities.

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"Stories matter. Many stories matter. Stories have been used to dispossess and to malign, but stories can also be used to empower and to humanize. Stories can break the dignity of a people, but stories can also repair that broken dignity" (Adichie 2009 00:17:24).

Introduction

In the Nigerian author and feminist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Ted talk "The danger of a single story" from 2009 she addresses the negative consequences of reducing a people into a single entity. She speaks from her own experience about how she was reduced to a poor African without contemporary knowledge, when she arrived in the US. She had never before considered herself African, since her identity was Nigerian. Just as the Americans had only one story about her, she herself, admits to having had only a single story about Mexicans. This she points out is the result of only receiving information from one perspective, instead of getting a more nuanced picture based on a number of different viewpoints. She advocates for a broader conception of a people, who are not an entity of just one story, but instead contain many variables, and should therefore not be judged as one-dimensional. Thus, Adichie argues that the power of the story lies in who is telling it. Since the literary canon is primarily written and told from a Western point of view, there are few stories available about the African people written and produced by themselves. When she grew up, her literary reality was based on white children, talking about the weather and eating apples. She never considered it possible for a Nigerian child to be the subject of a story. Hence, she and her people were excluded from the literary canon, and not only excluded but portrayed in a beastly way. The misrepresentation of a people in this way, can have a negative effect on the reader, especially when it is a young child. This was also something she experienced, until she stumbled upon contemporary Nigerian literature. The epiphany that Nigerians could write about and for Nigerians had a tremendous influence on her. From that point forward, she only wrote about things she knew and could relate to herself, as well as topics she knew her fellow Nigerians and Africans in general might also have experienced or could associate with. She argues that when only one part of a people's story is told, it dispossesses them into a frame that is incomplete and misleading. Often, it only contains one aspect of many and the intersections of multiple experiences and realities are excluded. It also has the tendency to misconstrue identities, which can result in a negative self-image. Adichie's views on the dangers of a single story inspired us to explore the importance of

recognising the different aspects of identity and the negative ramifications misrepresentation can cause. Today, there is a growing industry of 'native' literature writing from their own point of view, creating a more balanced literary canon. These voices are intent on portraying their reality and, through their voices, speak for those who have been silenced for too long. To delve into this subject, we have chosen a range of contemporary female authors from decolonised countries to examine how they portray their people's reality and cultural identity through fiction.

We have chosen two authors from India and two from Africa: Rhodesia and Nigeria. Although the four authors come from decolonised countries, both their countries' histories and their own backgrounds differ immensely. The first Indian author Kiran Desai comes from the Northern part of India, where most of her novel *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006) takes place: an area which has been troubled by conflict due to the Gorkhas' claim for recognition. Desai grew up in India, and later moved to England before she settled down in America. Arundhati Roy is our second Indian author. She grew up in the Southwestern part of India, where her novel *The God of Small Things* (1997) also takes place. Roy is preoccupied with social injustices in India and mainly the treatment of the untouchables. Although both our Indian authors come from different areas with different problems, they both share the experience of living in a country tormented by constant unrest and turmoil due to its multifarious peoples. Our African authors come from respectively Rhodesia, now known as Zimbabwe, and Nigeria. Tsitsi Dangarembga grew up in both Rhodesia and England, and she experienced the apartheid of Rhodesia as a young girl. Her novel *Nervous Conditions* (1988) focuses on giving a voice to Rhodesian women, since she did not experience African women in literature as a child. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie comes from Nigeria and moved to the US as a young woman. As earlier mentioned, she was also preoccupied with giving a voice to the African women in literature. Her novel *Americanah* (2013) is focused on the cultural identity of the modern African in a globalised world. Although Dangarembga and Adichie both come from Africa, their countries are different both when it comes to their colonial history and their culture. Thus, we wish to analyse how different aspects of these authors' and their characters' lives intersect and create different outcomes, both regarding their individual identities and the construction of their communities in relation to a historical, cultural and social context.

We will analyse the novels through an intersectional framework. The use of intersectional analysis has increased in the last couple of decades, since a growing number of academic- and social fields have recognised that people's lives are affected by numerous different factors, which

intersect and constitute various different nuances of people's identities. Previously, analytical work regarding the creation of cultural identity was done using one or two dominant categories such as gender and race, and primarily focused on their individual influence on identity. These forms of analysis often had a parallel focus point, while the new intersectional approach is focusing on how these different aspects influence and intersect with one another:

> … namely, that major axes of social divisions in a given society at a given time, for example, race, class, gender, sexuality, dis/ability, and age operate not as discrete and mutually exclusive entities, but build on each other and work together. (Collins and Bilge 4)

The new approach to analysis is aware of not only the reciprocal relationship between the aforementioned aspects, but also how they are influenced by historical, cultural, and social contexts. This new approach is relevant now more than ever, since people today live in a globalised world and are constantly influenced by other cultures and norms, as well as the historical contexts they are placed in. To understand how people's identities are created, it is important to understand, not only, the aspects which constitute their personality, but also what challenges they have faced in their lives. This means that it is important to look at factors such as race, class, gender and nationality, but also to contextualise the usage and interpretations of these factors and see them in relation to different historical, cultural and social situations. People experience their lives through multiple factors, and they are not only e.g. gender-based or racially-based, but instead combined for example as a black middle-class woman, or a white upper-class man. When looking at the creation of identity, it is therefore important to examine several factors at once and understand the interconnectedness between them.

Categories are predominantly created for the purpose of organisation. When people categorise themselves and others into boxes of 'us' and 'them', they are simultaneously creating a hierarchy. Because of the hierarchy of categories, people at times must choose between the categories they belong to: e.g. a black woman may have to choose whether to identify through her race or gender. As a result, to fit into a specific category she has to repress a part of her identity. The consequence of this neglect is that other people might not recognise that part of her: she is misrecognised. The category a person chooses to recognise is often dependent on the situation and its historical, cultural and social context. Thus, it can change from situation to situation and, since categories are

historically, culturally and socially based, their meaning can change through time and have different interpretations depending on the generations and the cultural influences. We are aware of socially constructed categories and will use them to identify different aspects of people's identities. However, instead of putting people inside one-category boxes, the focus will be on how all the factors intersect and influence each other.

We will use the approach of intersectionality to delve into the complexities of the four chosen novels. Through a comparative analysis we will examine the differences and similarities in the portrayals of their characters through a historical, cultural and social contextualisation. The main approach is to use Collins and Bilge's six core ideas of intersectionality: social inequality, power, relationality, social context, social justice, and complexity to frame our analysis. In addition, we will use Taylor, Hall, and Appiah to explore how cultural aspects influence and contribute to the intersections that constitute the making of cultural identities of individuals and communities. In addition to this, a feminist approach to postcolonial theory through the works of hooks, Narayan, Ang, Brah, and Mills will also be used to create a historical context.

One of the final steps of this paper will be to reflect on how the intersectional framework influenced the analysis and its findings. Likewise, the importance of the different views and comprehensions of the categories, whether it be through generational shifts or geographical settings, will be assessed and discussed. The historical, cultural, and social backgrounds are also relevant to this assessment, since these novels are, by some, considered to be postcolonial works, which have been influenced by colonisation. These influences will not only be explored through the fictional novels, but also by looking at the authors' and the theorists' points of view. It will be assessed how an intersectional approach can be used both when dealing with works of fiction and when dealing with real people and real-life experiences.

Our paper will delve into the concept and creation of cultural identity through an intersectional analysis of our four chosen novels. It will focus on how different factors such as: social and historical context, class, gender, nationality, race, religion, age, and culture intersect and influence people's understandings of themselves and their world view. Furthermore, we will examine how the authors' experiences and backgrounds influence their writings, themes, and postcolonial focuses due to their geographical and generational differences. Through an intersectional analysis of both the novels and their authors' backgrounds, we wish to showcase the

interconnection between the two, and that there is more than a single story to be told about a postcolonial people.

Theory

In the following theory section there will be a presentation of the three different theoretical approaches, which will be applied to this paper: Cultural identity, Feminist postcolonial theory and Intersectionality.

Cultural Identity

This theory section has three different theorists: Charles Taylor, Kwame Anthony Appiah and Stuart Hall. All three theorists are interested in cultural identities and have their own views on the subject. Hence, they have been chosen for this paper to bring nuanced perspectives on the issues of cultural identity. The book *Multiculturalism: Examining The Politics Of Recognition* from 1994 has been chosen for the theory section. In this book Taylor, Appiah, and other contributors from philosophy and the social sciences discuss the political challenges of multiculturalism, cultural identity and recognition.

Charles Taylor

Charles Margrave Taylor is a Canadian philosopher from Montreal, Quebec and a professor of Philosophy and Political Science at McGill University. His work is influenced by his interest in political philosophy, cosmopolitanism, religion and individualism.

Taylor's main focus is on the building of an identity and the need to be authentic about it: a person needs to be who he/she really is and needs to be recognised and respected as such. It does not matter if it is an individual or a group, everyone needs and demands to be recognised. There is a thesis that identity and recognition are linked and that without due recognition the identity can be devalued: "Nonrecognition or misrecognition can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being" (25). Minority groups of all kinds have long claimed that the contemptible image mirrored back at them has distorted and damaged their perceptions of themselves, both on an individual level and as a group. Taylor mentions feminists as being one of these groups, complaining about how patriarchy has generated

in them "a depreciatory image of themselves" (25). The same problem with depreciatory self-image can be found with blacks, indigenous, and colonised people. After being othered by the white for generations, they have adopted this self-depreciative attitude towards themselves, and it becomes a tool of oppression against themselves (26).

According to Taylor, creating an identity is not something we do on our own, since people are affected by their surroundings. The people we surround ourselves with, family and local community, are a part of what shapes us, and through a dialogue with them we discover who we are. Taylor calls this process the "*dialogical* character" (32) and claims it is a critical aspect of human life. Through dialogue and expression, we learn to understand ourselves and our surroundings. We use different modes of expression such as: the verbal language, the artistic language, and our love and compassion to signal to our surroundings what we think and feel. Through these expressions we exchange meanings with others and through these dialogues we discover what we really think, feel and mean. We discover who we are: our identity. From the day we are born we depend on our closest family and friends for the main dialogue. Hence, family cannot be ruled out as a formative factor, but neither can institutions such as kindergartens, schools, and other formative institutions, since they are the ones that form and shape how we look at the world. The relationships we build through our formative years are necessary, since we need these relationships "to fulfill, but not to define, ourselves" (33). Identity, meaning "who we are, "where we're coming from"" (33) is the "background against which" (33) everything we are makes sense: our tastes, opinions, desires and hopes are created here and have shaped us to become who we are. We have negotiated us to an identity through a dialogue, both with others and inwardly within ourselves. Recognition is crucial throughout this dialogue, since it influences how we see ourselves through others. A positive recognition boosts our self-esteem and approves the way we recognise ourselves, whereas a misrecognition or even nonrecognition induces a self-depreciatory image of the self, which then becomes the way we identify ourselves.

Today, there is a broad discussion about recognition in the public sphere. According to Taylor, we must recognise all human beings as having the same value, and not judge people by their differences: "withholding recognition can be a form of oppression" (36), and since all people deserve equal dignity we must recognise them. This debate has two sides, which Taylor classifies as a politics of universalism and a politics of difference. The politics of universalism stresses the importance of equality: people are all the same and there are no ""first-class" and "second-class

citizens"" (37). This view emphasises the need for all to be heard and cared for on an equal basis, whether it be on the right to vote or the right to equal access and opportunities. Here, the most important thing is to recognise all people as humans, and not to divide them in groups such as the handicapped, coloured or gay. This movement saw its greatest victory in the ´60s in the US with the civil rights movement (38). However, the politics of difference cannot recognise a homogenous group of humans but consider it vital to recognise the difference of identities, since they may have particular challenges to become recognised as a part of the whole.

> With the politics of equal dignity, what is established is meant to be universally the same, an identical basket of rights and immunities; with the politics of difference, what we are asked to recognize is the unique identity of this individual or group, their distinctness from everyone else. (38)

The belief is that these distinctive features have been disregarded and that they have been assimilated into an identity of the dominant majority: they have been denied their authenticity (38). According to Taylor, even though these two politics of universalism and difference are oppositional, they cannot but intertwine with one another. Firstly, the politics of universalism demands that all humans are equal and should be recognised as such. Secondly, the politics of difference demands that we see and acknowledge something that is not mutual to all: it wants us to accept particularities. These demands can seem to work against universal equality especially when they demand special measures, but they often find themselves fighting for the universal equality through measures such as "reverse discrimination" (40). They emphasise how some groups have not received their share of equal dignity and temporary measures must therefore be taken to help these groups to become equals by using e.g. quotas to make sure these members have the same access to jobs and education. These measures are not supposed to take us back to the ""difference blind" social-space, but, on the contrary, to maintain and cherish distinctiveness" (40). Thus, the politics of difference wants us to be proud of our distinct identity, while claiming that all humans are equally worthy of respect. We are all humans with a potential and the potential is the common denominator: "a *universal human potential*" (41). By putting all our potential into one universal group where we are all considered the same, we have to suppress our distinct identity to fit into a mold. If the mold was "neutral - nobody's mold in particular" (43) it might be amenable. On the other hand, according

to Taylor, the mold is never neutral and a "reflection of one hegemonic culture" (43). This means that the minorities are suppressed to take this form. By forcing some to suppress their distinctiveness, the mold becomes "highly discriminatory" (43). Taylor questions "blind" liberalism and states that it may be a reflection of a particular culture: "the very idea of such a liberalism may be a kind of pragmatic contradiction, a particularism masquerading as the universal" (44).

The US is a liberal society, where there is no determination of what a good life is: that is up to people themselves, since their dignity is connected to their autonomy. The American state has nothing to do with how people choose to live their lives, instead it only has to secure equal treatment for all. This is what Taylor quotes as the "procedural republic" (qtd. 58). The procedural republic uses the legal system instead of the political process of building majority. The lack of common collective goals in this system is a major contrast from the democratic system. The democratic system is more concerned with the common goal: the common welfare of all. When Taylor talks about the "the good life" (57), he is describing the common goals of a democratic society. In these societies, the majority of the people, through political processes, choose what their common goal for a good life is. Thus, it is the majority in these societies that are making the choices. This can isolate the minorities, since their voices and views are not heard: they may feel less valued. Taylor describes how Quebecers have made room for a minority, the French speaking natives of Quebec, by writing laws that help preserve their culture. Taylor is happy with the result, he is a French speaking Quebecer, as he sees it as a victory for cultural survival. However, he is aware of the difficulties for this process in the future:

> Although I cannot argue it here, obviously I would endorse this kind of model. Indisputably, though, more and more societies today are turning out to be multicultural, in the sense of including more than one cultural community that wants to survive. The rigidities of procedural liberalism may rapidly become impractical in tomorrow's world. (61)

Moreover, Taylor also emphasises the difficulties of equal worth in a multicultural society. The West has a tendency to judge worthiness through their own norms, which is impossible, since they do not have an exhaustive knowledge of the cultures foreign to them. If the West is the one to judge worthiness "it implies that we already have the standards to make such judgements" (71). Hence, the West will judge cultures from the standpoint of its canon, which in the end will make

everyone alike. Taylor encourages the West to be open-minded about others, and perhaps to do so it must look at how small its part is in the "whole human story" (73). The West must have a "willingness to be open to comparative cultural study of the kind that must displace our horizons in the resulting fusions" (73). The West must admit that it does not know it all: others can teach the West, just as much as it can teach them.

Kwame Anthony Appiah

Kwame Anthony Appiah is a professor of Philosophy and Law at New York University. Appiah was born in London, to an English mother and a Ghanaian father. He grew up in his father's native country of Ghana, where he went to school and later he also studied in England (appiah.net). Appiah is one of the contributors to *Multiculturalism*, and he has been chosen for this paper due to his interesting essay from 1994 "Identity, Authenticity, Survival: Multicultural societies and social reproduction".

Appiah agrees with Taylor that current issues of political and social life are mainly focused on recognition, and peoples' right to authenticity. However, he also questions why the focus on authenticity and identity is bound up on such broad categories as gender, race, ethnicity and sexuality, which he sees as too broad categories to represent the individual (149).

On the question regarding identity, Appiah believes there are two dimensions: the collective dimension and the personal dimension. Appiah claims that when Taylor talks about recognition of identities, he is talking about collective identities: the groups who represent "collective social identities: religion, gender, ethnicity, "race," sexuality" (150). According to Appiah, these are sociological distinctions that sum up what identities contain. Thus, they lack the logic distinction of individual characteristics such as wittiness, cleverness and charm (151).

On the question of authenticity, Appiah quotes Taylor: "There is a certain way of being that is *my* way. I am called upon to live my life in this way …. If I am not [true to myself], I miss the point of my life" (qtd. 152). Appiah claims that the modern politics of recognition seem to want to unify two angles of authenticity, one being what Taylor terms as a "monologic" (qtd. 154) authenticity and the other a kind of essential authenticity. The monologic authenticity suggests that the self is self-created and developed through a constant fight against family, community, religion, and other contributing factors of customs. Appiah disagrees with this idea, since he agrees with Taylor that the conception of the individual identity is built through dialogue with: family, community,

religion, and social institutions. The idea of an essential authenticity is not one Appiah believes in. According to him, we have "a toolkit of options made available by our culture and society" (155), and it is through the choices we make with the toolkit that we develop and create the authentic self. He is not sure how much people should concede to authenticity when it comes to their political morality and he feels that it would require a new approach, neither monologic nor essential, to be able to do so. Appiah is not as satisfied with the collective identities of the world as he believes Taylor is and this difference of opinion affects the view both men have on group survival. Appiah agrees with Taylor that procedural liberalism is not the right way forward:

> I agree that we should not accept both (a) the insistence on the uniform application of rules without exception and (b) the suspicion of collective goals … I agree that the reason we cannot accept (a) is that we should reject (b). … There can be legitimate collective goals whose pursuit will require giving up pure proceduralism. (156-157)

According to Appiah, Taylor's claim for collective goals in multicultural societies is that they are necessary for the survival of the groups, not just for the current members of these groups but also for future generations. Members of the groups are dependent on future generations being able to continue their particular culture through certain establishments, e.g. schools, and through learning the groups values and traditions. Hence, according to Taylor, procedural measures are necessary. However, Appiah dismisses this reasoning and finds this method to be a violation of "the autonomy of future individuals" (157). He argues that if Indian parents in England found it necessary to continue their culture of arranged marriages, legalising that would be an attack on the children's autonomy and on the principles of equal dignity, which liberal societies are built on. His answer is that if the society creates a culture which its descendants like and believe in, they will hold on to it: it will survive. Appiah points to the fact that since children are not monologically developing their identities, the society has the power to shape them and through education and dialogue teach them the values and cultures it wants for them.

The broad categories of collective identities come with a conception of how a person of that kind behaves or should behave. To those who adhere to these collective identities, the norm of expected behaviour contributes to the shaping of their lives. This is what Appiah describes as a sort of script: a narration available to help people to shape their identities. The script helps people to

make sense of their lives and it gives them a point of reference that makes their story "appropriate by the standards made available in my culture to a person of my identity" (160). Appiah discusses how the modern multicultural West has not been adequate in giving some collective identities the equal dignity they deserve: groups such as the handicapped, blacks, and homosexuals amongst others, have been insulted and made to feel inferior. Currently, there is an agreement that these insults must stop and that negative stereotypes of collective identities must end. To do so, Appiah says that the life-scripts must change from the negative stereotyped scripts to new positive ones. He uses being black and being gay as examples. Appiah conveys how the Black Power movement took the old life-script of self-hatred and turned it into the positive life-script of black pride. First, a black person had to accept that he/she was black, and then he/she had to start being proud of that. Appiah also addresses how homosexuals have been freed from the life-script of being a faggot stuck in the closet, and now can step out and demand to be respected as homosexuals with equal rights to dignity and respect. To achieve these changes, one must break out of the negative life-script and endure negative reactions, until the life-scripts have been rewritten and one can demand to be respected for who he/she is.

Appiah is afraid that these life-scripts can amount to demands on how people in collective groups must and should behave: "There will be proper ways of being black and gay, there will be expectations to be met, demands will be made" (162). However, Appiah, an African American and gay man, is pleased with the progress made by the more positive life-scripts, but he wishes that one would not have to choose a life-script, but that there would be other options:

> The politics of recognition requires that one's skin color, one's sexual body, should be acknowledged politically in ways that make it hard for those who want to treat their skin and their sexual body as personal dimensions of the self. And personal means not secret, but not too tightly scripted. (163)

Appiah disagrees with Taylor regarding the Quebecois' demand that only French speaking Canadians should teach their children in French. He thinks that this is stepping over a boundary and that this would amount to him being forced to choose whether to identify himself as being gay or being black. Appiah finally claims that bureaucratic classification of identity could never live up to the inconsistency and whimsical behaviour of real people. At the same time, he points to the

importance of remembering that the politics of identity is able to transform the identities of those it constantly works for, a fact which the essentialists would hardly ever be able to understand. Hence, according to Appiah, there is a very unambiguous difference between "the politics of recognition and the politics of compulsion" (163).

Stuart Hall

Stuart Hall was a cultural theorist and sociologist. He was born and raised in Jamaica, but he moved to England as a young man to study and work. He was the director of Birmingham School of Cultural Studies in the ´70s (Hsu). Hall's essay "Cultural Identity and Diaspora" from 1990 looks at the production of cultural identity and representation. Hall uses the term diaspora in a different way than what we are used to. He claims to use it metaphorically and not literally. Thus, he is not talking about the Jews and Palestine, but about the members of the African diaspora. Hall's version of the experience of diaspora is one that is defined by the "recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of 'identity' which lives with and through, not despite, difference; by *hybridity*" (235). He explains that the Caribbean people mostly descend from Africa. They were a diverse group of people, who have had to reproduce themselves and their identity throughout generations. Today they have become a hybrid people: Creoles.

Hall explains that the Caribbean people are developing their own cinema and that this cinema is joining other third world cinemas representing marginalized groups of people. The Caribbean cinema is focusing on representing its black people and questioning the issues of cultural identity, asking who these new subjects are and who they are representing? Hall says that to understand them, one must look at the context they speak from and the identities they represent. He stresses that the production of identity is "never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation" (222). He claims that all representation is positioned, "we all write and speak from a particular place and time, from a history and a culture which is specific" (222).

According to Hall, cultural identity can be defined in two ways: as a shared culture and as a "matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being'" (225). The first, the shared culture, is a collective culture that reflects the shared ancestry, historical and cultural codes, and the experiences of a people. This collective identity brings a sense of what Hall calls a "oneness" (223) to the people. "This 'oneness', underlying all the other, more superficial differences, is the truth, the essence, of what it means to Caribbean, and of their black ordeal. This identity is what the black diaspora has to

find and convey through the cinema. According to Hall, the rediscovery of identity has been the occupation of the struggling postcolonial subjects. They have struggled to reshape and redefine their identity and Hall mentions movements such as 'Negritude' and quotes Franz Fanon:

> passionate research … directed by the secret hope of discovering beyond the misery of today, beyond self-contempt, resignation and abjuration, some very beautiful and splendid era whose existence rehabilitates us both in regard to ourselves and in regard to others. (qtd. 223)

The need to find a positive and healing identity is strong, because, as Hall quotes Fanon again, the colonisation was not just about holding people in a tight grip to exploit them, "it turns to the past of oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures and destroys it" (qtd. 224). The character of the Caribbean cinema is to research and unearth what colonialism tried to erase, and then to reproduce the past, by re-telling it instead of rediscovering identities on archaeological material alone. Hall stresses the importance of "imaginative rediscovery" and points out that "'hidden histories'" have been an important factor to the rise of many current social movements (224). Through images and texts, the Caribbean people and cinema can find resources of defiance and identity, to confront the misrepresentations of Western cinema and visual portrayals.

The second view of cultural identity, the 'becoming as well as of being', goes further than just seeing what we have in common: it looks at who we are, or rather, as Hall stresses, what we have become. He points out that since history has interrupted the development of the Caribbean people, they have been shaped by these interruptions and have become something new. They are dealing with the trauma of colonisation, and the aftermath of being degraded to see and experience themselves as the 'other' by the powerful West: they are in the process of becoming. Hall says:

> Cultural identity … belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture. Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation. (225)

Cultural identity is not a steady essence. Hall explains, it is not a fixed spirit that lies within us, unchanged through time, waiting for us to find it so it can answer all our questions. We do contain

something though, with history and cultural aspects, and it speaks to us through memory and fantasy. According to Hall, it is "Not an essence but a *positioning*" (226).

According to Hall, the common history of the Caribbeans is shared between the Islands of the Caribbean, where most inhabitants are descendants of peoples who were transported as slaves to the Islands and this shared common history is formative and unites the islanders. However, it does not mean that they have a shared common origin, since the differences of origin are detectable through their play with their cultures. According to Hall, the way Martiniquais simultaneously both are and are not French is one example of the cultural play. At the same time the Jamaicans in Kingston are struggling to be "'in fashion' in an Anglo-African and Afro-American way" (228). They mix different things from their cultures and this results in hybrid versions of known things e.g. religion: Black baptism, Rastafarianism and Haitian voodoo (227).

Hall claims that meanings are constantly changing: they keep moving and evolving encompassing new additional meanings. Hence, they "'disturb the classical economy of language and representation'. Without relations of difference, no representation could occur" (qtd. 229). The established binaries are therefore challenged; representation is open to change. Hall asks how this influences identity, and answers that the meaning of identity must depend on the positioning of the speaker.

The Caribbean cinema has been trying to play out different narratives on their connection to the past, and the longing for home. It has tried to hypothesise identity as created inside representation instead of outside of it. Hall hopes that it can help to "constitute us as new kinds of subjects, and thereby enable us to discover places from which to speak" (237). He concludes that if a community focuses on the efforts made by themselves to describe themselves in a positive way, and justify and appreciate their accomplishments, they can create a national culture and keep themselves in existence.

Feminist Postcolonial Theory

There have been a great number of contributors to postcolonial scholarship throughout the years, but the theory has also received its share of criticism. This criticism has, among other places, come from several feminists, who have criticised male theorists theoretical work and the neglect of e.g. gender and the difference between how males and females perceive the world (ed. Lewis and

Mills 2). As a result, the feminist critics concerning themselves with postcolonial theory have grown in the last couple of decades and their work has focused on themes such as race, gender, class and nationality. In the following theory section a few of these theorists will be presented to create a broader understanding of the different factors and nuances an analytic approach to colonial and postcolonial literature should consider. For this purpose, the book *Feminist Postcolonial Theory* (2003) has been used, since it contains several essays on the subject.

Ien Ang

One of the feminists who has concerned herself with issues of white feminism versus feminism of colour is the Indonesian born theorist and professor of Cultural Studies at the University of Western Sydney, Ien Ang. In her theoretical work she has examined topics of identity politics, nationalism, migration and ethnicity, and issues surrounding representation of these in contemporary cultural institutions. In her paper "I'm a feminist but… "Other" women and postnational feminism" from 1995 Ang addresses the term woman and its nuances, as well as how different branches of feminism have misunderstood the multitudes of implications and conceptions that come with the term. According to Ang, the concept of 'women' is no longer a universal term for all women, since it is no longer acknowledged that every woman has the same experiences and common interests as another. Instead, there are different social categories such as race, class and nationality, which intersect in women's lives and create different outcomes and possible forms of both individuality and oppression (191). Thus, Ang claims that a white woman cannot understand the kind of oppression a coloured woman is objected to simply by paralleling gender-based oppression between them. Instead, several other factors have to be taken into account as well. She puts it as follows:

> The very presumption that race-based oppression can be understood by paralleling it with gender-based oppression results in a move to reinstate white hegemony. Such a move represses consideration of the cultural repercussions of the structural ineluctability of white hegemony in Western societies. (194)

It is clear how Ang criticises a paralleling between gender and racial oppression, instead of focusing on how the two intersect and influence oppression individually and differently in a given context.

Ang also criticises the concept of looking at race merely from a Western perspective, instead of creating a more inclusive collaboration between: women of colour, white women, and women of different nationalities. Hence, she challenges and criticises how white feminists are not prepared to acknowledge the struggle of women in other cultures and how they are only interested in their own perspectives, which they themselves can relate to (192).

Ang also states that the concept of colour, e.g. whiteness and being white, differentiate from nation to nation, from country to country. It is therefore impossible to generalise between what kind of oppressions or challenges e.g. a white woman in Australia faces compared to a white woman in England. According to Ang, whiteness is a political construction opposed to a biological category, where for example Southern European immigrants at one point in time where perceived as 'black' in Australia opposed to the current white (201). Therefore, according to Ang, the concept of skin colour is difficult to rely on as a broad and global explanation of different opinions and experiences, since the perception of skin colour is different depending on the people asked and the culture they live in.

Avtar Brah

The concepts of diaspora and identity are also topics examined in connection to postcolonial feminist theory, and in the paper "Diaspora, border and transnational identities" from 1996 the former professor of Sociology at Birkbeck, Avtar Brah, addresses the implications transnationality can have in connection to diaspora and identity. In her work and in this paper, Brah focuses on issues revolving around race, gender and ethnic identity. Brah argues that the concept of diaspora can be used theoretically regarding historical experiences and should be seen in relation to fields of identity, subjectivity and social relations. She writes: "I argue that the concept of diaspora offers a critique of discourses of fixed origins, while taking account of a homing desire which is not the same thing as desire for a 'homeland'" (614-615). Brah suggests that the concept of home is relative, since not every indigenous person wishes to return to their original culture, nation or country. Instead, it is a sense of belonging to a people or a culture, which can be incorporated into a new way of life. Furthermore, when explaining the use of diaspora in relation to the concept of identity and history, Brah introduces a new branch of diaspora, diaspora space, which she describes as: "… the intersectionality of diaspora, border and dis/location as a point of confluence of economic, political, cultural and psychic processes" (615). This shows that several different factors

influence the creation of diaspora and the study of a single factor is not enough to achieve a full picture of how diaspora develops.

Moreover, Brah states that it is also important to consider: race, gender, language, and generations when constructing and analysing the 'us' versus 'other', since these aforementioned factors play into how social divisions are created as well as which elements might be more dominant than others. According to Brah, it is important not to isolate a discourse when analysing a case or event, but instead see the discourses in relation to each other and let them intersect to make a more thorough analysis (618). To illustrate this, Brah uses an example of immigrants' journeys to new settlements. Brah states that the conclusion of a journey and the way in which the immigrants settle down is interesting in connection to social relations of race, sexuality, class, and gender, but also regarding economics, state politics and institutions (167). These factors contribute to where immigrants choose to settle down, since they often try to find places where they can identify with other people. Brah describes the process of situatedness as the creation of differences between one group and another: between us and them. She writes as follows: "The concept of diaspora centers on the *configurations of power which differentiate diasporas internally as well as situate them in relation to one another*" (617). In this way different narratives, both individual and collective, are created through these journeys, and the production and reproduction of experiences result in different historical and cultural memories.

According to Brah, the notion of generations also has a say in what qualifies as 'home' in relation to diaspora, since one generation of immigrants might remember everything about the country they originated from, whereas another might only remember aspects through stories and retellings from their relatives. Thus, new experiences and social networks might have disrupted old perceptions of 'home' (625). Other discourses such as race and gender also shape the memories and experiences of the individuals and generations, which often result in different perceptions of what their original culture and history entailed. For this reason, when analysing or attempting to understand the concept of diaspora in relation to identity, it is important to consider all the multitudes of intersecting aspects of life experiences, both regarding the individual and the group, before being able to fully understand how it affects their comprehension of history and culture.

Sara Mills

In all feminist writing, the topic of gender is never neglected. To understand what gender means in a colonial setting, it is important to look at other factors and discourses, which have been part of creating female gender in decolonised countries. In her paper "Gender and Colonial Space" from 1996 Sara Mills explores the relation between gender and the colonial space, as well as the significance of context on the creation of gender roles in any given situation. Mills argues that when reading a text, no matter the subject, it is important to examine not only what the text entails, but also the context of the text. This means an understanding of the dominant and submissive aspects of not only the characters in a text for the sake of understanding the plot, but also to understand the underlying historical aspects of how the characters would have been treated in real life, as well as how the production and illustration of the characters are in relation to the creator of the text (696). In this regard, Mills states that it is important to not only look at written texts, but also other social structures to analyse the different avenues these illustrations and images are constructed through – in different cases of spatial interaction (697).

In relation to the concept of spatial divisions in a colonial culture, Mills describes the creation of three kinds of cultures. According to Mills, on the surface there are the areas of the colonised and the colonisers, which at first glance seem to run independently of one another. However, a new level or space is created wherein both coloniser and colonised intersect and influence each other's cultures, norms and values. Depending on the cultural context the values and norms vary, but, according to Mills, the intersections still create a special kind of overlapping of cultures (706). It is not only the colonisers who influence and implement new values for the colonised, but also the colonised that, no matter the intent, affect the colonists.

Furthermore, Mills also argues that the discourses of gender and race are important in connection to how dominant and submissive roles are portrayed and experienced in social structures. Mills explains that e.g. a white woman finds a different feeling of freedom in an Asian country, than a coloured woman does in a British colonised country. The experiences differ from the perspective of the coloniser to the colonised, even though they share the same gender. The importance of analysing a context through both e.g. gender *and* race becomes essential in the pursuit of understanding why perspectives and experiences can result in significantly different memories and outcomes. Thus, the experience of oppression in spatial contexts are different from woman to woman, from race to race. Moreover, this also becomes evident in how coloured men and

women are treated differently in private and public spaces, wherein a different form of differentiation also takes place (698). The importance of understanding and placing a situation or example into the correct context and what the context entails is therefore crucial to any analytical work.

bell hooks

The gaze is a term well known in postcolonial writings and it plays a big part in bell hooks paper "The oppositional Gaze: Black Female Spectators" from 1992. Hooks, who is an African American author, feminist and political activist, is considered to be one of the most influential voices of black feminism. Hooks' paper is about the black female spectators' dilemma with representation and negation of black women in the film-industry. Black women's dissatisfaction with the lack of representation resulted in the denial of the gaze: they would not watch films. She claims that to fix this dilemma black cinema needs to recreate the image and the representation of the black woman so that she can recognise herself on the screen. Hooks explains how the gaze has been used as a tool of power, a tool of enslavement as well as of resistance. She accounts how the white slave owners denied their slaves the right to look at them and punished them if they dared to disobey. This fear of the gaze was inherited through generations, where black children were punished by their parents for looking at white people. Hooks terms this a "strategy of domination" and contemplates on how "the power as domination reproduces itself" (207).

When TV and the cinemas made it possible for black people to watch white people without being punished, they did so: they looked and gazed. However, they were not looking without resistance, since they were critical and were fully aware that "mass media was a system of knowledge and power reproducing and maintaining white supremacy" (208). Although the cinema gave black men the chance to free themselves from the white man's power during a film, it did not have the same effect on women. Women did not regain their power while at the cinema: the black woman became the scapegoat, a negative role model for young black girls who could not identify with her, and a symbol of the anger mature black women felt but had to suppress (211). Not going to the cinema became the black women's way of protesting. Hooks explains how when she returned back to films, after ignoring them for years, she had "developed an oppositional gaze" (213) and she would now analyse and question the work. She explains that most black female moviegoers

vigorously resisted to identify themselves with the white female on screen: "such identification was disenabling" (213).

Hooks criticises the feminist film theory of not questioning the absence of the black woman or her denigration. They may question the role of womanhood in films and the sexual differences, but they ignore race. She claims that their criticism is structured as if it "speaks about 'women' when in actuality it speaks only about white women" (214). The silence on the matter of black womanhood makes it difficult for black women to engage in a theoretical conversation: "It is difficult to talk when you feel no one is listening" (215). These issues: the silencing and the abuse of black women's narrative in films, and the absence of black women in feminist film theory, have made black women silent. They do not speak about their struggle with their representations: "We are afraid to talk about ourselves as spectators because we have been so abused by 'the gaze'" (215). According to hooks, the black community had to go against the white domination. To resist it, the 'oppositional black gaze' created the "independent black cinema" (208). Julie Dash, black female film-maker, claims that she makes films because she, as most black female spectators, would watch movies to deconstruct them (216).

Hook reminiscences about how she loved to go to watch independent or foreign films as they "did not have in their deep structure a subtext reproducing the narrative of white supremacy", and a friend of hers loved that they "demystified whiteness" (217). Her friend also claimed that black female moviegoers, who did not have the same knowledge as them, needed to "'break out', no longer be imprisoned by images that enact a drama of our negation" (217). Hence, what hooks has learned from her conversations with black female moviegoers is that: "The extent to which black women feel devalued, objectified, dehumanized in this society determines the scope and texture of their looking relations" (217).

Hooks points out that since black women are making more films, there is an increasing possibility to raise awareness about black female moviegoers, while there has been a focus on black men for years, the time has come to start focusing on black women. According to her, there are female critical thinkers of colour who are concerned with the creation of space for a different narration of the black female, and they are aware of the importance films and mass media play in this regard. The aforementioned filmmaker, Julie Dash, is aware of creating such a filmic narrative "wherein the black female protagonist subversively claims that space" (218). She challenges the stereotypical films and scripts that place black female spectators outside the narrative, and she

problematises the relationship between race and moviegoers. However, when she places the black female in the centre of the narrative she faces the critique, mostly by white males, that her films do not work: "They are adrift without a white presence in the film" (219).

Hooks claims that the focus of these films, made by black females for black females, is on enhancing black female empowerment through equivalent gazes and representations. They can create a space where black female moviegoers can go to the cinemas and not feel as if they have to be apprehensive, but feel that there is something representing them there:

> Cinematically, they provide new points of recognition, embodying Stuart Hall's vision of a critical practice that acknowledges that identity is constituted 'not outside but within representation', and invites us to see film 'not as a second-order mirror held up to reflect what already exists, but as that form of representation which is able to constitute us as new kinds of subjects, and thereby enable us to discover who we are'. (220)

According to hooks, it is imperative to employ critical practice, since it makes it possible to theorise on 'the black female moviegoer'. Black women are now looking at the past, seeing how they have been portrayed or left out of the narrative, and using that knowledge to understand their present situation so that they can reclaim and recreate the future representations and narrations of the black female.

Kirin Narayan

Native or non-native has been a power issue especially during the colonial era. The non-native colonist held the power over the native, hence, the term native became a term of negative connotation. Kirin Narayan is an Indian born American anthropologist, and her paper "How native is native" from 1997 is a critique of the fixed distinction of nativeness. In her paper she discusses subject matters such as: native vs. non-native, multiplex identities, hybridity, situated knowledges and narrative analysis.

Native vs. non-native is an issue Narayan delves into with a personal enthusiasm. She herself is often perceived as a native anthropologist rather than a "real" anthropologist. This she finds irritating, since it is possible to do anthropologist work from within a culture as well as it can be done from outside it. Narayan claims that with the global developments of our current society,

nativeness has lost its essence, and that the "nexus of authentic culture/demarcated field/exotic locale has unraveled" (287). The old terms of anthropology, previously set by the West, are now being practiced by members of postcolonial societies. These new anthropologists come with fresh viewpoints e.g. feminist scholarship that has questioned the expression of "'woman as Other'", and consequently has destabilised the categories of 'Other' and of the 'Self' (287).

Narayan is a result of multiplex identities, with a genealogy that spans from Germany, the US and India. She points out that most people have some mixed ancestries and cannot be considered to be just one thing: a native or a non-native. She explains that:

> … mixed ancestry is itself a cultural fact: the gender of the particular parents, the power dynamic between the groups that have mixed, and the prejudices of the time all contribute to the mark that mixed blood leaves on a person's identity. (qtd. 288)

She claims that an insider's knowledge of the culture studied can have its benefits, but a person can never know all about his/her society, and when doing anthropological work, one is often set outside of the fellowship: a culture broker (289). She argues that "*every* anthropologist exhibits … 'multiplex subjectivity' with many crosscutting identifications" (291). It then depends on the situation which aspect of their subjectivity they select as their designated identity. According to Narayan, the term 'native' needs to be reassessed as it is a term that has been connected to authenticity and to geography. The fixed idea has been that the native is fixed to his location and contains an authentic pure knowledge, which is then made available when the outsider comes to seek knowledge (292). She claims that while the focus often is on the nativeness, such factors as: gender, class, education, and emigration are underestimated, since they in fact distance people from the societies they supposedly represent (293).

Societies and cultures play a role when it comes to what one knows, and situated knowledge is explained by Narayan as a knowledge learned from the situations that shape us. She points out that until she studied India through her academical education, she did not see many of the things that are obvious to her today. She has learned more about her culture and society than what her upbringing could teach her, and her new framework of knowledge comes from dismantling old perceptions and rebuilding them through academic research and fieldwork. She states that even for an alleged insider, "it is clearly impossible to be omniscient: one knows about a society from

particular locations within it" (295). She argues that all fieldwork and much knowledge of people come from the positions they are viewed from. Every anthropologist comes with his or her point of view: they position themselves in different ways and end up with different results. She points out that the terms 'positioned knowledges' and 'partial perspectives' have been a part of the language of anthropology for decades (296). Therefore, knowledge is never objective, it is always situated in the perspective.

In Narayan's paper, hybridity is not merely about people with mixed heritages but also about the mix of, in her case, the anthropologist's personal and professional identity. She quotes Edward Bruner: "every anthropologist carries both a personal and an ethnographic self" (qtd. 299). According to Narayan, all people carry this double identity, and must be aware of how their personal situation affects their work relations and not least their academic writings. She points to the importance of being able to create a narrative voice that "neither effaces ourselves as hybrid nor defaces the vivid humanity of the people with whom we work" (299). She states that narratives are created for a reason and are there to tell a story from a particular viewpoint: "they are thus incipiently analytical, enacting theory" (299).

Narayan claims that identity today is not merely multiplex, but also increasingly more culturally complex. Identities are shifting, and relationships are constantly changing due to globalisation. To do right by narratives and analysis we need to tear down the differences that separate us: "By situating ourselves as subjects simultaneously touched by life-experience and swayed by professional concerns, we can acknowledge the hybrid and positioned nature of our identities" (300). It is necessary to mix the energetic story with the accurate study, and this must be done by "enacting hybridity", no matter who we are or where we come from (300).

Intersectionality

The theory of intersectionality is known as a term coined by the African American academic Kimberlé Crenshaw in the late 1980s and early 1990s, where she worked with issues and obstacles faced by women of colour regarding equal rights in the legal system and other social and political structures. Crenshaw is also a professor at UCLA School of Law and Columbia Law School and has worked extensively with issues of race and gender with a focus on intersectionality and social politics. She used the 'term intersectionality' as an attempt to bring together the studies of gender,

class, and race under an umbrella term to explain how the different discourses could be used in an interconnected analysis (Collins and Bilge 80-81). Since then, the theory has been used extensively in Black Feminism and has become synonymous with analytic frameworks involved with discourses such as race, gender, class, ethnicity and sexuality (2). The theoretical framework of intersectionality has become internationalised and relatively mainstream in the 21st Century. Digital and social media have developed into a new platform for intersectional work, and "a new generation of activists, artists, and scholars debate its intellectual and political significance" (88).

Patricia Hill Collins and Sirma Bilge trace the origin of the theory back to the years between 1960 and 1980 in connection to different academic and political movements concerned with issues of colonialism, racism, capitalist exploitation, sexism, and militarism in their book *Intersectionality* from 2016 (64). Collins is an African American theorist born in 1948 who has contributed with academic work regarding Black Feminism and gender issues within the African American community, and Bilge is a Caucasian professor of Sociology at the University of Montréal who has worked with issues of gender, sexuality, racism, nationalism, and postcolonialism among others. They place the theory inside a women of colour discourse and African American women's pursuit of equal rights in the 1960s and 1970s, which according to them had been displaced after Crenshaw's creation of the umbrella term. Furthermore, according to them, since the theory of intersectionality and its history became a part of academia, the term developed into analysis often used from the top-down, instead of how it was previously used as mostly bottom-up (84). Thus, Collins and Bilge look at the aforementioned discourses of class, gender, and race and how these might intersect and create different outcomes of inequality and oppression, while also examining the history behind the theory of intersectionality (65). The first documented example of using intersectionality to frame identity was done through theoretical and political work by the Combahee-River-Collective, whose aim was to not only have a theoretical approach to social and political problems, but also to make this theory work in praxis and be able to apply it to real life scenarios (69-70).

The ability to apply an intersectional framework to a context theoretically and practically simultaneously is the main objective of Collins and Bilge's book. They point out that intersectionality does not have a set structural focus or a specific way of use, but instead the theory and its potential as an analytic tool is still being explored (31). However, the theory has two organizational focus points: critical inquiry and critical praxis. Critical inquiry has often been

applied in academia, where it is used to question traditional disciplines and scholarships, both within the scholarly disciplines, but also from an outside perspective. Collins and Bilge state that intersectionality was used to critique "existing bodies of knowledge, theories, methodologies, and classroom practices, especially in relation to social inequality" (31). This was especially the case around and after the 1990s in relation to scholarship and teaching, where this new approach corresponded with changes that had already begun to take place in society. Moreover, it was also primarily used as a tool to criticise and analyse rather than applied in praxis, but this changed with the new approach of critical praxis. The focus of critical praxis is on the changes that might occur if intersectionality is used to challenge and question certain social problems that may be present in society. This is done both academically e.g. universities and high schools, but also in everyday life outside of any institutions (32). In short, critical praxis concerns itself with "*both* scholarship *and* practice as intimately linked and mutually informing each other, rejecting views that see theory as superior to practice" (42). Thus, it is possible to analyse a literary work theoretically, but at the same time it is also relevant to put it in relation to other scenarios and other settings, which might show how the theory is relevant in a factual context.

To achieve this understanding of interconnectedness of critical inquiry and critical praxis Collins and Bilge introduce six core ideas of intersectional framework, which should be considered in correlation with an intersectional analysis (25). The first core idea is social inequality, which describes the importance of recognising and exploring the entire context of a given situation before making conclusions or solutions. Collins and Bilge explain the relation between intersectionality and social inequalities as follows:

> Intersectionality exists because many people were deeply concerned by the forms of social inequality they either experienced themselves or saw around them. Intersectionality adds additional layers of complexity to understandings of social inequality, recognizing that social inequality is rarely caused by a single factor. (26)

The reference of more than one factor influencing social inequality is what intersectional analysis is centred around: how different discourses intersect and create different inequalities and social positions for individuals or groups. Intersectionality was created to explore these inequalities and expand the focus from one single discourse to many and analyse how e.g. race, gender, and class

influence people's lives differently and simultaneously, instead of focusing on one discourse as the catalyst of social inequalities.

The notion of power is Collins and Bilge's second core concept of intersectionality, where the focus is to examine how power is implemented to different social structures and situations. These social structures could be in relation to the aspects of: cultural, structural, disciplinary, and interpersonal situations, where intersectional framework is applied to analyse how power changes and reacts in these different settings, but more importantly how these aspects intersect and affect one another (Collins and Bilge 26-27). Collins and Bilge exemplify how the different factors of inequality work in relation to power as follows:

> Moreover, race, class, gender, sexuality, age, disability, ethnicity, nation, and religion, among others, constitute interlocking, mutually constructing or intersecting systems of power. Within intersectional frameworks, there is no pure racism or sexism. Rather, power relations of racism and sexism gain meaning in relation to one another. (26-27)

In this regard, by intersecting the different discourses into a frame of power analysis it is possible to examine how power structures are evident in connection to e.g. race and gender. Furthermore, the concept of power can be analysed independently inside any given social structure, which can create an awareness of how it works in that isolated situation. However, as the quote suggests, the different social settings interconnect and influence one another. Exploring the intersecting structures of the different domains of power through an intersectional framework might showcase an immense interlaced social phenomenon of power relations and their influence on people's lives (27).

According to Collins and Bilge, to better understand how identities are impacted through the domain of power or in relation to race, gender and class, it is essential to understand how the third core idea of intersectional analysis works: relationality. Relationality is referring to how different discourses, scholarships or activisms interconnect, instead of only focusing on how they differentiate from one another. The aim is to embrace a both/and frame, and Collins and Bilge describe it as follows:

> The focus of relationality shifts from analyzing what distinguishes entities … to examine their interconnections … Relationality takes various forms within intersectionality and is found in terms such as "coalition," "dialog," "conversation," "interaction," and "transaction.". (27-28)

What this suggests is that power and social inequality occur through relationality, social interactions and dialogue. Therefore, it is imperative to understand how social interactions can determine these relationships and how they do not have to be examined separately, but instead as a part of a bigger picture. This could for example happen through an analysis of power relations to create a better understanding of why a certain kind of power was used in a particular social context (28). To explore this relationality, Collins and Bilge have chosen social context as their fourth core idea in intersectional framework.

To examine a case of power relations and social inequality through discourses of race, class, and gender it is imperative to place it inside a social context. This is to achieve a better understanding of how and why the case has developed and why it took place in a certain way. Collins and Bilge describe this as "contextualizing" a social situation, where the analyser must be aware of historical, political and intellectual elements to a context which has influenced its outcome (28). These historical, political, and intellectual aspects have not only shaped that particular context, but also many contexts before it and for this reason it is essential to correlate these incidents and see how they intersect. Collins and Bilge express the importance of social contexts as follows:

> To understand increasing global social inequalities, relationality sheds light on how intersections of racism, class exploitation, sexism, nationalism, and heterosexism work together to shape social inequality. These systems operate relationally across structural, cultural, disciplinary, and interpersonal domains. Attending to social context grounds intersectional analysis. (29)

For that reason, social contexts are used to explore how these different social inequalities appear in different settings and situations, and how they have occurred in different relational systems concerning structural, cultural, disciplinary, and interpersonal domains. When the analysis of different contexts has been considered, it is easier to find patterns when using an intersectional framework, which can be used to explore the reasons why a social inequality might or has occurred.

The exploration of social inequality through social contexts is often done by individuals or groups, who want to change the disadvantages of a group of people. They engage with issues of social justice, which is the fifth core idea from Collins and Bilge's book. When an intersectional framework is used in cases of promoting social justice, it is often to challenge the current conditions and in the pursuit of change. Intersectional framework does not have to be used for the purpose of creating social justice, but it is often the result or the intention behind the inquiry (30). Collins and Bilge explain the relations between intersectionality and social justice as follows:

> Working for social justice is not a requirement for intersectionality. Yet people who are engaged in using intersectionality as an analytic tool and people who see social justice as central rather than as peripheral to their lives are often one and the same. These people are typically critical of, rather than accepting of, the status quo. (30)

Thus, scholars or people in general who have explored an issue with an intersectional approach often appear to be critical of what society deems appropriate even though inequality is present. As mentioned earlier, an example of this critical approach through intersectionality could be in relation to Black Feminism and their critique of the status quo and the disadvantages some people experience compared to others. Black feminists are also seeking social justice for other women of colour, which is often done through inquiry into how different discourses intersect.

These five core ideas of intersectional framework can be difficult to comprehend, because they influence and intersect each other in several different ways, and the intersections often appear to be diverse from previous cases if the context is not analysed correctly. Therefore, Collins and Bilge's last core idea is the concept of complexity. They acknowledge that an intersectional analysis can be complicated and what it entails can be difficult to comprehend. If scholars or activists choose to use an intersectional approach, they should address all the previous mentioned core ideas in collaboration with one another, since this is the best way to truly understand how the theory can be used (29).

An example of how intersectionality can be used in real situations can be seen in Kimberlé Crenshaw's work. Even though she did not develop the theory of intersectionality on her own, her usage of intersectionality as a frame both used in relation to inquiry and praxis is essential as an example of intersectional work and how it relates to identity. In the academic paper "Mapping the

Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color" from 1991 Crenshaw explores how intersectionality can be used when examining identity politics in relation to violence and domination against African Americans and especially women of colour. In the creation of identity and the analysis of dominance and violence, Crenshaw expresses a concern with only acknowledging one kind of discrimination. In her opinion, inequality is created through an intersection of discourses and not only through a single factor. She states the following: "The problem with identity politics is not that it fails to transcend difference, as some critics charge, but rather the opposite – that it frequently conflates or ignores intragroup differences" (1991 1242). For this reason, the neglect or misrepresentation of identity can become problematic when for example analysing cases of violence against women, since race and class are often not considered simultaneously, even though they might prove to be relevant to a specific form of domination. This is a concern Crenshaw not only has in relation to praxis, but also towards academic fields of feminism and anti-racist movements: How the focus on women's rights have ignored the intersection and challenge of race and class (1991 1242). This concern will be addressed again later in this theory section.

The neglect of how race and class influence gender discrimination is something Crenshaw has examined in her studies regarding domestic violence, but in general her theory and approach through intersectionality can be transferred to several different situations. For example, when Crenshaw addresses how women of colour subjected to domestic violence often protect and conceal their victimisation, it is frequently due to other factors beyond their gender. They must consider how their actions may also influence and affect other people of colour and their financial situation. Crenshaw explains this as follows:

> People of color often must weigh their interests in avoiding issues that might reinforce distorted public perceptions against the need to acknowledge and address intracommunity problems. Yet the cost of suppression is seldom recognized in part because the failure to discuss the issue shapes perceptions of how serious the problem is in the first place. (1991 1256)

Thus, due to the social sphere and stereotypical perceptions regarding people of colour, women of colour need to not only consider what is best for themselves, but also what is best for other people

like them: other people of colour. However, as Crenshaw points out: it is difficult to change attitudes, if one is unwilling to discuss and explore some of the aspects that create the discriminations and dominations in the first place. This is not only something which can be applied to people of colour, but to everyone in general who has ever faced discrimination based on multiple factors. According to Crenshaw, people of colour have to make a choice regarding their identity, where they have to choose between which aspect of themselves they will prioritise.

To acknowledge this problem and potentially solve it, Crenshaw believes that creating awareness of these intersecting discourses will further both the academic groundwork as well as the practical appliance in real cases. She states: "Through an awareness of intersectionality, we can better acknowledge and ground the differences among us and negotiate the means by which these differences will find expression in constructing group politics" (1991 1299). Thus, the recognition of how different discourses intertwine will help not only the construction of identity on an individual level, but also help bigger groups of minorities or groups faced with discrimination to be recognised and accepted.

On the other hand, in Crenshaw's paper from 1989, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics", it becomes evident that the misrecognition and suppression of intersecting discourses are not only caused by outsiders not familiar with the ramifications domination can result in, but also by people whom they share some of the same characteristics with. Crenshaw brings up two examples: white feminists and anti-racist movements, where the intersections of race and gender become problematic for their political work. She also believes that many cases of discrimination regarding race are seen from the perspective of the privileged people of colour, and that sex discrimination is seen from the perspective of white middle- and upper-class women. This becomes problematic, when the political work of the two groups does not take into consideration every factor of the different individuals who supposedly should be a part of their group e.g. women of colour (1989 140). Crenshaw writes as follows:

When feminist theory attempts to describe women's experiences through analyzing patriarchy, sexuality, or separate spheres ideology, it often overlooks the role of race. Feminists thus ignore how their own race functions to mitigate some aspects of sexism and,

moreover, how it often privileges them over and contributes to the domination of other women. (1989 154)

Crenshaw believes that white feminism is lacking, when it does not include more women of colour through an intersectional framework, which could bring light on the discrimination these women are faced with. She states that when analysing e.g. patriarchy the white woman's perspective on dominance is significantly different compared to the black woman's perspective.

Crenshaw draws a comparison between white women and women of colour regarding the dominance of the patriarchy, wherein she says that white women at one time were not allowed to work, whereas women of colour had to work, if they wanted to take care of their family (1989 156). She believes that there has been a different pressure on women of colour compared to white women and any work involving women's rights should reflect this. Crenshaw brings up this difference regarding people of colour, where the discrimination and domination projected onto men and women of colour also differentiate. She mentions a lack or hesitation of prosecution in rape cases involving black men and women, since the anti-racist movements are afraid of the harm it could do towards the anti-racist agenda, when a black man is accused of raping a black woman (1989 160). A set of stereotypes has also been set forth, which can make it more difficult to address the sexual exploitation of women of colour. Crenshaw writes as follows:

> In sum, sexist expectations of chastity and racist assumptions of sexual promiscuity combined to create a distinct set of issues confronting Black women. These issues have seldom been explored in feminist literature nor are they prominent in antiracist politics. (1989 159)

Again, the black woman or the woman of colour has to consider, if she wants to protect her racial relations or protect herself as a woman. She has to deny a part of herself: her own identity. Furthermore, her community is also choosing with her, if they deem the reputation of their community more important than the well-being of the rape victim (1989 160). Therefore, Crenshaw claims that there should be a focus on an intersectional framework, when one tries to analyse a case of inequality facing not just women, but people in general. According to Crenshaw, one needs to consider the entire picture, before truly being able to understand how every intersecting part of a person affect their choices and their lives.

An intersectional comparative analysis

In the following analysis this paper will delve into these four novels: *The Inheritance of Loss, The God of Small Things, Nervous Conditions* and *Americanah*. The analysis has a comparative structure and uses a framework of intersectional theory. First, we will analyse and compare the two Indian novels. Then, we will analyse and compare the two African novels. Lastly, we will compare all four novels, to explore whether they have different or similar focus points based on cultural, historical and social influences.

An analysis of the two Indian novels

The Inheritance of Loss

The author Kiran Desai's novel *The Inheritance of Loss* from 2006 takes place in the northern part of India, Kalimpong in the 1980s and is centred around an elderly well-educated Indian judge, his granddaughter Sai and their cook, while also following the cook's son Biju's journey as an immigrant in America. The novel became an international bestseller and Desai received the Booker Prize in 2006 as the youngest female writer to win the reward. Desai is born in India and has also lived in England, and now America, and her knowledge of the three places is reflected in her depiction of the characters' surroundings, both in relation to the setting and the characters' interaction within them. The novel is written in third person, and the narrator's point of view is omniscient and at times describes contextual situations taking place far away from what the main characters are experiencing. The novel also jumps in time through flashbacks and the narrator often knows and comments on the different settings and situations the characters find themselves in. Throughout the novel there are also numerous different intersecting factors, which determine the creation of the characters' identities and the journeys they each go through. In the following analysis of *The Inheritance of Loss* the significance of these intersecting discourses will be examined in a historical and cultural perspective, as well as the significance of the author's voice in the creation of the novel. For this analysis of the novel, the focus will mainly centre around Sai, the judge and Biju, and how their experiences mould their lives and identities.

The difficulties of a multicultural relationship

The young girl Sai's identity has been shaped by several different factors and intersecting discourses. At times, Sai was an active participant in these factors, but she was also a victim of circumstances outside her reach. From the age of six Sai's life was spent in an Indian convent and soon it became everything she knew, and her world centred around what she experienced in the convert as well as the letters she received from her parents in Russia (27). Her parents left for Russia in the 1960s during the space-race between the US and Russia, because her father wanted to become an astronaut (26). The significance of class and religion, which Appiah termed as a part of collective social identities, are evident in Sai's life through e.g. her placement in the convent. Her parents did not share the same religion, her father was a Zoroastrian and her mother a Hindu, which resulted in her mother's family disowning her and Sai (26-28). The two religions did not correspond in the context of the 1950s, and their elopement and Sai' birth did not help in this regard. For this reason, Sai spent most of her early years in a convent, but only since her grandfather chose to pay for it. In this sense, the concepts of power and relationality, Collins and Bilge's second and third core ideas, are present in all interactions between Sai and her grandfather. He pays for her livelihood and has power over whether Sai can live in the convent and receive the education the nuns provide for her. The social context of Sai's life in relation to religion is also evident in this example, since Sai might have had more family to live with, if her mother's family had not disowned her mother. They disowned her because in the 1950s and the 1960s the marriage between those two religions was not common nor appreciated. Collins and Bilge's core idea of social context also shows its importance in the case of Sai's upbringing. Because, to understand why Sai's family disowned her mother, it is relevant to look at how the cultural context influenced by religious beliefs was part of their dislike of Sai's father and then estrangement from their daughter. As a result, the first years of Sai's life, as well as her identity, were not shaped by her parents' presence but by lack of it, and instead the nuns' education was fundamental to her upbringing. However, as Hall also expressed, identity is always in production and Sai's identity would be as well.

While living with her grandfather, Sai develops a romantic relationship with her tutor Gyan. The relationship with Gyan has many nuances and is fundamental to the developments of Sai's life and what Hall refers to as the production of identity. Through her relationship with Gyan, Sai learns about her sexuality and womanhood, and she explores herself and her body due to their shared attraction to one another (74). She goes from childhood to adulthood in these interactions, and she

becomes aware of the physical differences between man and woman. However, this realisation is not only positive, since Sai also realises her physical disadvantages when it comes to unwanted sexual attention from other males. In the first chapter Sai's family is being robbed by a group of boys, whom we later find out are members of the Gorkhas' freedom movement, and their approach towards her scares her because of her gender: "They looked at one another, at her, looked up, down, and winked. She felt intensely, fearfully female" (5). She is afraid that they will sexually violate her because she is female. They do not make any sexual innuendos towards the males in the household, and it is clear that she has been targeted because of her gender. In addition, to understand how important the intersectional discourses are in relation to what happens to the characters in Desai's novel, it is relevant to understand the importance class had in this robbery. If Sai's grandfather had not been perceived wealthy by the group of boys, they would not have robbed the household. Thus, the implication of both class and gender should be considered relevant to the incident, or else it would not have happened to Sai in the first place. Therefore, when it comes to power relations, it is evident that Sai is both at a disadvantage due to her gender and class. Later in this analysis it will also become clear that a number of other factors, such as nationality and religion, were also implicated in the robbery's conception.

The implication of class and the relevance it has to Sai's life is apparent in her relationship with Gyan. The relationship only happens because her grandfather is wealthy and pays for a private tutor. Even though Sai is not wealthy herself, her grandfather has enough money in his retirement to pay for luxuries such as private education. The differences between Sai and Gyan are evident already from the beginning of their relationship: a relationship between an employer and an employee. It is not until matters of the outside world, and the historical context this novel takes place in, move into their shared sphere that their relationship suffers.

The implications of being a colonised country for years shows its effects in the novel's plot and it effects Gyan and Sai's relationship. In the paragraph above, the notion of an employer and employee relationship brought them together, but when the aspect of nationality also becomes an intersecting factor in their different identities, their relationship breaks apart. As an author, Desai illustrates the proceedings of the decolonisation as beginning in 1947, when the British left and India gained its independence. According to her depiction of an angered Nepali-Indian, this new freedom was mainly available to castes and tribes, but not for the Indians of Nepali origin (158). Hence, there is a difference in how different nationalities and religions were treated after the

English left India. This is also illustrated through the description of how the Communist Party in the 1940s failed in implementing Marxist and socialist agendas to the advantages of the Gorkhas: people of Nepali nationality. Desai is not only attempting to create a context for her characters to interact in, but also trying to convey a premise of social and historical context for the reader. This contextualisation is also relevant, as Mills described, to create an analysis and understand the challenges the characters go through. The following deterioration of Sai and Gyan's relationship becomes easier to understand, when the novel's context has been considered.

The deterioration of their relationship happens gradually after Gyan observes the angry Gorkhas' rally against the other Indian nationalities. An awareness of his cultural identity is awakened through a cultural dialogue with fellow Nepali-Indians and their anger is directed towards the misrecognition of their Nepali culture and its rejection. According to Taylor, this misrecognition of cultural identity can have severe negative ramifications, which is also what the novel is attempting to illustrate through the Gorkhas and their movement for justice. The awareness the Gorkhas are trying to implement through cultural history is also part of what Appiah termed collective social identities, where shared factors such as nationality, ethnicity, and class are essential to their message. However, this awareness of Gyan's cultural history results in the deterioration of his relationship with Sai, which meets its end through a fight regarding issues of nationality and class. In the interlude, where Sai for the first time experiences the community Gyan grew up in, the differences of their economic status becomes apparent to her (255). The difference in wealth is based on their nationality, a factor which Sai had not previously considered, but her appreciation and sudden awareness of Gyan's background gives Sai an insight into Gyan's struggles. She realises that in the process of educating Gyan and making him her tutor, Gyan's whole family had put their lives on hold in the hope that Gyan in the future would provide for his family:

> Every single thing his family had was going into him and it took ten of them to live like this to produce a boy, combed, educated, their best bet in the big world. Sisters' marriages, younger brother's studies, grandmother's teeth – all on hold, silenced, until he left, strove, sent something back. (256)

Sai finally realises how different their lives are and the social inequalities their lives are faced with. Even though Sai has never been close to her grandfather and did not choose to live with him, she

still lives a life free of debt and she has the opportunities to educate herself without jeopardising her family's future. In the fight, Gyan blames his nationality for being an instrumental factor in how this economic gap has occurred between the two families. He shows a distaste for everything Westernised that has influenced Sai's way of life in India (258). He had previously thought of her as lacking a sense of Indianness, because of her upbringing. She had lived her whole life speaking English, and could only speak pidgin Hindi: "… she … could not converse with anyone outside her tiny social stratum" (176). This notion of Sai not understanding the social and historical context Gyan has been brought up in, is a significant factor to this dislike, as well as to the fight the two have in the novel. Due to her lack of Indian knowledge, Gyan accuses Sai of having neglected her Indianness and instead conformed to a form of Westernised hybrid – a person who cannot relate to the struggles he and his people have gone through (176-177). In what Hall calls seeing oneself as the 'other' and the negative consequences this can insure, Gyan resents Sai and her family for making Gyan's people appear as the 'other' and is adamant on their mission to take back India. Furthermore, he also blames Sai and her family's kind for influencing the misrecognition of his cultural heritage, which Taylor also described as damaging if misrepresented. This blame is somewhat misplaced, but the notion of Sai coming from a different class, a different national and religious background as well as her Westernisation gives Gyan an excuse to point the finger at her and what she stands for - as the 'them' to his 'us'. It is also an essential factor in the robbery that occurred in Sai's home, since it was also due to these factors that Gyan told the Gorkhas about the supposed wealth of Sai's grandfather. Thus, he was the reason the robbery occurred in the first place.

However, the distance Gyan is trying to create between him and Sai is not only based on nationality and class, but also on an intersection of age and gender, and the process of going from child to adult. When the relationship between Gyan and Sai began, Gyan was twenty and Sai was sixteen, which means that Gyan was already in the flux between childhood and adulthood, whereas Sai was still a child in some situations (126). Moreover, in Gyan's growing awareness of his cultural history, he also wants to prove himself as an adult and as a man. His relationship with Sai suddenly seems childish and almost shameful, because of her wealth and the luxuries he has participated in. Instead, the Gorkhas' movement brings forth a sense of masculinity and strength that Gyan wants to be a part of:

> It was a masculine atmosphere and Gyan felt a moment of shame remembering his tea parties with Sai on the veranda, the cheese toast, queen cakes from the baker, and even worse, the small warm space they had inhabited together, the nursery talk - It suddenly seemed against the requirements of his adulthood. (161)

Not only as a ploy to become an adult, but also because of his challenged masculinity, does Gyan begin to distance himself from Sai. The relationships he builds in the novel, first with Sai and then with the Gorkhas' movement, are fundamental to the development of his identity. However, as Desai describes in the novel, it is only the males that are allowed to be a part of the movement, and the women have to stay at home (193). Thus, the social justice for the Gorkhas is implemented by and through the work of men, where women are not allowed to participate. Therefore, the male Gorkhas are only interested in changing certain parts of the Indian culture, since they are satisfied with the women staying at home, doing chores, and bringing in economic funds through marriages. The social justice the Gorkhas are seeking is only directed at a particular group of people, and just as was the case with the colonisers, some will receive more advantages than others.

<p align="center">The consequences of cultural misrecognition</p>

In Kalimpong Sai's grandfather is known as the judge, and the household's cook is quick to fabricate long and exciting stories about him and his origins. However, the judge has the same background as many other Indians in the middle of the 20th century. The judge or Jemubhai, Jemu for short, was born into a poor and uneducated family that Jemu himself describes as part of the "peasant caste" (56). Jemu has always been fascinated by the Western world and what it entails, which influences his opinions on not only what he wants to do with his life, but also the resentment he feels towards his own parents (37-38). The fact that they never had the opportunity to get an education due to their place in the caste system had always been a problem for Jemu. Not only because of the lack of wealth that came with being in a low caste, but also because Jemu himself was an Agnostic. The concept of religion and in extension lack of financial security was the foundation for Jemu's dislike of his parents' background. This becomes apparent when Jemu gets the opportunity to travel to England to receive the education his parents were denied, and he does not follow the old traditions that are part of his parents believes.

> "Throw the coconut!" he [Jemu's father] shrieked.
>
> Jemubhai looked at his father, a barely educated man venturing where he should not be, and the love in Jemubhai's heart mingled with pity, the pity with shame. His father felt his own hand rise and cover his mouth: he had failed his son.
>
> … Jemu watched his father disappear. He didn't throw the coconut and he didn't cry. (37)

Jemu makes a clear and certain choice to leave his parents and their belief system behind in the pursuit of the Western world. This choice correlates with Appiah's point of view on the perseverance of old traditions through generations, and how Jemu made a choice to discard religious beliefs that no longer pertained to his life and identity.

However, England and the West are not entirely what Jemu had fantasised of in India. Because, as Jemu soon realised the concept of class and wealth transcended into every culture and influenced people of every historical and cultural origin. Jemu was surprised to experience buildings in England that were not grand and majestic, as he had pictured them in India. Additionally, in the late 1930s it was difficult for an Indian man, due to his race and nationality, to find a place to rent in Cambridge. Because of the treatment he received, Jemu became withdrawn and did not interact with people: "The solitude became a habit, the habit became the man, and it crushed him into a shadow" (39). Thus, since he did not fit into the England he had adored in India, he became somebody else that did not want to interact with the world. This distancing was also influenced by the reactions he got from the English:

> … and elderly ladies, even the hapless - blue-haired, spotted, faces like collapsing pumpkins - moved over when he sat next to them in the bus, so he knew that whatever they had, they were secure in their conviction that it wasn't even remotely as bad as what *he* had. The young and beautiful were no kinder; girls held their noses and giggled, "Phew, he stinks of curry!" (39)

The rejection Jemu was faced with by a society he had idolised resulted in a misconstructed conception of his own identity. The English society did not recognise Jemu and his efforts of trying to fit into their society, and instead the misrecognition and its ramifications, which Taylor focuses on, happened: "… he grew stranger to himself than he was to those around him, found his own skin

odd-colored, his own accent peculiar" (40). He reflected himself in the Western world, in the colonisers, and he found himself lacking the signifiers he had come to believe were essential to be the right kind of human. In the question of power, Collins and Bilge's second core idea, the English had the power over Jemu: not just in relation to his physical well-being, but also in the mental image he had of himself. And, when Jemu returns to India again after being appointed a judge by the English, it is with mixed emotions both towards the English and the Indian people: "He envied the English. He loathed Indians. He worked at being English with the passion of hatred and for what he would become, he would be despised by absolutely everyone, English and Indians, both" (119).

The last part of the quote above pertains to the influence the British had on India and the Indian governmental- and legal system due to the colonisation. As mentioned earlier, the Gorkhas were infuriated with how the British treated them and how they left India behind without leaving an opening for a new and better system. On the other hand, the British colonisation had a different impact on Jemu's life, when he returned to India. Because of his education in England, he had the opportunity to work for the government and he became a part of the Indian middle-class and rejected the notion of the Hindu caste system. Furthermore, Jemu rose up through the ranks at his workplace due to the British departure from India, and his experience with the British decolonisation of India was again radically different from the Gorkhas' and Gyan's (307). Thus, Jemu's fascination with the West let him rise from being a part of the lower classes and into becoming part of the middle- and upper-classes of Indians in India.

However, this did not mean that Jemu did not recognise the inequalities that took place in India because of him and others like him who had chosen to work for the British government. Throughout the novel, it becomes clear that Jemu has ambivalent feelings about England and India, and the Westernisation he has sought out. At one point, Jemu discusses the matter of the British and colonial power with another Indian, Bose, who also decided to work in the legal system implemented by the British. At first, Jemu has difficulties in expressing his own views on the colonisation, and due to his pride, he chooses to be quiet at first. But, when the one-sided conversation becomes too much for him he exclaims: "YES! YES! YES! They were bad [the colonisers]. They were part of it. And we were part of the problem, Bose, exactly as much as you could argue that we were part of the solution" (206). Hence, in the matter of power and inequality, Jemu admits to his role in maintaining the British structures in India after the British's departure:

> He thought of how the English government and its civil servants had sailed away throwing
> their *topis* overboard, leaving behind only those ridiculous Indians who couldn't rid
> themselves of what they had broken their souls to learn.
> Again they [the native Indians] went to court and again they would go to court with their
> unshakable belief in the system of justice. Again they lost. Again they would lose.
> The man with the white curly wig and a dark face covered in powder, bringing down his
> hammer, always against the native, in a world that was still colonial. (205)

Not only did he admit to his part in maintaining the colonial structures in India after the British had
gone home, but he also reflected on what it did to him, his soul and his identity. The notion that he
had seen himself through what Hall called the eyes of the coloniser and tried to mirror himself with
the same behaviour and racial appearance, meant that he became a native Indian man who ensured
that the inequalities and social injustices in India did not change. Consequently, due to his
involvement in keeping groups of the Indian people down through their race, nationality and
ethnicity, and thus affecting their economic safety as well, the deterioration of his identity that
began in England only magnified and became instrumental to his withdrawal from other people,
including his family and granddaughter.

At one point, his relatives acknowledge that Jemu has changed and has become someone else
due to his Westernisation, and his father accuses him of bringing dishonour on their family due to
Jemu's actions:

> "Why are you talking like this?" he said to his father. "You're following the script of a village
> idiot. She [Nimi] is unsuitable to be my wife."
> "It was a mistake to send you away. You have become like a stranger to us."
> "You are the one who sent me and now you come and say it was a mistake! A fine thing." He
> had been recruited to bring his countrymen into the modern age, but he could only make
> himself by cutting them off entirely, or they would show up reproachful, pointing out to him
> the lie he had become. (306)

It becomes clear that the steps Jemu has taken: to become part of the Western world, to integrate
into the English culture, and to change his cultural identity, has made him reject certain parts of his

Indian culture, which his father sees as a rejection of their cultural heritage. The lack of cultural recognition Jemu shows towards his father's way of life results in a fight, where father and son leave on bad terms and as a result he becomes estranged from his family. In addition, Jemu only invited Sai to live with him as an attempt to redeem himself of the injustice he committed towards his wife, Nimi.

The injustice he committed began when he was young and wanted to travel to England and experience the West, and factors such as culture, gender, race, age, and class were essential to the injustice. To be able to go to England, he married into a family that was financially more secure than his own family and through the marriage he received financial aid. As a fourteen-year-old Indian female, Jemu's wife did not have a choice in the matter when it came to marrying Jemu: the decision was made by her father who sought the advantages Jemu's future governmental status could bring him (90). For this reason, the beginning of their marriage was a business transaction, where Jemu's wife was an object to be traded. The concept of the wife being an object and her choices being determined by males, became even more evident after the marriage with the following: "When she married, her name was changed into the one chosen by Jemubhai's family, and in a few hours, Bela became Nimi Patel" (91). Thus, not even Bela's first named belonged to her, and she became Nimi Patel.

When the two married they were both young and inexperienced, and when Jemu attempted to undress Nimi and have sexual intercourse with her, as his uncles had told him to do, Nimi became scared, began to cry and Jemu stopped his advances. It becomes clear through Desai's illustrations of the Indian families that Jemu's actions were not only unusual in the context of newlyweds' first night together, but also frowned upon:

> Next morning, the uncles laughed. "What happened? Nothing?" They gestured at the bed.
> More laughter the next day.
> The third day, worry.
> "Force her," the uncles urged him. "Insist. Don't let her behave badly."
> "Other families would not be so patient," they warned Nimi.
> "Chase her and pin her down," the uncles ordered Jemubhai. (91-92)

Hence, the concept of forced sexual intimacy and essentially rape was not frowned upon, since the notion of a wife belonging to a husband after marriage was commonly acknowledged. What was significant to Jemu's actions towards Nimi was his age and his lack of sexual experiences. It becomes evident how important the intersections between age and gender are in this example, and how Jemu's actions were influenced by them. Furthermore, his identity had not deteriorated yet, but when he returns to his wife after living in England he reacts differently towards her.

As a young man, he recognised her youthfulness and womanhood as fresh and pretty, but when he returns to India his perception of a real and beautiful woman is English, and even though he can see that his wife is an appealing Indian woman, it is nothing compared to the images he has in his head of Western women:

> He did not like his wife's face, searched for his hatred, found beauty, dismissed it. Once it had been a terrifying beckoning thing that had made his heart turn to water, but now it seemed beside the point. An Indian girl could never be as beautiful as an English one. (168)

After this, Jemu discovers that Nimi had stolen his powder-puff, which is used to make the Indian judges' faces appear white and Western, as it was mentioned in a previous quote. The fact that his wife stole from him makes Jemu crack. After having experienced ridicule and teasing from his Indian family because of his new Westernised traits, he rapes his wife and forces her to have sexual intercourse with him. Thus, the rape becomes a consequence of the misrecognition Jemu experienced both in England and in India. In relation to Taylor's theory, this instance of rape might not have happened if Jemu's identity had not been so severely broken due to the lack of recognition.

What stands out in the situation is not only the rape, but also how the people around them react:

> "Break the bed," shouted an ancient aunt, hearing the scuffle inside the room, and they all began to giggle and nod in satisfaction.
> "Now she will settle down," said another medicine-voiced hag. "That girl has too much spirit."
> … She [Nimi] ran to the door.
> But the door was locked.

> She tried again.
>
> It didn't budge.
>
> The aunt had locked it - just in case. All the stories of brides trying to escape - now and then even an account of a husband sidling out. Shameshameshameshame to the family. (168-169)

As it is evident from the two previous quotes, the notion of forced intercourse was not frowned upon, but rather encouraged by their families. It is even noted that the rape will make Nimi more docile and hopefully she will no longer have her own opinions and free spirit. This was why the aunt had chosen to lock the door and make sure that neither Nimi nor Jemu would leave the room before they had had intercourse, as a precaution so that neither one of them would shame their families. In this social context it becomes clear that the unjust treatment of Nimi by her family is due to a number of different intersecting cultural aspects. She lived in a culture and was part of a religion that endorsed a wife to be submissive towards her husband, and in their power relation he was the dominant part due to his gender. As a female she had no power over her own life and could not speak out about the social injustice she was faced with, because it was part of their culture to treat women this way. The mistreatment of Nimi due to her gender also becomes apparent in relation to her death and how it occurred.

When the British departed from India, all Indians that were part of the Indian Civil Service (ICS) rose in power, no matter their skills. The judge, who was working hard at that time, no longer spoke to his wife, and had sent her back to her family. This was the reason for the previously mentioned fight between the judge and his father. Nimi's family did not want her back, and when Nimi died it appeared to be because of an accident involving a fire, where Nimi's body had turned to ashes. Everybody chose to accept her death as an accident, because it was easier (307-308). However, through the narrator's commentary and Jemu's reflection on Nimi's death, it becomes apparent that there might have been foul play involved in the death and that Nimi's family wanted to get rid of a disgraced female. By paying off the police, they could hide their shame, and spare the police the trouble of an investigation. In the wake of the British departure from India, the Indians were concerned with making their society work, and it was easier to forget the past and look towards the future. Hence, the intersections of gender, religion, culture, and historical context influenced the unjust death of Nimi Patel.

Resisting Westernisation

Far from India, the cook's son Biju experiences the challenges of adapting to the American culture, a culture profoundly different from his own. An experience which is significantly different from Jemu's. Biju travels to America in the pursuit of the American Dream, and his father, the cook, supports his son's wishes of travelling to another country to find a different life and hopefully become part of a different class. However, what becomes apparent in the chapters about Biju is that he struggles with his integration into the American culture and that he does not become as severely Westernised as Jemu did. Instead, during his stay in America Biju questions: everything American, Indians who have become Westernised, and why education about other countries outside the West has not been available to him in India. Thus, every time Biju meets a person of a new nationality and religion, he stereotypes the rest of a country or people after that incidence (77).

Compared to Jemu, Biju's interactions with people were significantly different, and Biju had to take underpaid and ungrateful jobs in restaurants throughout New York. It is through these jobs that he becomes familiar with other nationalities and countries and their cuisines. What is interesting in this process is that the Western restaurants serve food such as 'authentic colonial food', even though they have no idea about what that entails (21). People in the West participate and maintain stereotypes regarding the former colonies, even though they have no idea about what is really served in decolonised countries. At the same time, the cooks who make and produce the food in the kitchens have entirely different nationalities than the themes of the cuisines, since the workers from countries such as India, Pakistan, and Mexico need the work more than the nationalities the cuisines originate from. Through this it becomes clear that some nationalities, races, and religions have a difficult time climbing the class ladder and becoming wealthy Americans and change their lives as they had hoped to: through the American Dream. Also, the fact that every restaurant worker is male proves that females did not immigrate to America as often as the males did - or that when they arrived in America they had to choose lesser payed or different jobs than the men. This shows that there was also a gender-based difference in the American labour market.

At one point in his second year in America, Biju is discriminated against and then fired from a job in an Italian restaurant based on his nationality, race and religion:

"He smells," said the owner's wife. "I think I'm allergic to his hair oil." She had hoped for men from the poorer parts of Europe - Bulgarians perhaps, or Czechoslovakians. At least they might have something in common with them like religion and skin color, grandfathers who ate cured sausages and looked like them, too, but they weren't coming in numbers great enough or they weren't coming desperate enough, she wasn't sure. … (48).

If Biju had been of another nationality or skin colour similar to the wife's, she would have been more accepting towards him. She mentions a number of cultural references of food and appearance that she would have appreciated more in her restaurant workers. She has prejudices towards Biju based on his background. She even comments on his smell, which her husband tries to change through hair products, but in the end, Biju still gets fired from his job based on his cultural background. In this context involving social inequality and power relations, Biju is a victim of discrimination due to his appearance and his lack of European features and religion, and even though he tries to change e.g. his smell, the prejudices the owner's wife has and how she views him as the 'other' and too different from her own kind are too prominent. Furthermore, in this social and cultural context in New York, the wife as a female has more power over Biju than he has over her as a male. In this situation their cultural background, race, and religion have a bigger influence on who is faced with the discrimination and injustice, than the concept of gender, which was more prominent in India in the case of Jemu and his wife, Nimi.

The challenges Biju goes through in maintaining his cultural and religious background becomes evident through his interactions with successfully assimilated Indians in the restaurants. To be accepted into the American society, the assimilated Indians have disposed of their Hindu religion, and instead chosen to become either Christian or Agnostic as Jemu did when he went to England. However, Biju does not view the conversion to another religion as positive, and he has a difficult time accepting how people can change their religious beliefs:

But here [in America] there were Indians eating beef. Indian bankers. Chomp chomp. He fixed them with a concentrated look of meaning as he cleared the plates. They saw it. They knew. He knew. They knew he knew. They pretended they didn't know he knew. They looked away. He took on a sneering look. But they could afford not to notice.

> "I'll have the steak," they said with practiced nonchalance, with an ease like a signature that's a thoughtless scribble that you *know* has been practiced page after page.
> Holy cow unholy cow. (135)

Not only is there a religious element to this interaction, but also one of class. In this social context, where Biju is serving his fellow Indians meat from a cow: a holy creature in India, there is an unspoken conversation of how to achieve full assimilation: one has to make choices and ignore certain parts of one's original culture. In so doing, the Indian bankers were able to achieve wealth and work their way up the economic ladder, while Biju was still working illegally in the restaurant as a server. However, he served the beef in order to stay alive and get paid, which again shows the difference between the consumers and the servers. The lack of financial wealth is also the reason why Biju keeps working in restaurants and under horrible working conditions, since he has yet to obtain a green card. Biju has to not only serve beef to Indians, but also to accept the way he is treated due to his lack of rights as an illegal immigrant.

What becomes apparent in Biju's story is that he rejects the Westernisation he is submitted to, even though it could have been beneficial to his future to integrate into the American society. Instead, the lack of cultural recognition as well as the cultural prejudices he is faced with through his interactions with the Americans and the immigrants, make Biju feel misplaced. Historically and socially Biju makes a decision that few other Indians before him made, which his circle of acquaintances deem both ill-advised and foolish: he decides to return to India without a green card and as a result his chances of returning to America become minuscules due to his nationality, race and class. When Biju arrives back in India he can breathe and be himself again: "He looked about and for the first time in God knows how long, his vision unblurred and he found that he could see clearly" (300). Thus, even though he had gone to America in the pursuit of a better life and finding happiness in a new culture, it had the opposite effect on Biju. Compared to Jemu who came back after accepting the Westernisation he was subjected to and feeling like a shadow of himself, Biju instead rejected the West's influence on him and when he returned to his home country, he felt whole again. Even with the conflicts in the country and the challenges he has gone through to get back to his father, the cook, he accepts these challenges and is happy when he finally reaches his father again in a reunion of happiness. Biju returned to India to be his authentic self, instead of a server who was not recognised for who he really was.

Through the different perspectives of Sai, Gyan, Jemu and Biju, it becomes apparent how the West and Westernisation have had numerous consequences on how the different characters' lives have evolved, and on the experiences they have gone through. Desai, as an author, has both showcased negative and positive consequences of the West's influence on different nationalities, and it is evident throughout this analysis that cultural misrecognition and cultural hybridity can cause difficulties for the people experiencing them. This also comes through in the books title *Inheritance of Loss*, which is in itself an uncommon concept. Often, inheritance is positively charged, however in this novel it relates to the notion that the characters, no matter their wealth, nationality, race, religion and gender, are faced with a sense of disadvantage and struggle to escape their historical and cultural past. They inherit the historical suppression of colonialism as a people, the characters inherit their parents' decisions and the consequences these decisions produce, they inherit the conflicts between their nationalities and religions, and they inherit the prejudices and stereotypes each of these factors have become associated with. Thus, the importance in analysing the characters and the obstacles they face through an intersectional frame becomes essential to understand them and their choices, because the factors that influence their choices are numerous and to focus on a single factor or two is not enough to comprehend the full picture, nor to understand the obstacles each character goes through in their pursuit of a better life.

The God of Small Things

The Indian author Arundhati Roy was born in 1961 and grew up in Kerala, an area where many Syrian Christians live, and this is a religion she shares with her characters in *The God of Small Things* (1997). Roy is an architect, author, a social commentator and activist. She has strong political opinions and is not afraid to go against the mainstream political ideologies. She is a firm critic of the Indian government, which she blames for abusing their power when dealing with the lower castes and the indigenous tribal people, called Adivasi, who live in great poverty. Roy met with the armed communist fractions who, in their effort to protect and help the Adivasi, are in armed conflict with the government. They are called Maoists or Naxalites, and after their meeting she published a book in 2011: *Walking with the Comrades,* where she tells the story of the Adivasi's struggle to keep their land from being stolen from them and even from being 'wiped out' by the government forces. According to Roy, the main reason for the government's interest in the tribal lands, is that they are rich of minerals: minerals that the government and big corporate mining

industries would like to get their hands on (Choudhury). Roy also criticises the ideology of capitalism as a solution for all, pointing out how it seems to accumulate wealth on a few hands and leave the rest of the population to suffer in poverty.

Her resistance to the Indian rulers and the culturally and religiously created caste system is evident and relevant in her novel chosen for this paper. She especially criticises what she calls 'The Love Laws', which lay down the rules for who should be allowed to love whom, and pinpoints how breaking these rules can have devastating consequences, not only for those who break them but also for their families. The novel, although titled *The God of Small Things*, is a critical novel which pinpoints how all the small things are connected to the big things:

> To me the book is about connecting the smallest things to the biggest … it's about connecting that fish in the river, and the dent the baby spider makes, and the little insect that tries to disguise itself at the end of the book by collecting garbage on itself to the huge political forces that are raging through this very violent and futile country. (Roy 2018 00:12:59 – 00:13:27)

Roy's story of 'small things' evolves into a great cobweb of interconnected situations and actions which end up devouring its protagonists. The small story of Ammu, Estha and Rahel is connected to the bigger history of India, which is built on colonialism and cultural practices and differences such as: caste, gender inequalities, class division, and religious differences. Roy structures the book in a way so that it starts with the end and gradually moves to the fateful events that capsize the protagonists' lives. Hence, the reader is introduced to the diverse gallery of personas and different small - although influential, incidents before knowing what entirely happened. This creates a deeper knowledge of the protagonists' emotional and societal situations, which leads to a more powerful 'blow to the stomach' of the reader when the main episode occurs. It is as if Roy has created a cobweb of her own where the readers are lured in, and once they are fixated she gives them the final blow. The result is that the reader 'feels' the unfairness and brutality the protagonists are pushed towards and cannot but agonise over the harsh and unjust social settings and power plays the protagonists are victimised by. Roy's brutal depiction of the consequences of the caste system, is there to make sure that her social commentary about social injustices is not lost on the reader. This analysis will focus on the intersecting connections between history, culture, and different institutions of power, and how these connections shape and create the protagonists' lives. Collins

and Bilge's core ideas of power, social injustice, and social context are important factors to this analysis, as it will try to put the Indian society of 1969 into a context to the contemporary Indian society in an effort to analyse what has prompted Roy to write such a critical novel.

Roy's narrative aesthetics

The narration of the novel is exquisitely carried out using layers and polyphonic narrative voices. Time is nonlinear and layered: the past, the present, and thousands of years of history are all simultaneously there. They are interwoven into a web of intersections where no person or event can be judged by itself alone, but must be viewed and analysed with history, culture, and religion in mind. It is also important to be aware of how these factors have come to affect not just each other, but also the protagonists and their interrelations. In the first chapter several stories are told, mostly through the third person omniscient narrator: Rahel, and Roy's supplementing commentary remarks e.g.: "*She´s living her life backwards,* Rahel thought. It was a curiously apt observation. Baby Kochamma *had* lived her life backwards" (Roy 1997 22). These kinds of comments appear throughout the book, where Roy as the intrusive author steps forth and uses her voice to nudge the reader to pay attention to some facts. This creates a three-dimensional storytelling, where the reader is simultaneously exposed to a protagonist's view, a third person omniscient narrative, and a commentary made by the 'invisible' author. Roy ends the first introductory chapter by wondering if it all started with Sophie Mol's visit or if it all started thousands of years ago. Roy does this by speaking to the reader, using the third person narrative to comment on the story, saying:

> In a purely practical sense it would probably be correct to say that it all began when Sophie Mol came to Ayemenem. … Still, to say that it all began when Sophie Mol came to Ayemenem is only one way of looking at it. Equally, it could be argued that it actually began thousands of years ago. … That it really began in the days when the Love Laws were made. The laws that lay down who should be loved, and how. And how much. (1997 32-33)

Roy then starts the second chapter with an 'intrusive' introductory remark on an otherwise empty page: "HOWEVER, for practical purposes, in a hopelessly practical world …" (1997 34), and then goes on to tell the story of 1969 through a third person narrative. The remarks about the 'hopelessly practical world' could be a reference to the Western literary formula, where stories preferably

should be told in a linear fashion, and therefore she feels obligated to start her story from the beginning. These narrative techniques allow Roy to be present in the novel, without actually being a part of its story.

It is hard to pinpoint a single protagonist in this novel, since the story has several people functioning as main protagonists. However, if one must abide to the practical senses of literature, the main story within the story is the love affair between Ammu and Velutha, and consequently it is possible to see Velutha, Ammu, and her children as the main protagonists. Still, this cannot be done without considering the bigger story: the ancient history of India's culture and religious practices, and how they intersect with the protagonists through the institutions of power to punish them for breaking the rules. Moreover, it is important not to forget what is made clear through the novel, that they, the institutions of power, are the main recipients of Roy's critique. Hence, Roy makes sure that the different protagonists, history, culture, and social issues are continuously intersecting with each other, creating a context with the current social issues of India.

The family and the intersections of power and cultural context

There are layers of different institutions of power in the novel that intersect with each other. Their range is broad, starting at the top with the English colonists, and moving down through national politics, the police force, the school system, the caste system, the patriarchy, and going down to the bottom of the hierarchy, the 'untouchable' subject: Velutha. These institutions of power all intersect with each other, and through Roy's accomplished storytelling the intertwining of the social and cultural web of power is carefully displayed to the reader, through the protagonists' absorption of it.

The family is the main power institution of this novel and it is through them, and because of them, that Ammu and her twins suffer the most. They are influenced by the power institutions of government, culture, and religion which have through centuries intersected each other and affected the way they understand the world.

The main body of the novel occurs in 1969 in India, a country where patriarchy is the norm and where the caste system determines a person's social position. Ammu's family is a well of family within a high caste. Her father had been an "Imperial Entomologist" and after independence he became a "Director" (1997 48-49), and her mother had her own pickle factory. This shows that they are a part of a higher caste, since the British only hired the upper castes to do their

administrative work, and since they had employees in Mammachi's pickle factory. Pappachi was a bitter and jealous man: his hope for fame after discovering a rare moth had been crushed. The moth becomes the symbol of anger, fear, and violence throughout the story, especially Rahel feels its presence when she is fearful e.g. when Ammu scolds her for hurting her feelings: "A cold moth with unusually dense dorsal tufts landed lightly on Rahel's heart" (1997 112). Pappachi beats his wife on a daily basis, but this changes when his son comes home from Oxford bigger and stronger than before and threatens him to leave his mother alone. Pappachi's terrorisation of his family is not unusual behaviour as women in India are not considered equal to men, and when Rahel comes back to Ayemenem and watches the "Kathakali Men" perform, Roy points this out by casually mentioning that afterwards the men "took off their make-up and went home to beat their wives" (1997 236). This was not only a problem in the past, since women in India are still suffering violence by the hands of their husbands. A recent UNICEF study shows that more than 50% of young Indian men find it acceptable to beat their wives. And it is not only through marriage that women in India suffer: rapes and gangrapes of women and girls in India are frequent. According to a CNN article, India is "the world's fourth most dangerous country for a woman" (Udas). Roy is pointing out that the violence towards women has a cultural and historical background, which makes it a cultural problem rather than a domestic one.

By showcasing the beating of women in the novel, Roy is pointing out that the violence against women has been institutionalised in India through generations. This shows the importance of context to current situations. The violent treatment of women in India, both in real life and in the novel, fit Taylor's theory about the consequences of misrecognition and how women have developed a self-depreciative attitude towards themselves through patriarchy. However, hooks calls this treatment a 'strategy of domination', where women are punished if they do not obey and are denied their own meaning and their own voice.

Pappachi, as the head of the household has the power to decide everything: who gets an education, who should marry whom and so forth. When he dies the eldest son takes his place, and all other family members must look to him for support. For Ammu this means that when she divorces her husband she must obey her brother. Her mother is still alive, and she too is Ammu's superior, since Ammu has lost her position in both the family and the society by being a divorcee. This hierarchy is a part of the patriarchal society India still adheres to. The patriarchal system has built in rules on behaviour, and a 'script' on how things work. Appiah calls this a 'life script', a

script that comes with "modes of behavior" (Appiah 159). In the case of the family unit there are definitely some norms of expected behaviour, and for the women this entails that their fathers and brothers are their superiors, and they must do as they are told.

After Pappachi's death, Chacko comes home and takes over Mammachi's pickle factory. Since he is the only son, he owns and runs everything on their land while Ammu, as the daughter, has no legal claim to property. Chacko told the twins that Ammu had no status. "'Thanks to our wonderful male chauvinist society,'" (Roy 1997 57) Ammu replies. To this Chacko replies "'What's yours is mine and what's mine is also mine.'" (1997 57). This interpersonal discourse fits into Sara Mills' theory about spatial division between genders, where the man is treated differently, not only by his family but also by the law. The son is the rightful heir of the parents' property, while the daughter is excluded from any inheritance. This spatially positions her in a condition where she has no power of negotiation: she has been marginalised. Roy uses this discourse to show the different status between brothers and sisters, and to make her point about the unfairness of the system. Roy knows this unfairness from her own life, as her mother, Mary Roy, had to take her brother to court so that she and her sister could receive their inheritance from her parents. She won the case in 1986, although it took 24 years with legal battles before the sisters finally received their final decree and their rightful property (Jacob).

Ammu, who is actually a strong character, is stuck in a society and a patriarchal culture that does not allow her to be herself. After the divorce she has not given her daughter a surname since "… choosing between her husband's name and her father's name didn't give a woman much of a choice" (Roy 1997 37). Roy uses Baby Kochamma's voice to explain the attitude of the society:

> … a married daughter had no position in her parents' home. As for a *divorced* daughter according to Baby Kochamma, she had no position anywhere at all. And as for a *divorced* daughter from a *love* marriage, well, words could not describe Baby Kochamma's outrage. As for a *divorced* daughter from a *intercommunity love* marriage - Baby Kochamma chose to remain quiveringly silent on the subject. (1997 45-46)

According to Baby Kochamma, Ammu's crime is not only to be a divorcee and to have returned to her parents, but to have married for love and to a man of another community. He was from a family of Bengal Zamindars who were Hindus. The fact that Ammu was able to leave her husband and

move back to her parents' house is not a given: had she come from a lover caste where people struggle for survival it is unsure whether the family would have taken her back. Baby Kochamma's discontent with Ammu and her twins is a result of the indoctrination of the Indian culture as well as a personal grudge: she was never able to marry her love, Father Mulligan. For this reason, since she could not be happy, why should Ammu? Her resentment would later become the fuse to 'the Terror'.

It is interesting to see that although Chacko also had an intercommunal 'love marriage' and is divorced, he does not experience the same prejudices. This could be both because he is a man, and that his wife was English and white. Thus, he married 'up', while Ammu married 'down'. In fact, Chacko's daughter, Sophie Mol, who is just as much a 'half-caste' as her cousins, is worshipped for her Englishness and whiteness, while Rahel and Estha are seen as outcasts. Whiteness and Englishness in general are valued attributes in the novel, although they are not prominent factors of the plot. The family's 'London connections' and Chacko's English education are looked up to. Pappachi's great respect for the Englishman is made clear when Ammu comes home and tells her father how Mr. Hollick had asked her husband to let him 'look after' her, and her father does not "… believe that an Englishman, *any* Englishman, would covet another man's wife" (1997 42). The great awe and respect for the English and the white skin colour stem back from the colonial era, and through the inter relations of the protagonists it is showcased how it has lingered and penetrated the Indian culture. This shows that colonialism and its doctrines have intersected the Indian culture and become the desired qualities on all levels, whether it be a lighter skin colour, an English education or 'London connections'.

The interpersonal power play between the family members is built upon their cultural and historical practices. They have been taught to value the man before the woman, and to see the caste system as something acceptable and normal. Therefore, apart from Ammu and the kids, they do not have a strong reaction to the killing of Velutha: a man who has worked for the family all his life. The killing of Velutha happens in 1969 and although the laws against discrimination of lower castes were introduced in 1947, when India regained its independence, the killings and discriminations are still happening. Today more than half of Dalits are undernourished, 37% live in poverty, and violence against Dalits occurs on a daily basis, as pointed out by Ajit Kumar Jha in his article "The Dalits | Still Untouchable":

Dalit dilemma in India reads like an entire data sheet of tragedies. According to a 2010 report by the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) on the Prevention of Atrocities against Scheduled Castes, a crime is committed against a Dalit every 18 minutes. Every day, on average, three Dalit women are raped, two Dalits murdered, and two Dalit houses burnt.

Jha's article shows that although the laws have changed - the culture has not, which is exactly one of Roy's main allegations against her society.

The inevitable consequences of necessary politics

Legal enforcement of power is carried out by the police in the novel. They are the ones Baby Kochamma runs to when she accuses Velutha of kidnapping the children and trying to rape Ammu. The reason for this is not to spare Ammu but "to contain the scandal" (Roy 1997 259). The police inspector and his policemen are what Roy calls "history's henchmen" (1997 308), and they bear the "Responsibility for the Touchable future on their thin but able shoulders" (1997 307). The main conflict in this novel has to do with the caste system and the untouchability of those at the bottom of it. There are many references to the historical significance of the caste system and some of them are made by Comrade Pillai. Although there was a 'comrade', a card holding member working at the factory, Pillai did not want him as an ally: "He knew that all the other Touchable workers … resented Velutha for ancient reasons of their own" (1997 121). When Chacko comes for a visit, Pillai is busy telling him to send the Paravan, Velutha, away as he will only cause trouble for him as these "caste issues are very deep-rooted" (1997 278). Chacko's reply is that sending all Paravans away is not the answer and "Surely we have to learn to deal with this nonsense" (1997 279). Pillai answers that "… Rome was not built in a day …this is not your Oxford college. For you what is a nonsense, for Masses it is something different" (1997 279). When Pillai later knowingly sacrifices Velutha to the police and then uses his death for his own gain, it becomes evident that to him Velutha was nothing but a Paravan: an untouchable, who was dispensable. This is apparent when 23 years later Pillai thinks back, he: "... didn't hold himself in any way personally responsible … He dismissed the whole business as the Inevitable Consequence of Necessary Politics" (1997 14). The sober and steady voice of Pillai is a way for Roy to represent how the 'masses' feel about the untouchables, and how seriously they rely on the caste system. They believe in 'inevitable consequences' when someone breaks the rules: in this case the Love Laws. The conversation

between Chacko and Pillai is juxtaposing the old and the new, the East and the West. Pillai represents the majority of Indians, who may or may not be educated, but who cling to the old cultural beliefs, while Chacko represents the new generation of well-educated Indians who do not cling to old ancient myths and are ready for change. Chacko's Westernisation is also a reason for why he thinks that the business with the Dalits is 'nonsense'. The intersecting power politics are visible here, through the police, and through Comrade Pillai who represents the masses: the Indians who are still preoccupied with the caste system and reject any attempt to change it. And although Chacko is not preoccupied with these issues, they will in the end rob him of his factory and status.

  The 'touchables' in the novel are not only against the 'untouchables', they are appalled by them: "'*How could she stand the smell? Haven't you noticed, they have a particular smell, these Paravans?*'" (1997 78) These words are Baby Kochamma's, and they are repeated when Vellya tells Mammachi what has been going on between their children (1997 257). This idea that a Paravan's smell is particular and disgusting is something that is pointed out not just by Baby Kochamma, but also when Mammachi touched Vellya's eye and washed her hands and then smelled them, as to make sure the Paravan smell was not still there. Although, these older more conservative ladies are appalled by the smell, Ammu is not. She smells the river on Velutha and tastes it. It is obvious that the Paravans smell of the land they work on and the river they bathe in. Hence, we now understand why Ammu scolds Rahel for not knowing the "… difference between CLEAN and DIRTY. Especially in this country" (1997 149). The great difference of position is demonstrated through Vellya, an old Paravan, who remembers the days when a Paravan had to "crawl backwards with a broom" so the touchables would not be tainted by walking on their "footprints" (1997 73-74). Mammachi remembers when the untouchables were neither allowed to: dress from the waist up, "walk on public roads", and they even had to cover their mouths if they said something, so as to not spread their tainted breath (1997 74). The "strategy of domination" with its rules and connections shows "… the ways power as domination reproduces itself in different locations employing similar apparatuses, strategies, and mechanisms of control" (hooks 207). The 'strategy of domination' also illustrates what Mills describes as the spatial difference between people. Velutha belongs to another spatiality than the family: he is separated from them, not only by his caste but through a spatial division, both a physical one but also a psychological one where he has been attributed with a different - and appalling scent. These power strategies and mechanisms of

control intersect into each other and into the lives of the protagonists and separate them through mental and cultural borders, where they should not cross the intersection between 'them' and 'us'

The mistreatment of the Paravans resembles the mistreatment of black slaves by their white owners, and the mistreatment of the colonised by their colonisers. The caste system was already in place when the British arrived in India, so they used it and recommended it: it was a convenient and effective system. Although, the discrimination of certain castes has been banned by law, the people who have grown up with the system cannot just set it aside: it has become a part of their way of life. They resist the new way of things and cannot for the life of them accept that an untouchable has the right to 'touch' them or their children: especially their daughters. Syrian Christians have long traditions for endogamy and took pride in their good breeding. Mammachi is also extremely proud of her family's good breeding and the threat Velutha poses to it is immense. It is bad enough that both her children married cross-culturally, and then shamed her with divorce, but touching an untouchable is the final straw for her.

Since the community feels this way about untouchables, it is no wonder that the policemen feel obligated to do something drastic to this unthinkable threat. They too harbour these feelings, which Roy implies when she comments that "They were merely inoculating a community against an outbreak" (Roy 1997 309): an outbreak of untouchables defiling their touchable well-bred family. Roy portrays the police through an ironic and almost sarcastic play with words. She does this twice in the novel, to emphasise how the Indian police does not live up to the standards expected of them. This happens when Ammu seeks help from inspector Matthews, who tells her that the police do not take statements from *veshyas* (whores) or their illegitimate children and then taps her on her breasts with a hint of sexual harassment. This attitude towards Ammu shows how the power institution: the police, uses its power to oppress the same people it ought to defend. Inspector Matthews treats Ammu with the hostility he finds suitable for a woman who has broken the cultural rules. Her gender makes her a victim to not only the cultural rules of caste but also to the depreciatory attitudes towards women in India: Ammu is victimised by the intersecting connections between the law, and cultural politics. Meanwhile Estha reads the board behind him:

> **P**oliteness
>
> **O**bedience
>
> **L**oyalty
>
> **I**ntelligence
>
> **C**ourtesy
>
> **E**fficiency. (1997 8)

Roy uses the board again when the policemen are getting ready to arrest Velutha, and then she continues her critique by describing the police as:

> A cartoonplatoon. New-Age princes in funny pointed helmets. Cardboard lined with cotton. Hairoil staind. Their shabby khaki crowns.
>
> Dark of Heart.
>
> Deadlypurposed. (1997 304)

This is a sarcastic critique of the way Indian police still treat the lower castes. The situation today, although better than before, is still difficult for Dalits and Jha's article claims that "Dalits are prevented from entering the police station in 28 per cent of Indian villages" (Jha). Roy's critique of the police does not stop at them not servicing the Dalits, she also accuses them of regular violence and murder. She does this in the novel, when she demonstrates that when Ammu came back to the police station, the police had already removed Velutha's body: "Dumped in the *themmady kuzhy* - the pauper's pit - where the police routinely dump their dead" (Roy 1997 321). If it is a routine, they do it regularly. Hence, there is no doubt that Roy accuses them of deadly violence.

Collins and Bilge's emphasis on social context and social justice are to a high degree relevant to the notion of power and the misuses of it as we have seen above. It is vital to be aware of the historical, social, and cultural history of India, to understand the importance of the caste system to Indians. It is a way to organise themselves in relation to their identity, and of course it is more important to the upper-class castes to keep the system, since they are the ones who benefit from it. The lowest castes have no means to protest, and as shown above, they are still being trodden upon. The lack of social justice in India is what Roy showcases through the institutions of power in the novel. Factors such as India's culture and history intersect and through their power institutions,

represented by the police in the novel, these factors transform into social injustice and police brutality.

The love story that broke all the rules

The cause of the 'Terror' in Roy's novel is the forbidden love that occurs between Ammu and Velutha, a touchable upper-caste Syrian Christian woman and a Paravan. The Paravan, also known as the untouchable and Dalit, inherits his place at the bottom of the caste system by birth. The untouchables have had no opportunities to change castes: they are enslaved by it. On the other hand, in today's India, the possibilities for social mobility are growing in parts of the country, mostly among the well-educated city dwellers. However, since Dalits have less possibilities for education, especially in the rural areas, their chances for upwards mobility is still restricted. Syrian Christians are well-educated, and their women have become increasingly better educated too. Although, it has not always been that way. As showcased in the novel, Ammu does not get a college education as her father finds it "an unnecessary expense for a girl" (Roy 1997 38). While Ammu is of a high caste it does not bring her any independence or happiness, and her parents do not seem to care much for her: "Her eighteenth birthday came and went. Unnoticed, or at least unremarked upon by her parents" (1997 38). When she finally gets a chance to slip away from her parents, she marries a man: a Bengali. He proposed after only knowing her for five days, and the fact that she accepted shows that she was looking for a way out: out of her imprisoned life in Ayemenem. Ammu was never in love with him, nor pretended to be: "She just weighed the odds and accepted. She thought that *anything*, anyone at all, would be better than returning to Ayemenem" (1997 39). Ammu's situation at home, where she suffered from misrecognition and nonrecognition as Taylor calls it, is so unbearable to her that she marries a man she hardly knows. For Ammu this is her ticket out, and it shows how desperate she is for another life. Ammu does not think that the world belongs to her, nor that it ever will. She is suffering from what Ang calls a "permanent dislocation", a sense of being othered and in this case: through her gender. According to Ang, the feeling is shared by most people that are 'othered' (Ang 197). The same applies to Velutha, who is being othered by his society. He is not only dislocated by his caste status, but there are also borders to where he is allowed to be and what, and whom, he is allowed to touch. Brah explains borders as:

> Borders: arbitrary dividing lines that are simultaneously social, cultural and psychic; territories to be patrolled against those whom they construct as outsiders, aliens, the Others; forms of demarcation where the very act of prohibition inscribes transgression ... (Brah 625)

Velutha and Ammu violate these rules by crossing the social and cultural borders, by touching each other, and finding 'home' in each other. They are suffering from what Brah calls a "homing desire" (614) it is the desire to belong somewhere, and in this case, they find their home in each other. Ammu has lost her spark after moving back to Ayemenem: she is unhappy and feels imprisoned by her situation. When she lived with her husband in Assam, which is in the Northeastern part of India, she had more freedom to be herself. There she was "beautiful, young and cheeky, [and] became the toast of the Planters' Club" (Roy 1997 40). Her clothing was more unrestrained: she would wear "backless blouses" and use silver accessories (1997 40). When she returned home to Ayemenem "to everything that she had fled from", she was "unwelcomed" and she had "no more dreams" (1997 42). For these reasons, Ammu is desperately unhappy, marginalised, and as a divorcee she has no status amongst her family. Her children were half breeds and had the lowest caste status. The intersecting factors of being an outcast, being misrecognised, and being prejudiced against due to her gender, spiral Ammu into a relationship which she knows is wrong. Her spatial freedom and unrestricted life in Assam is a direct opposite to her life in Ayemenem. What makes her life in Assam possible is that the social relations there are different to those in Kerala: she is in a different place with different people and abiding to different rules of conduct. This is what Mills touches upon in her paper: "both social phenomena and space as constituted out of social relations, [we therefore need to think of] the spacial [as] social relations "stretched out" (qtd. Mills 699). Hence, the social relations in Assam, a town 3.450 km away from Kerala, are totally different than in Ayemenem. This gives Ammu a chance to free herself from her family's orthodox religious constraints. However, after her divorce, there is no place for her in India, where she can provide for her children, or feel safe as a single woman. For Ammu, the only thing to do is to move back 'home'. The cultural misrecognition and restriction of women intersect with spatiality and force her to move back home. She is barred from opportunities of freedom which are only available to men.

It is interesting to see that there are no comments about the children's relationship with Velutha, neither the protagonists nor Roy comment on why it is acceptable for Rahel and Estha to spend time with Velutha and even ride on his back. The logical conclusion is that they inhabit the

same spatiality as Velutha: they have no stand. "Locusts Stand I" is a phrase that Roy uses four times in the novel: twice about Ammu (Roy 1997 159 & 226) after her affair with Velutha and twice about Rahel (1997 188 & 231) after she returns. The origin of the phrase can be traced to Latin, locus standi: a place to stand. It refers to the right to take a stand, to speak and to be heard. Neither Ammu nor Rahel have that right in their community. Roy intersects the Latin phrase into the novel to emphasise her message of the social injustice of the caste system.

Inside, Ammu is ready to burst. There are hints to her instability in the novel commenting on how she is best left alone when she is in that certain kind of mood, which was often caused by listening to songs she loved. Everyone around her sensed "That a woman that they had already damned, now had little left to lose, and could therefore be dangerous. … everybody agreed that it was best to just Let Her Be" (1997 44-45). The capital letters in Let Her Be emphasise the fear of Ammu. She frightened them because she was not like them: she had not fully accepted her ascribed life-script. Roy explains that what scared them was the "unmixable mix. The infinite tenderness of motherhood and the reckless rage of a suicide bomber" (1997 44). This rage is evident when Ammu and Velutha look at each other and find love in each other's eyes. She is looking at him and hoping that it was him at the communist march and that he had been there to protest and raise his voice and flag against their oppressive society. She hoped that "he housed a living, breathing anger against the smug, ordered world that she so raged against" (1997 176). She was right, Velutha had been at the march and he was a 'card holding member', which implies that he is not accepting the injustices against him and his caste without a fight. Hence, when the two of them get together, it is not only love, physical attraction, and kindred spirits, but also defiance and a rebellion against a prejudiced, oppressive society. Roy comments on how someone small, who through a lifetime has been bullied by someone who is big, develops a "reckless streak" and even may seek out and enjoy confrontations (1997 181-182). This could be true for both Ammu and Velutha. While Ammu due to her gender has been bullied mostly by men: her father, her husband, and other men in her society, Velutha has been bullied and held down due to his cast, by the entire society. Their meeting, which breaks all the rules, could be seen as partly a result of attraction and partly a result of oppression and misrecognition, which has fuelled their anger towards their society. It is a result of intersectional crossings of oppression, misrecognition, cultural identity, and social power that throw Ammu and Velutha into each other's arms. They are oppressed and feel they have nothing left to lose, which explains their actions.

Interpersonal relations and history

The relations between the protagonists of the novel are inharmonious. The only two people who actually love each other and are at peace with one another are Rahel and Estha. The women in the Ipe household cannot stand each other. Mammachi, who suffered from Pappachi's ill-tempered moods and beatings, lays all her love on Chacko. Her love for him is on the verge of being incestual. She has a backdoor built so the women he sleeps with can sneak into and out of his room, and secretly pays them so that she, in her twisted mind, can separate "sex from love. Needs from feelings" (1997 169). She cannot bear the thought of him loving anyone else than her. Mammachi is immensely snobbish and extremely proud of her family's good breeding. However, the endogamy of her family stops with her children, as both of them marry cross culturally. When Chacko says that the children's good health is because they do not suffer from inbreeding, Mammachi answers that they suffer far worse for their parents' divorce. Roy intrudes and says: "As though these were the only choices available to people: Inbreeding or Divorce" (1997 61), pointing out Mammachi's narrow-mindedness.

Baby Kochamma is a bitter old lady who has accepted her fate and embraced it with a burning rage. She did all she could as a young girl to come close to the love of her life: Father Mulligan, an Irish priest, and when that failed she stubbornly accepted that she should have no man. He later converted to Hinduism, and the fact that he converted for another religion and not for her, enraged her even further. All this plays a part in the rage and hate she bears for Ammu and her children. Although all the women have been mistreated by their men, there is no sense of sisterhood. They are too used to the aspects of life in India: the culture of wife beating, the religious modes of conduct, and the hopeless aspects of womanhood. They have all fallen victims to what hooks calls 'the gaze' and what Taylor terms a 'self-depreciative' attitude towards themselves.

The men in the novel have jobs and the possibility of mobility. Pappachi went to Vienna to study and then had a good administrative job for the British in Delhi. Chacko lived in London and studied at Oxford, and after his divorce he moved back to India to work as a lecturer at Madras Christian College (1997 57). He moved back to Ayemenem after his father died and took over the pickle factory with high hopes of becoming a very successful pickle producer. Even Velutha had the opportunity to move away. As a young man he had been to the Untouchable's School where he learnt carpentry (1997 75). Later, he would disappear for four years, and no one knew where he was, although rumours said he was doing everything from carpentry work to prison time. There is

no brotherhood either in the novel, every man is looking out for himself, whether it be: Pappachi, Comrade Pillai, Chacko or Inspector Mathews. The men have a greater, what Mills terms, spatial freedom in the novel: they are free to travel or move for educational or work purposes, whereas the women only travel when accompanying their men.

The women in the Syrian Christian community of the novel are not supposed to develop an individual independent identity. They are supposed to conform to the norms and practices of their religious and cultural society. The Syrian Christians, as the name implies, are a fraction of people from Syria, and in India's multicultural society they are just one of many cultures trying to preserve their creed. The diaspora of Syrians to India was due to religious persecution. Hence, their history and their religion became immensely important to them; their 'script', as Appiah calls it, comes with a notion of 'modes of behaviour' and these modes shape the lives of "those who make these collective identities central to their individual identities" (Appiah 159). They strive for a collective social identity, and that identity is more important than the freedom of their members to choose other modes of behaviour or other life styles. Even the freedom to love has been taken from them, since the endogamous system requires them to marry someone from within the tribe through arranged marriages.

Taylor is concerned with the importance of recognition of the individual and groups. He claims that identity is shaped through a discourse with our society and our family. He says that the thesis of what is called "the politics of "multiculturalism"" (Taylor 25) demands the recognition of an individual or a group, and that "Nonrecognition or misrecognition can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being" (25). It is possible to argue that the women of Ayemenem and Velutha have suffered from nonrecognition and misrecognition. Being oppressed their whole lives and not seeing any end to it has harmed them in different ways. However, Estha and Rahel are those who end up suffering the most. They are not recognised by anyone except Ammu and Velutha: the two people they lose and miss the most. When Rahel and Estha are split up they lose the one person who could 'see' and understand them and in extension they lose themselves.

The interpersonal relationships between the protagonists are limited and distorted by ideas created by intersecting cultural, religious, and historical norms that they all in their own way are dependent on. Their ancient old Syrian culture was distorted by the British when they colonised the country, as Chacko explained it to the twins: "They were a *family* of Anglophiles. Pointed in the

wrong direction, trapped outside their own history, and unable to retrace their steps because their footprints had been swept away" (Roy 1997 52). All of these old historical, cultural, and religious aspects intersect with each other and together they affect generations of Indians. They frame their 'life scripts' that determine their way of living and create borders and spatial limits, whether it be on the collective or the individual level. Roy's novel is a critique of the power institutions in her society that use these aspects for their own gain, while exploiting the majority of her countrymen- and women.

<p style="text-align:center">Comparative aspects of the Indian novels</p>

Throughout a comparative intersectional analysis of the two Indian novels it becomes apparent how important it is to consider both historical and cultural factors, when trying to understand people's actions and behaviours in any given context. Historically, the novels differ in the significance they give to the British colonial rule. In Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* the negative ramifications of the British rule are explored in length through the difficulties of restoring law and order after independence. The Indians are left with no alternatives to a system which has been implemented by their colonisers, and they find it difficult to find their own way - in a new world - with old rules. For this reason, they continue with the old system, even though it is discriminatory against their own people based on: skin colour, nationality and religion. The conflict between the Nepalese and the Indians also stems from the British's oppressive system, which discriminated against the Nepalese. However, in Roy's novel *The God of Small Things* the British rule is hardly ever touched upon. Chacko mentions it when speaking about the loss of the Indian history and culture, and the police represent a Westernised institution of power. This shows that the colonial era is the backdrop to the main story, where the hierarchy of skin colour is the only visible remnant of the colonisation.

Both novels touch upon cultural elements involving gender roles, religion, class, nationality, age and race. Every element is important to consider, but some of these aspects are more prominent than others, e.g. gender roles. The women are portrayed as dependent on male relatives or husbands and have no freedom of movement nor freedom of choice. Nationality and skin colour are important elements in the female hierarchy as shown in *The God of Small Things*, where Margaret, as a white English woman, has a higher status than the native Indian women. Furthermore, in Desai's novel, race trumps gender in America when Biju is fired due to a white woman's insistence. This would

never have been possible in India between a native man and woman based on race, but instead it could have happened due to discriminatory factors of nationality or religion.

Religion is a recurring theme in both novels, although, they approach it differently. In *The Inheritance of Loss* the struggle of religious identity becomes essential to the difficulties the characters go through, as well as the negative consequences of conversion. Even though the caste system is mentioned in *The Inheritance of Loss,* it is more prominent in *The God of Small Things*, where it plays a major role in the plot. Other religions such as Syrian Christianity and Irish Catholicism also have influence on the plot and the protagonists' choices and behaviours.

However, culture and history are not enough on their own and their significance cannot be analysed without being aware of the context they are used in. It is also important to be aware of the authors' origin and points of view, since it influences their perspectives and their interpretations of events. When looking at Roy's background it is obvious that she has strong critical opinions of the government, and that she is a spokeswoman for the downtrodden people of the lowest castes in India. This comes through in her novel, where the agent of the governmental power, the police, abuse their power by brutally killing Velutha: a representative of the lowest caste. Regarding Desai, her knowledge of the different cultural systems across India, America, and England becomes evident in her portrayal of the countries. As an Indian woman with an American education, she is well aware of the differences between the countries and how these differences may occur in different contexts. Consequently, her portrayal of cultural identity struggles may relate to something she herself has been through, when she moved to England and later America. Even though both authors are Indian, their focus points differ from one another, and they find significance in different cultural and historical aspects. Thus, the discourses of gender, race, nationality, religion, age, and class intersect differently in the novels based on the authors' individual perceptions of culture and history.

An analysis of the two African novels

Nervous Conditions

The novel *Nervous Conditions* (1988) is written by Tsitsi Dangarembga, a Zimbabwean author, screenwriter and filmmaker. Dangarembga was born in 1959 when Zimbabwe was called

Rhodesia and was under British rule. She grew up first in England and then Rhodesia, and as a young woman she moved back to England to study medicine at Cambridge. She later moved back to Zimbabwe without finishing her medicine studies, and instead studied philosophy at the University of Zimbabwe. She has also studied film direction at the Deutsche Film und Fernsehakademie in Berlin and she has a doctoral degree in African Studies from the Humboldt University in Berlin (Liukkonen). *Nervous Conditions* was the first Zimbabwean novel to be written in English by a black Zimbabwean woman.

The novel starts in the year 1968, three years after Rhodesia unilaterally broke free from the United Kingdom, and since the novel takes place while the country was called Rhodesia, it changed into Zimbabwe in 1980, this paper will refer to the country as Rhodesia when referring to the novel. The novel is written in a third person restricted narrative in the voice of Tambudzai, also known as Tambu, a 13-year-old girl from a poor homestead not far from Umtali, now known as Mutare. She tells her story about how the death of her older brother came to pave the way for her access to education and civilisation. She also tells the stories of the women in her family: giving them voices through their interactions. The main theme of the book is postcolonialism, the weight of womanhood, and the oppression of women in a patriarchal society. Furthermore, it questions how these different women, whether they be: poor, rich, uneducated, or highly educated women, can find a common ground to stand on to find a way to lift the burdens of womanhood, colour, and poverty of their shoulders. Although the story is told from a 13-year-old's point of view with a limited knowledge of the world, it is simultaneously told by her future self: the future Tambu. The novel opens with the future Tambu saying: "I was not sorry when my brother died. Nor am I apologising for my callousness, as you may define it, my lack of feeling" (Dangarembga 1988 1). She then goes on to say that she is going to recall the events that led up to her brother's death, and her becoming able to write the story. This beginning is intriguing and the first question the reader asks is: why is she not sorry about her brother's death? The story of the novel is mainly told by the young Tambu, but every so often the author lets the future Tambu intrude into the young girl's narrative, e.g.: "Since then, in order to find out what really happened at that time so that I can understand what followed, I have asked many people … - to tell me what they recollect" (1988 13-14). This passage gives the novel an autobiographical touch, which makes it more realistic to the reader. Dangarembga also uses the grown up Tambu to point out that while she may have felt one way as a child, she is now a grown woman, with a knowledge of the world. Thus, she feels

differently about some things e.g.: "At the time though - and you must remember that I was very young then, … at that time I liked the missionaries" (1988 105). This intrusion from the future makes the reader pause and think about the narrator's point of view: she once used to like the missionaries, now she does not, what changed her mind? The change of her circumstances from being a poor girl in the homestead to becoming an educated woman, have changed her view about the missionaries, and most likely her views on society's cultural and social norms too.

"*The condition of native is a nervous condition*" is the epigraph to Dangarembga's novel. It is a quote of Jean-Paul Sartre's introduction to Franz Fanon's book *The Wretched of the Earth*. Both men were of the idea that the colonist had the power to take such a hold on the colonial subject's mind that it was close to a nervous breakdown (The Stockton Postcolonial Studies Project). Dangarembga uses this quote to create an allegory to the condition of her protagonists in *Nervous Condition*s: they have been brainwashed through colonisation and this has made them nervous. The Rhodesians, as a nation, are not at ease with themselves anymore - they have just become an independent nation - and Tambu puts the uneasiness of her and her people into words when she claims that: going to the mission has "unnerved me" (Dangarembga 1988 112).

The intersectional analysis of this novel will focus on the influences of power, class, and gender on the protagonists. Babamukuru as the head of the family represents the authority of power, hence there will be a focus on him, but otherwise the main focus is on the female characters of the novel. Since the characters of the novel belong to different classes of the Rhodesian society and also represent two different generations, there will be an analytical focus on the cultural, social and interrelational context. Due to the Rhodesian background of the author and her experience of growing up in England, it is important to keep in mind the real history and political situation of Rhodesia to create a context between the author and the novel.

<p align="center">Postcolonial inheritance</p>

The nervous conditions of the protagonists in the novel are portrayed differently and have different origins, although it can be argued that it all began with the white settlers. Dangarembga uses Tambu's grandmother to tell the story of the past, of how the white people came and changed their lives for the worse. She tells Tambu that her family did not always live where they did now: the homestead, but that they used to live in "… Chipinge, where the soil is ripe" and that her ancestors were prosperous at that time (1988 18). But the idyllic life ended when the white people,

which she refers to as wizards, came and took their land and drove them off to a life of slavery and misery:

> Wizards well versed in treachery and black magic came from the south and forced the people from the land. … the wizards were avaricious and grasping; there was less and less land for the people. At last the people came upon the grey, sandy soil of the homestead, so stony and barren that the wizards would not use it. (1988 18)

This is not just the story of Tambu's grandmother and her family, but of the people of Zimbabwe in general, which creates a context to the real situation of the Rhodesian people in 1969. They were descendants of people: who had been driven away from their land, who had been exploited and subjugated by the white settlers, and who now had to live in poverty: barred from descent jobs, lands and possibilities. Dangarembga uses this story in the beginning of her novel to set the stage: to introduce the reader to the backdrop of her novel. The backdrop is colonialism, a power institution created to usurp third world countries and to exploit them for their own benefit. The psychological effect on the colonised people has long been discussed. The loss of their identity, their culture and their home, when driven away from their land, is traumatic and unsettles their identity. Although Tambu's family at the homestead seems to be a settled patriarchal tribal community, the foundation they have built their existence on is a shaky one. The loss of their land, their inability to support themselves, and the intrusion of missionaries and Western values into their lives are slowly tearing them apart.

Babamukuru is the head of the family. His mother took him to the missionaries when he was 9 years old and asked them to "prepare him for life in their world" (1988 19). At the mission Babamukuru worked at their farm by day and studied in the evenings. He was a bright and hard-working boy, so the missionaries helped him to complete his education, and later the Government gave him a scholarship to South Africa. In the beginning of the novel he has just arrived back to Rhodesia after studying in London for about five years. Babamukuru is one of the main characters of the novel and he represents the colonial subject, who deals with his life through developing a double consciousness. Dangarembga comments on this in an interview saying that she created Babamukuru, so he could represent the split consciousness of the colonised subject. She claims that when you are colonised, you are labelled as powerless and dispossessed, and that you need to

internalise these aspects to be able to function within the system, otherwise the system will destroy you (George et al. 314). Furthermore, she explains that: "… all your submissive characteristics come out when you are in a situation with your boss and then when you go home all the "**power**" characteristics are intensified and distorted as well" (George et al. 314). This could explain Babamukuru's violent and brutal ways of controlling his family. His position in life depends on the missionaries being satisfied with his work and his family's progress and behaviour. Dangarembga argues that the missionaries' goal with educating the colonised was for their own gain and not an action of goodness. She explains this through Tambu's narrative when speaking about the missionaries' appreciation of the young Babamukuru: "They thought he was a good boy, cultivatable, in the way that land is, to yield harvests that sustain the cultivator" (Dangarembga 1988 19). This implies that he is there for their benefit and therefore he must be aware of taking the 'right' decisions: decisions that will please the missionaries. The colonial power that has been thrust upon Babamukuru since he was a child, has changed his personality. Through the white missionaries' cultural education Babamukuru has lost a part of himself, and although he tries to remain African he has become a tool of colonialism. Firstly, this happened through aspects such as power and race: the white missionaries' power to decide which black person benefits from life and how. Secondly, through culture: by teaching Babamukuru about Western culture and religion, which made him internalise these values and simultaneously turn his back on other local African values. In this context it is important to remember Collins and Bilge's view on how different factors intersect and influence each other, instead of only looking at them individually, since every person and situation are a result of complex interactions.

That Babamukuru is not truly an independent person is made clear when future Tambu talks about the dilemma Babamukuru had before going to England:

> Babamukuru did not want to leave the mission. He did not want to go far from home again … In addition … he now had a family of his own. Although the missionaries who had offered him the scholarship to study in England had offered Maiguru a scholarship as well (so anxious were they that this intelligent, disciplined young couple be trained to become useful to their people) … to decline would have been a form of suicide. The missionaries would have been annoyed by his ingratitude. He would have fallen from grace with them and they would have taken under their wings another promising young African in his place. (1988 14)

Since Babamukuru could not obtain the same qualifications in Africa he had to go, or else lose his status and goodwill from the missionaries. Hence, although Rhodesia is a self-governed country of the commonwealth in 1960, when Babamukuru leaves for England, it is ruled and run by the white minority, and without their goodwill Babamukuru has no future: he must "endure and obey, for there is no other way" (1988 19). He is still just a colonised subject, powerless and disposable, the victim of social inequality and dependent on pleasing his master to preserve his access to economic power. This is what triggers his brutality at home. At home he is in charge: he is the dominator, his word is the law, and anyone who does not obey him in every way is a traitor, an evil thing: "Anyone who defies my authority is an evil thing in this house, bent on destroying what I have made" (1988 169). Babamukuru is hellbent on keeping his house in order, just as the colonists were determined to keep 'their blacks in order'. This is what Dangarembga means when she says that Babamukuru has developed a double consciousness. He is the submissive colonial subject at work and when he comes home his submissive powerlessness is unleashed in an intensified and distorted way, creating a power-hungry dictator who clings to the idea that he alone created his world and status. Babamukuru cannot face the fact that he is just another African, trained by the missionaries to fulfil the missionaries' idea of bringing light to the darkest Africa.

Mills talks about the ideal of 'the sublime', which she says is "… a supremely imperialist viewing/knowing position" (Mills 700). She says that the male views the 'landscape' of spatiality with a dominant single view point and tries to subdue it. One can argue that Babamukuru has taken on the 'the sublime' ego, what Patricia Yager calls a "… 'self-centered imperialism'" (qtd. Mills 701). The sublime tries to surpass the normal of humanity, and the aggrandization of this surpassing the norm is approved in its position of power. This means that when the clan at the homestead and the family at the mission worship Babamukuru, it confirms him in his belief that he is above the normal black human: that he is the 'sublime father Babamukuru' and those who do not yield to his power are evil traitors. Unfortunately, for Babamukuru the 'sublime' is only reachable in fantasy, since he can never transcend into 'the sublime': he is both the subject and the object and there is a difference between the two that he can never surpass. It is through Tambu's eyes we see Babamukuru and his actions. When Tambu is young and unknowing about the world, she sees Babamukuru as the 'sublime': "Babamukuru was God" (Dangarembga 1988 70). She explains that through his submission to the missionaries Babamukuru had gained "… greater power than before.

… Stoically he accepted his divinity. Filled with awe, we accepted it too" (1988 88). When she grows older and wiser she sees that he is not what she thought he was: that he is only fulfilling his social obligations. She finds this hard to take in and she is not ready to accept: "that Babamukuru was a historical artefact" (1988 162). The white 'sublime' colonists and their power, have intersected with Tambu's society through Babamukuru's authority: he represents the white man and all his wisdom and power. Collins and Bilge's core ideas about power and relationality seem appropriate in this context through the institution of power, the mission, and the relationality of interactions between the protagonists across gender and class. In other words: the power institution of the white man continues to intersect with the Rhodesian people and their culture, altering their minds and their behaviour.

The only time Tambu sees her uncle happy is when they are going back to the homestead for Christmas: "Unaccountably, unusually, Babamukuru was happy. Free of tension and in the best of spirits, he looked younger and more lovable than he ever did at the mission" (1988 124-125). Tambu's observation of her uncle's changing mood when coming to the homestead is for her an incomprehensible change: how could anyone be happy to come back to this godforsaken place? However, the change in Babamukuru's mood implies that he feels more at home there then he does at the mission. The homestead provides a safe haven, where Babamukuru is free to be himself and it is a place where he can enjoy the company of his siblings and their families without having to think about the missionaries. At the homestead he can just enjoy himself and his status: being the oldest brother, the provider, and the top authority.

Hall talks about the unstable points of cultural identities, and how they are constantly changing and taking new forms. The rupture that happened during colonisation has changed the Rhodesian people's cultural identity, and Babamukuru seems to be holding on to an old tribal culture that is slowly disappearing on the one hand, and a Christian English lifestyle on the other. Hall says that: "Cultural identities are the points of identification, the unstable points of identification or suture, which are made, within the discourses of history and culture. Not an essence but a *positioning*" (Hall 226). Babamukuru has positioned himself as someone trying to hold on to the old cultural identity of his tribe. He makes sure the patriarchal ceremonies are upheld and that things 'stay the same' at the homestead, while at the mission Babamukuru upholds his English cultural identity: living in a house decorated with English furniture, English books in the book-shelfs, and "the daintiest, most delicate china" (Dangarembga 1988 69) on display on his glass

shelves. He is split in two halves, but he has not become the same kind of hybrid as his daughter Nyasha. She is the one who represents the future generation of Africa: the young intellectuals who have lived in and travelled to Westernised countries and seen what life can be like under other circumstances. They have grown up within a mixture of Westernised and African culture and cannot separate one from the other.

Babamukuru's family at the homestead represent the beaten down African. They are poor, dirty, and live in shacks. Jeremiah, Babamukuru's younger brother and Tambu's father, is not a responsible person. He has lost his manliness: he drinks and begs others for charity when he is in trouble. Tambu's mother is a bitter woman who has lost all hope for a better future, especially after the death of her eldest son: the future of their family.

The white minority in Rhodesia took the good farming lands and drove the locals away, as previously mentioned: to barren unproductive lands. They held the local farmers, who stayed on, in serfdom. In the cities they hired blacks to work for them but underpaid them, so the black majority of the country was poor, uneducated, and had little hope for a better future (Stolten 4). The missions became the place of hope, the place where black 'good' students could take courses and educate themselves for the benefit of their families. Hence, there are two kinds of whites in this story: those who came to take and exploit, and those who came to give. However, both kind of whites believed that they were the superior race. It did not matter how well-educated or how well behaved the black population or the black protege, e.g. Babamukuru, became, they were invariable inferior to the white. This was the reality for both the poor family at the homestead and for Babamukuru at the mission. Although Babamukuru has a double consciousness and a split cultural identity, he has internalised the white religious culture. This becomes evident when he tries to help his family who is battling many problems on each their individual home front. Jeremiah asks for a medium to drive out the evil that is troubling them, and Babamukuru will not hear of it. He replies: "I have been thinking they [the misfortunes] are the result of something that we are doing that we should not be doing, or the result of something that we are not doing that we should be doing" (Dangarembga 1988 149). He then proposes that Jeremiah and Tambu's mother must have a church wedding. They are living in sin and that is the reason for the family's misfortunes: the lack of God. This shows that Babamukuru has internalised the English Christian way of thinking and through him the family is further colonised. He does not ask the people involved if they want a church wedding, he dictates it. Babamukuru has become an extended tool of the colonists' power: carrying on the institutionalised

power over their subjects, and he is completely unaware of it. His daughter, Nyasha, sees it, and she is not happy about it: "It's bad enough … 'when a country gets colonised, but when the people do as well! That's the end, really, that's the end'" (1988 150). Dangarembga uses Nyasha's voice to point out how internally colonised the people have become: believing that the white way must be the solution to their problems. Hence, through intersections of power institutions such as the missionary and Babamukuru, 'the head of the family', interpersonal power plays are continuing the social inequality of colonialism.

The burden of womanhood

The women in the novel are not only colonised, they are also subordinate to men: first they belong to their father and then to their husband. Girls are not valued the same as their brothers, since they move away after marriage and belong to their husbands after that. Many Zimbabwean women of today consider their submission to be cultural and normal, and the fact that they sweat in the fields working hard to provide food for the family, while the man is out drinking, is something they have learned to accept as the norm:

> The irony is that 'culture', the common conceptual antithesis to 'nature', is here 'naturalized', so that socially fabricated cultural norms and practices are conjured into inevitable even sacred structures beyond human intervention: ideology (patriarchy) becomes culture becomes nature. (Mbatha 16)

This normalisation of submission makes it almost impossible to break free from patriarchy and this is obvious when looking at the women in Dangarembga's novel.

Tambu's mother, MaShingayi, got pregnant by Jeremiah as a young woman and was married off to him. Since then she has carried his children, worked in the fields, and made his dinner. This is her role according to her culture and traditions. Gender differences are socially accepted, even emphasised: the man is supposed to be strong and fierce; the woman is supposed to be nurturing and obedient. MaShingayi has accepted her fate and she carries her burden through life, not happily, but obediently. She says to Tambu: "This business of womanhood is a heavy burden … 'How could it not be? Aren't we the ones who bear children? ...'" (Dangarembga 1988 16). She explains that when you are the one to bear and nurture children, you cannot change your mind on a daily basis or

ask for things such as education: "… there are sacrifices to be made, you are the one who has to make them" (1988 16). She then tries to teach her daughter to ease into her role explaining that:

> … you have to start learning them [sacrifices and gender roles] early, from a very early age. The earlier the better so that it is easy later on. Easy! As if it is ever easy. And these days it is worse, with the poverty of blackness on one side and the weight of womanhood on the other. Aiwa! What will help you, my child, is to learn to carry your burdens with strength. (1988 16)

MaShingayi does not believe in a better future for her daughters. She and the women she knows have been subjugated: first by their colour and then by their gender, there is no platform for them to speak from. They have become what Gayatri Spivak calls the 'subaltern': "The context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow" (Spivak 83). According to Spivak, the female colonial subject is doubly subjugated. Firstly, she is subjugated due to her colour by colonialism that has turned every native into the 'other', and secondly due to her gender, since "the ideological construction of gender keeps the male dominant" (Spivak 82). This implies that the female subaltern is even more repressed than the male, and has a greater struggle to be heard. MaShingayi has internalised the cultural idea that men are the heads of the family: education and freedom of thought is theirs alone. Hence, when her eldest, and at the time the only son, dies, she is disheartened and loses all hope for the future of her family. She does not support Tambu's wish to educate herself, since she thinks it will only set her up for disappointment: Tambu's future is to marry and belong to her husband. That is the way it has always been, and MaShingayi cannot imagine it otherwise. Her attitude to education and gender is made visible when she says to Tambu that she: "… did want him [Nhamo] to be educated" (Dangarembga 1988 53), and when Babamukuru secures Lucia by giving her a job at the mission, she cries: "'That is why they say education is life' … 'Aren't we all benefiting from Babamukuru's education?'" (1988 161). But she is dead set against Tambu getting an education, and when Tambu tries to earn enough money to pay for her school fees she complains about her mother not being supportive: "She began to prepare me for disappointment … To prepare me she began to discourage me. 'And do you think you are so different, so much better than the rest of us? Accept your lot and enjoy what you can of it. There is nothing else to be done'" (1988 20). She loves her daughter, but she is blinded by her belief in 'the cultural norm'.

The cultural upbringing and the low social status of MaShingayi has formed her into who she is today, and she has never known any other alternative. As a person of colour, she was bound to poverty and as a woman, she was bound to misery. The intersectional combination of being black, poor, and a woman has deprived MaShingayi of all hope. Tambu sees it differently, since she has grown up exposed to a rich family: her uncle's. She knows there is another alternative and that it begins with education, and she is adamant on getting one. The generational difference between mother and daughter stresses that there are different opportunities for girls of Tambu's generation and therefore they need not necessarily continue in their mothers' footsteps. This is not always obvious or accepted by the mothers, as is seen through MaShingayi's resistance.

MaShingayi's juxtapose is Maikuru who is married to Babamukuru. She is highly educated and has a higher social status then her husband's family: due to his high status as a headmaster and her status as a teacher. Maiguru supports both genders in getting their education, but, just as all the other women in the novel, she is obedient to her husband. Tambu is surprised when she finds out that Maiguru has a Masters degree and teaches at the mission. However, she never gets her salary. When Tambu asks her if it is 'the Government' that takes it, Maiguru answers: "'You could say that'" (1988 103) and laughs: implying that it is in fact her husband who takes it, and that she must obey his rules. Although she lives in a grand house at the mission, the female work space in the house, the kitchen, is quite worn. This does not matter to Babamukuru, since he never goes in there and guests are only invited into the living-room and dining-room. The kitchen represents the attitude towards the women: it is neglected and worn out like them, and the state of it does not matter as long as it can fulfil its task. Maiguru pretends to be happy with her life, but she is constantly complaining without naming her husband or airing her frustrations in his presence. On the state of the kitchen she says: "'You'd think people would find time to fix windows in their own homes. Yet they don't. Ts! It surprises me'" (1988 67). Frustrated, she makes small comments like that to relieve her of her dissatisfaction. Maiguru knows there are other ways of living, since she has lived with her husband in both South Africa and England, and there she has seen other alternatives and opportunities of life. When explaining to Tambu why she accepts getting no salary she says:

> 'What it is … to have to choose between self and security. When I was in England I glimpsed
> for a little while the things I could have been, the things I could have done if - if - if things
> were - different - But there was Babawa Chido and the children and the family. And does

anyone realise, does anyone appreciate, what sacrifices were made? As for me, no one even thinks about the things I gave up.' (1988 103)

The frustration of knowing what could have been, is one of the things that is driving Maiguru crazy. Tambu feels sorry for Maiguru for being "prevented by marriage" (1988 103) to do what she wanted to do, but since she was married to Babamukuru and, due to him and his status, lived a 'good life' she had done the right thing. Tambu reasons that "… if it was necessary to efface yourself in order to preserve his sense of identity and value, then, I was sure, Maiguru had taken the correct decisions" (1988 104).

The woman who does not follow the rules in the novel is Lucia, MaShingayi's sister. She has a reputation of being a loose woman: sleeping with whomever she wants and doing whatever she wants. Lucia is unlike the other women in the novel: she is the rebel. She is hot-headed and independent, although her independence relies on her being able to stay with her family. Her father is only too happy to send her away to help her sister, and she can stay at the homestead as long as Jeremiah and Babamukuru allow it. When Babamukuru and his patriarchal council have a meeting to decide about Lucia's future, she insists that Maiguru and the other women in the kitchen stand by her: that they all be supportive in a sisterhood. This did not happen though, since Maiguru was emotionally detached from Lucia, and did not think that it was worth going against her husband for her. Tambu comments on this incident as a moment of pivotal importance. The women needed to broaden their minds, to see themselves as women: sisters, not divided by their different origins, status or family relations. Instead, they saw the reflections they had been taught to recognise as self, and they were too afraid to recognise that these images, which set them apart, were just myths: "… frightening to acknowledge that generations of threat and assault and neglect had battered these myths into the extreme…" (1988 140). Instead of standing together as one, as a sisterhood of women, they retreated to their 'known' image of self and "… pretending while they did that actually they were advancing, had in fact initiated an offensive, when really, for each one of them, it was a last solitary, hopeless defence of the security of their illusions" (1988 140). Hence, there is no uprising of the sisterhood. There is no feeling of powerful togetherness: the women are divided into their roles and each has to face her burdens alone. This is the result of the patriarchy and its cultural norms.

Through intersections of power, culture, and gender norms the women have, just as the Indian ones in Roy's novel, developed a self-depreciative attitude towards themselves. They do not believe that they are worthy of standing up for themselves, much less for each other. The women are all dependent on the men around them, and most of them hardly ever dare to speak against them. Taylor says that the nonrecognition of a person or a group is an oppressive form of control. By not recognising them, they are barred from their true identity and instead they are imprisoned in, as mentioned earlier, a 'false, distorted, and reduced mode of being'. It can be argued that the nonrecognition of women both in the novel and in Rhodesia, has distorted their sense of identity and that they have learned to view themselves as a reflection of their husbands' status, and not by their individual identities. In fact, one must consider if they even have had the opportunity to develop an individual identity at all. According to Taylor, the identity of a person or a group is developed through dialogical interaction and through this interaction both a cultural- and an individual- identity is created. When a woman is misrecognised for who she is, she is wounded and can develop a self-hatred of her own image. Just as the white people misrecognised the black and projected onto them an image of being uncivilised and inferior, the Rhodesian men also project the image of inferiority and disposability onto their wives. Creating an individual identity in this atmosphere is not easy, since the development is dependent on dialogue. Taylor explains as follows: "… my discovering my own identity doesn't mean that I work it out in isolation, but that I negotiate it through dialogue, partly overt, partly internal, with others. … My own identity crucially depends on my dialogical relations with others" (Taylor 34). The women have never been able to have a voice in this dialogue, being misrecognised as individuals and judged only on their obedience and hard work. The mutual influence of the gender relations in the Rhodesian culture is twofold. Firstly, the men's power over women position them as subaltern to the men. Secondly, the women's obedience assures the men of their supremacy and their right to rule. The social injustice of the patriarchal system cannot be uprooted unless people realise that there is an intersection at play between the interpersonal patterns of their culture, and the disciplinary structure of power.

The three women in this section all try in various ways to break out of their imprisonment. MaShingayi stops eating and almost kills herself and her new baby in her distress over Tambu going away to school. She is afraid Tambu will die there, just as her eldest boy did. She considers the 'Englishness' to be the evil in her life. Her boy went away to school, came home and spoke only English and not Shona, which meant she lost him already before he died, since she does not speak

English. She cannot bear the thought of losing Tambu too. Lucia stands up against the patriarchy while they are 'judging' what to do with her and criticises them for not hearing her side of the story. She breaks free from her situation by asking Babamukuru for a job at the mission, and by studying to read and write in the evenings. She speaks her mind bluntly and when she and Babamukuru have a fight about Tambu, and Babamukuru says that girls ought to obey so they can become good and obedient women, she answers: "'Well, Babamukuru … maybe when you marry a woman, she is obliged to obey you. But some of us aren't married, so we don't know how to do it. That is why I have been able to tell you frankly what is in my heart" (Dangarembga 1988 174). And although Babamukuru finds her outbursts funny: "'That one', he chuckled to Maiguru, 'she is like a man herself'" (1988 174), he does not and could not ever take her seriously.

Babamukuru's wife, Maiguru, finally has had enough towards the end of the novel. She has a fight with Babamukuru where she tells him that she has had enough of not being respected nor recognised for her contribution to their lives, and the lives of Babamukuru's family. She is fed up and decides to leave him. Although she is well-educated and has a better chance to make a different life for herself than any of her gendered 'sisters' in the novel, she only runs away to her brother, and after a couple of days, Babamukuru fetches her back home again. Even though her rebellion was not as successful as Nyasha, her daughter, would have wanted it to be, she is now starting to make her own decisions and gaining more power over herself. This clearly shows that although she has a high education and options for her life, she has internalised the feeling of inferiority and obedience which she has grown up with. The women's effort to free themselves is somewhat successful in the fact that Lucia and Maiguru are able to change their daily lives to some extent. However, breaking free from the rule of men has been unsuccessful for all of them. The burden of womanhood is heavy on all the women. The intersecting factors of gender, education (or the lack of it), class, and culture are all part of the different oppressive situations they are experiencing. The patriarchal society and the reminisce of colonialism are the power institutions that continue to intersect with their lives and hold them down. This is visible through their different attempts to speak up and break free, whether it is the highly educated Maiguru or the rebellious Lucia, in the end they are left with no alternative but to accept that their possibilities are restricted by men.

Negotiating identity

Tambu and Nyasha are the two central characters of the novel. They each represent a new generation of Rhodesians but from juxtaposing milieus: Tambu is from an uneducated poor family of the homestead, while Nyasha, who is from an educated Christian household, has lived in England during her formative years. Both girls struggle with their identity and a feeling of belonging in a society and in a culture that does not value them due to their gender.

Tambu, as the main narrative voice of the novel, starts the story by telling the reader why she was not sorry for her brother's death. She explains how she envied him of his position of being able to do things with their father and their uncle, while she was excluded, but she mostly envied him for going to the mission for the purpose of education. Tambu was equally interested in learning as her brother, but due to her gender she was ignored for being irrational. Her father did not see the purpose of educating her and answered her complaints by saying: "'Can you cook books and feed them to your husband? Stay at home with your mother. Learn to cook and clean. Grow vegetables'" (1988 15). The difference between Tambu and her mother is that Tambu has seen that there is another life than the homestead, and she looks up to her uncle's wife Maiguru and wants a life more like hers than like her mothers. Hence, she is adamant on getting her education even if she has to find the money herself. Her brother thinks little of her wishes to go to school and when she seeks his help he answers: "'Why do you bother?' … 'Don't you know I am the one who has to go to school?'" (1988 20). When she keeps pestering him about it he explains to her: "'It's the same everywhere. Because you are a girl'" (1988 21). The fact that she is prevented due to her gender is not an acceptable explanation for Tambu, and she becomes severely hateful towards her brother saying: "My concern for my brother died an unobtrusive death" (1988 21). When her brother later dies, and she gets the chance to go to the mission, since she has no other brothers, she feels ecstatic: "I, I was triumphant … I was vindicated!" (1988 57) The loss of her brother, whom she had grown to dislike, paved the way for her future. She was on her way.

When Tambu moves to the mission she shares a bedroom with Nyasha. She is partly excited, but partly scared of living with Nyasha: "Everything about her spoke of alternative and possibilities that if considered too deeply would wreak havoc with the neat plan I had laid out for my life" (1988 76). Tambu is dead set on getting her education and will do anything to achieve her goal. She behaves perfectly and minds her schoolwork and reads anything she can get her hands on. She even effaces some of her personal traits such as her ability to stand up for herself and speak her mind.

Tambu has changed while at the mission: her fear of displeasing Babamukuru and being sent back home to the homestead has made her a subjugated and a quiet girl. She wants progress in her life, not the old ways of the homestead: "… the more I saw of the worlds beyond the homestead the more I was convinced that the further we left the old ways behind the closer we came to progress" (1988 150). Nyasha does not agree with Tambu, since she does not see the alternative as a definite progress. She calls it assimilation and tries to explain this to Tambu before she leaves for the convent school: "To forget who you were, what you were and why you were that. The process, ... was called assimilation…" (1988 182). But Tambu is blind to the change ahead and is determined to take her chance: "I would take the chance. I would lighten my burdens. I would go. If Babamukuru would let me" (1988 182). The fact that her determination is contingent on Babamukuru, and that he has the power to stop her shows just how much she is dependent on him. This is why she obeys him and keeps quiet in his presence. To be able to break free from the homestead and its poverty, she must close her eyes to the price she has to pay for her freedom: the price of her individuality.

Tambu is afraid of looking at the reality of things, because the truth may unsettle her. But she is constantly presented with the truth and alternative points of view through her cousin Nyasha. Nyasha is the diametrical opposite of Tambu. She is wilful and disobedient, she is curious about her background and what really happened in the past. Although she is a good student and minds her schoolwork, she is constantly criticising everything. Having lived in England and seen other ways of living, she is not as naive as Tambu when it comes to the praising of everything European. When she came back to Rhodesia she was unable to speak her native language. She had lost it while she was abroad, and at the same time she had lost her Africanness. She explains this when Tambu accuses her of not speaking to her the day they arrived from England:

'… we were frightened that day. And confused. You know, it's easy to forget things when you're that young. We had forgotten what home was like, I mean really forgotten - what it looked like, what it smelled like, all the things to do and say and not to do and say. It was all strange and new. Not like anything we were used to. It was a real shock!' (1988 79)

The cultural shock had left her and her brother speechless at the time. Nyasha had lost a part of herself in England, the African part. And now back in Rhodesia she has to struggle to find herself

again. She is too English for the Africans and the girls at her school do not accept her as one of them: in their eyes, she is too proud and "… thinks she is white" (1988 95).

Nyasha tells Tambu that her parents should not have taken her and her brother with them to England, since the trip has Anglicised them, so now they do not fit in anymore:

> 'We shouldn't have gone, … The parents ought to have packed us off home. They should have, you know. Lots of people did that. Maybe that would have been best. For them at least, because now they're stuck with hybrids for children. And they don't like it. … I can't help having been there and grown into the me that has been there. But it offends them - I offend them.' (1988 79)

Nyasha's dilemma is her cultural identity: England has changed her and she cannot change back into something that she no longer recognises. Her parents do not understand her, since they were adults and had already built their identity before going abroad. According to Appiah, people build their cultural identity through a dialogue with their community and Nyasha's parents did that in Rhodesia while she did it in England, therefore her cultural identity differs from her parents'. Hence, the intersections of culture and generational differences are broadening the gap between Nyasha and her parents. Nyasha explains her lack of belonging in a letter to Tambu saying:

> I find it more and more difficult to speak with the girls at school. … They do not like my language, my English, because it is authentic and my Shona, because it is not! They think that I am a snob, that I think that I am superior to them because I do not feel that I am inferior to men … I very much would like to belong, Tambu, but I find I do not. (1988 200)

The denial of recognition she experiences from her parents and mostly by her father, who represents the authority, is slowly making her sick. He will not accept her as she is and withholds his recognition. This is what Taylor is addressing when he says that "the withholding of recognition can be a form of oppression" (Taylor 36). Nyasha is being oppressed by her father. Babamukuru is denying her equal dignity and he is also denying her the right to be different. He is forcing her into a mold she does not fit into. Babamukuru is violating both the politics of equal dignity and the politics of difference, which according to Taylor: "… is the cardinal sin against the ideal of

authenticity" (38). Although her parents know that Nyasha is Anglicised, as her mother calls it, she is denied her authentic individual identity. Instead of accepting the fact that their children are different due to their time in England, the parents: mostly Babamukuru, try to fit them and especially Nyasha, into an African mold.

Nyasha's struggle with herself and her father escalates when she is dancing with her friend, a white boy, one late evening. Her father accuses her of being a whore, and the discussion ends with a full-blown fight between father and daughter. Tambu realises at that moment that the victimisation of women in her country is due to their femaleness. It has nothing to do with class or status:

> The victimisation, I saw, was universal. It didn't depend on poverty, on lack of education or on tradition. It didn't depend on any of the things I had thought it depended on. Men took it everywhere with them. Even heroes like Babamukuru did it. And that was the problem. … what I didn't like was the way all the conflicts came back to this question of femaleness. Femaleness as opposed and inferior to maleness. (Dangarembga 1988 118)

There is no way that Tambu nor Nyasha can shed their femaleness, and while Tambu plays the diligent obedient role of the 'poor relative', Nyasha must decide what to do. She is aware that things are different in Rhodesia compared to England, and that she ought to adjust. But as she explains to Tambu:

> '… when you've seen different things you want to be sure you're adjusting to the right thing. … You've got to have some conviction, and I'm convinced I don't want to be anyone's underdog … once you get used to it, well, it just seems natural and you just carry on. And that's the end of you. You're trapped. They control everything you do. (1988 119)

Nyasha's conviction of not wanting to be anybody's underdog is what is making her life a living hell. Her father cannot understand her pride and disobedience, and she cannot do things his way. After the fight she is in an internal conflict of "self versus surrender" (1988 120). And this battle results in a disease well-known in the Western hemisphere: Anorexia, which according to Taylor's theory could be a result of misrecognition. Her sickness being a Western disease shows how Westernised she is. No girl in Rhodesia was worried about getting fat or trying to be slim, but

Nyasha was. And her internal turmoil manifested itself in her obsessiveness in controlling her weight. She had no control over her circumstances, her gender nor her life, but she could control her weight. That is how her downwards spiral started and almost killed her.

Nyasha is the only character in the novel that speculates about Rhodesian history and culture. She represents the young generation of postcolonial women who are starting to draw connections between the intersecting power of authorities and cultural traditions in their lives. She can see that the men are in charge of their lives, but she refuses to acknowledge their postulate that women are inferior to men. She also refuses to acknowledge that Western traditions automatically are better or more progressive than the local African traditions. And in the end of the novel, when she has her nervous breakdown, she blames the white colonists for the subjugation and alteration of the African mind and identity:

> 'They've done it to me, ...It's not their fault. They did it to them too. You know they did, …
> To both of them, but especially to him. They put him through it all. But it's not his fault, he's
> good. … He's a good boy, a good munt. A bloody good kaffir, … Why do they do it, Tambu
> … to me and to you and to him? Do you see what they've done? They've taken us away. …
> all of us. They've deprived you of you, him of him, ourselves of each other. We're grovelling.
> Lucia for job, Jeremiah for money. Daddy grovels to them. We grovel to him.'
> (1988 204-205)

After spilling her guts on how she is not going to be grovelling to anyone, and how the white colonists are to blame for their shattered identity, she continues with how the colonists have taken their history and their foundation from them, while she shreds her history books:

> ('Their history. Fucking liars. Their bloody lies.') … 'They've trapped us. They've trapped
> us. But I won't be trapped. I'm not a good girl. I won't be trapped. … I don't hate you,
> Daddy, … They want me to, but I won't. … I am not one of them but I'm not one of you'.
> (1988 205)

Nyasha's breakdown is a result of her feelings of not belonging, neither within her family nor with her friends at school. She has a crisis of identity, since she does not fit in anywhere. Hall's claim:

that there are two kinds of cultural identities, is important when looking at Nyasha and her family. Her family has the cultural identity of 'a group that shares one culture': they have a common historical experience and share cultural codes, so they feel as being 'one people'. However, Nyasha and her brother have the cultural identity of 'becoming as well as being', they are hybrids: a mix of both their African and their English upbringing and culture. Hall speaks of the Caribbean and the colonial subject as belonging to the second group. On the other hand, in this analysis it is justifiable to juxtapose the family's characters into these two groups. Although the family has been colonised, most of them have been able to hold on to their traditional shared cultural codes. Nyasha and her brother have not learnt these codes, or they have forgotten some of them e.g. language. This results in them becoming outsiders. They are both the same and different, which means that they must negotiate their identity.

Nyasha's identity crisis has unknowingly led her to do an intersectional analysis of her country's cultural and historical past. She has read everything she could on her own country's history e.g. the UDI and what it meant. She has also compared their situation to other countries such as South Africa, and she has read about the diaspora of the Jews and about Hiroshima and Nagasaki. She explained to Tambu that: "… you had to know the facts if you were ever going to find the solutions" (Dangarembga 1988 95). Her search for solutions has distraught her in such a way that she has almost effaced herself.

Dangarembga uses Nyasha to put forth some of her own considerations about her country and the state it is in. In a postscript of the book: an interview with Dangarembga, she explains that racism is a tough subject in her country and that she had to be careful not to create a greater division in an already divided country. Hence, she used some of the complex characters to show that: "One can hold a person responsible for reacting to a situation in a certain way, but the situation that exerted the pressure to behave in that way must also be addressed" (1988 210).

Society through 'partial perspectives'

As mentioned earlier in this paper, Narayan speaks of situated knowledge: a person can only know his or her society from where he or she is situated within it. This theory explains the different perceptions of the characters in the novel. Tambu, who has never been outside of her homestead before she goes to the city with her teacher and later when she moves to the mission, has a very limited knowledge of her society and life in general due to lack of education. Meanwhile, Nyasha,

who has lived in England and has a higher level of education than Tambu, has a broader knowledge of cultural and social politics. Tambu knows her culture, the language, the somewhat limited history her grandmother told her of her ancestors, and the cultural codes and norms. Nyasha, on the other hand, is missing all this information. This shows that both girls only have 'partial perspectives' of their society: Tambu sees it from the inside out, while Nyasha looks at it from the outside in.

Babamukuru's perspective is that of the colonised subject that has been dealt a greater hand than his family, and he feels obligated to share his fortune with them by giving the unfortunate ones a helping hand. His perspective though is coloured by the white colonists' influence on him, and he sees things differently than most of his family members. His only tools to deal with situations are the tools of his oppressor: his language, his education, his literature and his religion. Babamukuru's family at the homestead knows this, and although they may not agree with all of his ideas, they play along since they desperately need his help to get by.

The novel uses these different perspectives to shine a light on some of the issues the postcolonial society of Rhodesia was and is dealing with. It points out the intersectional effects that power, race, class, and gender has had on the characters in the novel, and by mentioning historical events through the voices of the grandmother and Nyasha it puts the situations in context with the real-life struggles of today's Zimbabweans. Through creating characters that Zimbabwean readers can identify with, Dangarembga is hoping to inspire other girls like herself to speak up and become the new voices of the subaltern who rarely speaks.

Americanah

The novel *Americanah* from 2013 is written by the African author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, who was introduced earlier in this paper. Adichie has won many prestigious awards for her writings including for her novel *Americanah* which received the National Book Critics Circle Award. She is also the recipient of a MacArthur Foundation Fellowship and divides her time between the US and Nigeria. The novel is centred around the characters Ifemelu and Obinze and the obstacles they, and their families and friends, go through in the period between the 1980s to the late 2000s in Nigeria, America and England. The novel is written in third person with a limited narrator from the point of view of Ifemelu and Obinze, and the novel is framed partly in the present and partly through flashbacks. The novel is segmented into 6 parts, where most of the present-day narration takes place in a hair salon near Princeton in America from Ifemelu's point of view or in

Nigeria near Lagos, where both Obinze and Ifemelu live at one point or another. The flashbacks are mostly centred around Ifemelu's experiences both in Nigeria and in America, while Obinze's flashbacks take place in Nigeria and in England. For this intersectional analysis with a focus on cultural and historical influences, the main focus will be on Ifemelu and her family, and their experiences with migration and assimilation into a country, which has a significantly different cultural and historical perspective on discourses such as race, class and nationalities. Therefore, the importance of contextualisation will be addressed to not only understand the characters' actions, but also to gain insight into different points of view and prejudices.

<div align="center">The concept of categorisation</div>

Throughout Adichie's novel there is a noteworthy focus on categorisation and labels and how they influence people and their views. It also becomes evident how significant the notion of identification through these labels are to the creation of people's identities and how it places them in boxes of us versus them. In the novel this is addressed through Ifemelu's blog, *Raceteenth or Various Observations About American Blacks (Those Formerly Known as Negroes) by a Non-American Black*, where she writes about her experiences of being a non-American black in America. Even in the statement of being a non-American black there is a certain amount of disclaimer or necessary explanation as to why Ifemelu writes about certain topics, and why her point of view might be different from an African American's. The concept of categorisation is not only interesting to Ifemelu, but also Adichie as a writer, which indicates that the fascination and perception of labels are projections of Adichie's own opinions to her character: Ifemelu. Adichie is ambivalent about the notion of being an African American, Igbo, or feminist writer, because she does not believe that the concept of categorisation is always beneficial for the writer. Often, it labels the author into a category, which is not always correct or, more importantly, can hide or deter future readers from exploring their work (Tunca). Thus, the categorisation and exploration of labels become especially interesting in *Americanah*, where Adichie also examines the stereotypes and prejudices both Americans and Africans have towards other nationalities and races. Furthermore, Adichie's assessment that readers do not hold every label as equally significant is also interesting in an intersectional analysis, since a reading of both Adichie's characters and her writing style will delve into these predispositions and aim to analyse how every category interconnect and influence each other differently depending on the point of view.

To explore the notion of categorisation, Ifemelu writes a blog post called "Understanding America for the Non-American Black: American Tribalism" and in it Ifemelu delves into what she calls the four tribes in America: class, ideology, region and race (Adichie 2013a 184). In the blog post Ifemelu explains how the American society is built around these four tribes and how important they are if one wishes to understand American culture.

> First, class. Pretty easy. Rich folk and poor folk. Second, ideology. Liberals and conservatives. They don't merely disagree on political issues, each side believes the other is evil. Intermarriage is discouraged and on the rare occasion that it happens, is considered remarkable. Third, region. The North and the South. The two sides fought a civil war and tough stains from that war remain. … Finally, race. There's a ladder of racial hierarchy in America. White is always on top, specifically White Anglo-Saxon Protestant, otherwise known as WASP, and American Black is always on the bottom, and what's in the middle depends on time and place. … Americans assume that everyone will get their tribalism. But it takes a while to figure it all out. (2013a 184)

It becomes clear that a number of different nuances and intersections have to be explored and understood if one wishes to understand how the American society is structured. Culturally and historically, it is also not enough to consider the concepts of race and wealth, and how these concepts intersect and create different hierarchies. Instead, Ifemelu explains how the Civil War between the South and the North, as well as the political differences between the Democrats and the Republicans, also influence how the American society is divided into sections. People inside these sections intersect in different ways, where an African American male might be perceived differently in the South than he would be in the North, just as it historically has been the case. Thus, a WASP, as Ifemelu terms it, is hierarchical above others because of his or her skin colour, religion and other Western signifiers.

However, what also becomes evident in Ifemelu's blog post is that the concept of this hierarchical sequence is not universal, but instead primarily a part of the Western culture and how they have chosen to identify themselves. Undoubtedly, as it also becomes apparent in Ifemelu's interactions with the African American blacks, it is not of everybody's choosing. But still, the Americans identify themselves through these factors, which are difficult to comprehend in

Ifemelu's mind, since her home country from a cultural and historical point of view has developed and been structured differently than the US. The intersections that create hierarchies and oppressions in America are highly dependent on Collins and Bilge's core idea of social, as well as cultural, context, since the difference these factors play differ from America and Nigeria. An intersectional analysis is therefore essential to comprehend not only the differences between the two, but also the underlying reasons as to why the differences are there. The blog post is also a comment on how Western cultures, such as the American, have a preconception of their culture being universal, undeniable, and essentially better than other cultures e.g. Ifemelu's. However, it becomes clear that their knowledge of Ifemelu's home country and her living conditions in Nigeria are lacking.

Throughout the novel it becomes clear through interactions with African Americans that Ifemelu's own categorisation of being a non-American black is not only used by her, but also something she implements because others point out the difference between them and her. She is subjected to this categorisation through the entire novel, but there are three unrelated incidents that particularly project this.

At one point in the novel, Ifemelu chooses to neglect an event her second boyfriend in America, the African American Blaine, arranges in connection to a case of discrimination based on race. In her eyes, she did not have to attend the event, since she did not care as much about the subject as Blaine did, and instead she attended a luncheon with one of her acquaintances. Blaine gets angry with her, since she did not recognise the importance of the event, not only for him, but for others like him:

> "You know, it's not just about writing a blog, you have to live like you believe it. That blog is a game that you don't really take seriously, it's like choosing an *interesting* elective evening class to complete your credits." She recognized, in his tone, a subtle accusation, not merely about her laziness, her lack of zeal and conviction, but also about her Africanness; she was not sufficiently furious because she was African, not African American. (2013a 345)

Thus, it was not only due to her lack of participation in his event, but also how, according to Blaine, Ifemelu cannot identify with the troubles he has gone through as an African American black in America, because she is Nigerian. Again, the concept of cultural history becomes apparent to the

challenges Ifemelu goes through in America, since she cannot recognise the struggles other African Americans have gone through to such a degree as her boyfriend wants her to. Instead, the notion of her nationality and her cultural and historical heritage intersect within her and influence her opinions and actions in a way, which does not correlate with how others of the same skin colour see things in America. Hence, even though Ifemelu tries to implement herself into the American society and writes her blog about challenges both African American blacks and non-American blacks go through in the US, she cannot sufficiently assimilate into the society, since her cultural perspective of race is different due to her nationality. This correlates with Ang's statement that race is seen differently from country to country, from nation to nation. Even though two people might share the same skin colour, their reactions to situations might differ due to significantly different historical and cultural influences from their home countries.

At one point, Ifemelu expresses this as follows: "I came from a country where race was not an issue; I did not think of myself as black and I only became black when I came to America" (2013a 290). Thus, the concept of race influences every aspect of Ifemelu's life in America, and the sympathy African American blacks expect of her due to her skin colour is lacking, due to these different perceptions of race. This affects her relationship with Blaine, and their inadequacy in acknowledging each other's individual cultural perspectives develops into what Taylor described as cultural misrecognition. According to Taylor, this misrecognition can have negative consequences on them as individuals and on their relationship. It becomes difficult for them to express themselves freely with one another and it is a part of the reason behind their eventual break-up. Furthermore, the example above is also another instance of how Adichie's own experiences in America shine through in her novel and her depiction of Ifemelu. In the interview Adichie explores the significance and meaning of the novel's title, *Americanah*. She explains that she too only recognised herself as black when she arrived in America: "… and race is something *I* discovered in America, because, when I was in Nigeria I did not think of myself as black, and then I went to the US and I became black" (Adichie 2015 00:03:25-00:03:32). It becomes evident how Adichie's own thoughts, feelings, and experiences are reflected in the character of Ifemelu, and how Adichie too was influenced by cultural and historical aspects regarding the concept of race, since she had never before considered the significance of having a certain skin colour before.

The second instance where categorisation becomes evident is in relation to the rules of tribal hierarchy in America, where Ifemelu is faced with prejudices due to race, class and gender. Ifemelu

is working as a nanny for a white middle-class family in America, when a carpet cleaner rings the door to provide his services. His initial reaction to Ifemelu is hostile, which Ifemelu believes is due to her race:

> … he thought she was a homeowner, and she was not what he had expected to see in this grand stone house with the white pillars. … *It didn't matter to him how much money I had. As far as he was concerned I did not fit as the owner of that stately house because of the way I looked. In America's public discourse, "Blacks" as a whole are often lumped with "Poor Whites." Not Poor Blacks and Poor Whites. But Blacks and Poor Whites. A curious thing indeed*. (Adichie 2013a 166)

The preconceptions the carpet cleaner has about the American society's hierarchies makes him unsympathetic and hostile towards Ifemelu, because she does not fit into his mindset of which kind of people should be able to afford the house Ifemelu is staying in. Instead, he sees Ifemelu as: a young black woman in a middle-class house and these criteria of skin colour, age, gender, and class do not meet his preconceptions of African Americans. Since, as Ifemelu points out in the blog post through the italic writing, the carpet cleaner himself is a white poor man, and if he is unable to live in the house Ifemelu works in, then neither should Ifemelu as a black woman. However, this difference, which was also the case in the previous example of categorisation, is only present in the West and especially in America, due to the four tribes and the cultural, historical, and social implications that follow these notions in the country. For this reason, Ifemelu is subjected to discrimination due to her skin colour in America, which she had never experienced in Nigeria before.

The last example of categorisation lies in how the use of specific words can affect and create extreme reactions in certain people, where others might not even consider the words discriminating or wrong. In one of Ifemelu's classes at the university in Philadelphia, the class is discussing historical representation in films and the word, 'nigger', is bleeped out of the film. A discussion of the word erupts in the classroom, which is centred around the four black students' different comprehensions of the word, since two of the black students are non-American black, and they therefore do not have the same understanding of the word as the other black students:

> "I [Ifemelu] don't think it's always hurtful. I think it depends on the intent and also on who is using it."
>
> A girl next to her, face flushing bright red, burst out, "No! The word is the same for whoever says it."
>
> "That is nonsense." The firm voice again. A voice unafraid. "If my mother hits me with a stick and a stranger hits me with a stick, it's not the same thing."
>
> "I agree it's different when African Americans say it, but I don't think it should be used in films, because that way people who shouldn't use it can use it and hurt other people's feelings," a light-skinned African American girl said… (2013a 138)

What becomes evident in the example is the different perceptions of the word 'nigger', and the cultural and historical emotions that are connected to the word. In the discussion, two non-American blacks are expressing their confusion as to why the word should not be used, when, in their eyes, it has its place in certain historical contexts. On the other hand, the African American students and the teacher all agree that the word sends out certain discriminating and derogatory images, which should not be used in a conversation no matter the participants' points of view or intentions. To them, the word has been used to such a negative extent that it should be prohibited. In the discussion it is particularly the female students who voice their opinions and contempt for the word. If one considers bell hooks' view on cinema and the portrayal of black people, and especially black females, it can be used to explain the African American females' respond to the word. Hooks claims that through cinematic usage they, as black American females, were reduced to one dimensional images of themselves, where words such as nigger was used by white filmmakers to portray the African Americans as the 'other'. Thus, the disgust the African Americans show in the university class is based upon historical discrimination and injustice, which they have been subjected to in the American society. However, since Ifemelu and her fellow non-American black classmate have not been objected to this discrimination, they, as African females, feel differently about the word and can instead put it into a historical context without being affected by it in the same fashion. The categorisations and boxes the word placed certain people in, people who in America were sold into slavery and had been called 'nigger' as a way to discriminate and oppress, had a negative influence on the African Americans' self-images and identities. The notion of race was seen and experienced differently based on the intersections of gender and nationality as well as

its historical and cultural context, which explains why Ifemelu's reaction to the concept of racial slurs was different from her classmates'.

Assimilation and cultural norms

In Ifemelu's pursuit of assimilation into American society, she not only tries to understand and participate in the American culture, she also changes herself to fit into the American norm. She does a number of things that she in Nigeria made fun of others for doing: becoming Americanah. In the previously mentioned interview Adichie explains the term Americanah as follows: "... A person who is going to the US and comes back to Nigeria and suddenly has all of these affectations and pretends not to understand Nigerian languages, speaks with an American accent and that kind of thing" (Adichie 2015 00:00:09-00:00:22). Even though Ifemelu and her friends in Nigeria want to travel to the West and explore places such as America and England, they still expect Nigerians to maintain their Nigerian roots and not become completely changed by Western culture. However, as it is stated above, when Ifemelu arrives in the US and sees the American culture first hand, she experiences the effects of becoming an Americanah and she begins to implement the American traits she laughed at as a young girl.

The notion of the accent is fundamental to how others perceive Ifemelu in the US, and Adichie addresses the importance of the accent a multitude of times. In Nigeria, Ifemelu and her friends made fun of a girl, who travelled to America and lost some of her Nigerian accent when she spoke English: "... a girl in the form below them, who had come back from a short trip to America with odd affectations, pretending she no longer understood Yoruba, adding a slurred *r* to every English word she spoke" (Adichie 2013a 65). Thus, they were making fun of the girl because she was trying to emulate Americans and, in the process, neglected certain aspects of the Nigerian cultural heritage such as the native tribal language of Yoruba.

In America Ifemelu experiences the need and desire to fit into a society, which is fundamentally differently hierarchically built than her own. One of the ways she can do this is by strategically changing her accent so that others will take her seriously. At first, Ifemelu does this simply to make it easier for others in America to understand her and since she does not wish to be looked down upon by Americans. An example of this is when Ifemelu enrols at the University of Philadelphia and people talk to her slowly due to her being a foreigner: "… she [Ifemelu] realised that Christina Tomas [the registrar at the university] was speaking like that because of *her*, her

foreign accent, and she felt for a moment like a small child, lazy-limbed and drooling" (2013a 133). There are two important aspects to this quote. Firstly, in relation to the critique Appiah has of the multicultural West and its lack of proper recognition of blacks and their cultural backgrounds, this is an example of an American person, who does not recognise and does not want to understand Ifemelu's cultural origin. Ifemelu has talked English her entire life and is better at English than her own tribal language of Igbo (2013a 61). However, the registrar, Tomas, still speaks to Ifemelu as if she is slow or different, only based on her skin colour and nationality. She has no intention of learning about Ifemelu's cultural background either, and when Ifemelu tells her that she understands and speaks English perfectly, Tomas only gives her a somewhat condescending smile and a dismissive answer. This example correlates with Appiah's criticism of the West and the lack of will to comprehend and educate themselves on foreign cultures. Secondly, Tomas reaction to Ifemelu also correlates with Taylor's concept of identity through dialogue, where Ifemelu experiences this negativity directed at her accent and in turn changes it to sound more American. This is due to the concept of identity being created through interactions with others, and in America Ifemelu's skin colour, nationality and appearance lead Tomas to assume that Ifemelu is unable to communicate with her. Because of this negative reaction, Ifemelu makes a decision and leaves part of her cultural identity behind in the hope of fitting into another culture and the cultural norms that it entails.

Later, when Ifemelu has lived in America for a couple of years, she suddenly realises what these changes to her accent have done to her concept of self. After a phone conversation with a young telemarketer, Ifemelu contemplates the reason behind her accent and why it had been important for her to change it. After explaining her country of origin to the telemarketer, he comments on her accent and tells her she sounds American. To this Ifemelu automatically thanks him, but afterwards it leaves her confused and irritated:

> Only after she hung up did she begin to feel the stain of a burgeoning shame spreading all over her, for thanking him, for crafting his words "You sound American" into a garland that she hung around her own neck. Why was it a compliment, an accomplishment, to sound American? She had won; Cristina Tomas, pallid-faced Cristina Tomas under whose gaze she had shrunk like a small, defeated animal, would speak to her normally now. … Her [Tomas] fleeting victory had left in its wake a vast, echoing space, because she had taken on, for too long, a pitch of voice and a way of being that was not hers. (2013a 175)

What comes through in the quote above is a void inside of Ifemelu, which has been created due to the neglect and rejection of her own cultural and historical roots through the loss of her accent. By faking an American accent to fit into the American mold, she had transformed into something she was not. It is, as Taylor explained it, a negative consequence of withholding recognition, and how it can develop into a form of oppression - not only from the West, but also from inside Ifemelu herself. Hence, when Ifemelu recognises the negative ramifications Tomas and other Americans have caused within her, she is able to put her cultural identity back together in a small way. She does this later when she speaks with her accent again for the first time in 3 years and she instantly feels relieved and more like herself: "… [she] felt a rush of pleasure from giving the *t* its full due in "advantage", from not rolling her *r* in "Haverhill". This was truly her; this was the voice with which she would speak if she were woken up from a deep sleep during an earthquake" (2013a 175).

The second aspect she changes about herself is her hair. Throughout the novel it becomes apparent how important hair is to Ifemelu's identity and how others around her judge her based on her hair. The first example of hair and its significance in America is portrayed through the difficulties Ifemelu has with getting a higher paid job in communications. Her hair is braided, which is the norm for African women in Nigeria, but at a meeting with her career counsellor, the caramel-skinned African American Ruth, she advises Ifemelu to change it: "When she told Ruth about the interview in Baltimore, Ruth said, "My only advice? Lose the braids and straighten your hair. Nobody says this kind of stuff but it matters. We want you to get that job" (2013a 202). What becomes apparent in this underlying cultural understanding in America is how straight hair is professional, while braids and natural African hair is unprofessional. This shows that there is a hierarchical difference of hair, where black women have to change their hair to appear more white by straightening it, or else they will not be taken seriously in the workplace. After getting her hair chemically straightened she explains it to her first boyfriend in the US, the white American Curt, as follows:

> My full and cool hair would work if I were interviewing to be a backup singer in a jazz band, but I need to look professional for this interview, and professional means straight is best but if it's going to be curly then it has to be the white kind of curly, loose curls or, at worst, spiral curls but never kinky. (2013a 204)

The concept of hair has never been an issue for Curt as a middle-class white male when applying for a higher paid job. He is both confused and angry that this is something Ifemelu must go through as a black woman in America. It is also something which Ifemelu had not considered before, due to her Nigerian heritage. In Nigeria her hair had never been a problem, since everybody around her had the same hair as her and everybody was black. Again, it becomes evident how race culturally has a different part to play in America versus Nigeria, and how this instance of social injustice is tied to the intersections of cultural and racial differences.

It also becomes apparent how this racial view on hair challenges and damages Ifemelu's cultural identity. She struggles with recognising and appreciating her appearance after the chemical straightening has taken place: "She did not recognize herself. She left the salon almost mournfully; while the hairdresser had flat-ironed the ends, the smell of burning, of something organic dying which should not have died, had made her feel a sense of loss" (2013a 203). The notion of something organic dying could be seen as a metaphor for her cultural identity dying as well, or at least a part of what makes up her identity. She mourns the loss and the changes she has been pressured into making due to outside expectations. Again, this relates back to Taylor's perception of identity and what lack of recognition can do to an individual, where the oppression of cultural recognition can result in negative consequences: in this case Ifemelu seeing herself as the 'other' compared to the white norm, which wordlessly determines right from wrong. The chemical treatment in her hair also result in the hair falling out, another image Adichie has put forth of the procedure being wrong and going against Ifemelu's cultural heritage, and it is not until Ifemelu finds a community of black women appreciating natural black hair that she feels at home again (2013a 212).

The second instance of how the theme of hair and its importance comes through in the novel is in relation to the setting of the hair salon. It is the offset for the novel's plot and the conversation that takes place in the hair salon illustrates the intersections of different nationalities, races, classes, and cultures in one small room, and how these factors influence the people's outlook on life differently. The salon's spatial placement is in the town, Trenton, but Ifemelu herself lives in another town, Princeton (2013a 3). Historically, there had been many conflicts between the two towns, but in the novel, it also illustrates the economic and racial differences between the two towns. Ifemelu comes from a university town, where the majority of the citizens are light-skinned

and have somewhat straight natural hair, but the neighbouring town of Trenton has many hair salons for black women with natural hair. This illustrates the difference between the two towns regarding race, nationality and class. The hair salon's poor state further illustrates the difference between Ifemelu and the hairdressers, where the room is hot, stuffy, somewhat dirty, and stuffed full of things and people, which makes the room seem even smaller (2013a 10).

In this particular setting, Ifemelu suddenly appears to have a better life full of freedom, which the women in the hair salon did not achieve by immigrating to America. Throughout the previous analysis of Ifemelu's life in America, she has perceived herself to be placed lowest on the hierarchical cultural ladder in the US, but in the salon this suddenly changes. The women originate from different decolonised countries in Africa, but since Ifemelu is from Nigeria, she had a better chance in life than the other women did due to her educational opportunities in Nigeria and therefore her easier access to the Green Card. This is also pointed out to her by her former employer's sister, Lauren, that Ifemelu being from Nigeria and having immigrated to the US, is privileged compared to others that did not have the same opportunity (2013a 169). This was the first time Ifemelu heard of herself as privileged, since she always compared herself to others that had more than her. This proves how important the context is when trying to analyse and understand people's views, and why this should be considered in an intersectional analysis as Collins and Bilge put forth in their theoretical work. The concepts of race, age, nationality, and class are difficult in and of themselves, and the neglect of contextualisation makes them even more incomprehensible.

In the salon it also becomes apparent how different the women's lives are. Compared to the women in the salon, Ifemelu has options and she has the freedom to choose her own life. It shocks the women in the salon when Ifemelu tells them she is going back to Nigeria to stay. The hairdressers are still hoping for the American Dream, the dream Ifemelu too shared in her youth, but getting older and experiencing America first hand have proven to Ifemelu that she could never truly feel at home in America. The cultural differences between the two countries, particularly in relation to the concepts of race, gender and class, are too prominent for Ifemelu to handle, and she has a difficult time trying to fit into the American culture. Instead, she wants to return to the Nigeria she has imagined for herself in her times of struggle in America, even though the people around her warn her that the acclimatisation process might be difficult.

The consequences of diaspora and cultural loss

One of the most important personal relationships Ifemelu has in the novel is to her nephew, Dike. Dike was born in Nigeria, but due to his father's death, his mother was forced to leave her home and travel to America for a fresh start in life. As a consequence, Dike grows up in an entirely different culture and society compared to the one his mother and Ifemelu grew up in. The influences he is affected by in America shape and challenge his identity in a significantly different way than it did Ifemelu and his experience with diaspora has not been easy to adjust to.

During his childhood, his mother has been adamant about keeping Dike's Nigerian cultural background away from him, since she wants him to fit into American society. This means that she only speaks Igbo to Dike, when he has done something wrong and she is reprimanding him. This results in Dike having a disconnection with his cultural heritage, because to him Igbo and in extension Nigeria represent something negative, while America symbolises something positive. Furthermore, his mother also uses Nigeria as a punishment for him and she threatens to send him back to Nigeria as a consequence for bad behaviour (2013a 171). Thus, Nigeria is never mentioned to Dike as something positive and something relatable or desirable by his mother, and every positive aspect of his home country comes from Ifemelu. This is also why Ifemelu shows concern for Dike's lack of cultural knowledge and their native language:

> "Dike, *I mechago*?" Ifemelu asked.
> "Please don't speak Igbo to him," Aunty Uju said. "Two languages will confuse him."
> "What are you talking about, Aunty? We spoke two languages growing up."
> "This is America. It's different." (2013a 109)

According to Dike's mother, there is a difference between being American and being Nigerian, and the languages he should learn. In Nigeria, Dike as a young boy should have learnt his native language of Igbo. However, due to his move to another country, his mother does not want him to become confused while he is struggling to become an American, and that is why he should not learn a second language. She has taken part of his culture and replaced it with something else, even though Ifemelu is arguing that he can be both - a form of hybrid with both American and Nigerian traits. A hybridity which Hall, through his theoretical work, has encouraged. According to him, it is only natural for generations to developed into different directions, and if Dike would have had a

choice, he would have become a bilingual American, instead of the narrow direction his mother ushered him into.

Later in life, Dike also feels this loss of his native language, and he longs for the possibility of learning and speaking his native tongue: ""You can still learn," she [Ifemelu] said. ... "Yes, I guess so," he said, and shrugged, as though to say it was already too late" (2013a 424). However, at this point in Dike's life, even though he is only in his first teenage years, he no longer believes that he can become a part of the Nigerian culture, which he has been denied throughout his life. In this particular context it is Dike's mother that has oppressed her son and his curiosity towards his roots, which results in a case of cultural disconnection. This disconnection can only occur due to factors such as age, nationality and cultural differences, and how they intersect and differentiate between Dike and his mother, and their experiences of living in America. Dike even expresses his concern of having a crisis of identity in a school paper, but his mother calls it an American phenomenon, which her Nigerian son should not be experiencing:

"How can he say he does not know what he is? Since when is he conflicted? And even that his name is difficult?"

"You should talk to him, Aunty. If that is how he feels, then that is how he feels."

"I think he wrote that because that is the kind of thing they teach them here. Everybody is conflicted, identity this, identity that." (2013a 217)

It becomes evident that Dike is struggling with the lack of recognition from his mother, and it becomes apparent that Dike lacks the cultural knowledge of Nigeria, which should have occurred through an identity forming dialogue with his mother. In this context it is not only outsiders that are withholding the recognition Dike is seeking, but his own mother preventing him from exploring his roots and cultural heritage.

What also makes the hybridity of Dike's identity interesting, is his mother's feelings about his Americanness and lack of Nigerian traits. Even though she denies him knowledge of Nigeria, she still expects him to have Nigerian norms and values, and act as other Nigerians did when she lived in her home country. This results in frustrations directed towards Dike, and Dike has a difficult time trying to both become an American and at the same time comply with his mother's wishes. An example of this is when his mother wants him to attend church in Massachusetts in a particular set

of clothing, which is not something cool to wear at his age, but instead something young Nigerian boys would wear. Dike is persuaded by Ifemelu, but only: "… as long as he could wear sneakers, not the lace-ups his mother wanted" (2013a 215). Thus, Dike is trying to fit into American trends, but his mother will not let him.

Another instance wherein Dike's mother believes America to be a bad influence on her son, is when he, at the age of 6, is exploring his sexuality by comparing genitalia with a young girl at his day-care, which she discusses with Ifemelu: "What do you mean, is that all? He is not yet seven years old! What type of thing is this? Is this what I came to America for?" … "Aunty, we were all curious as children"" (2013a 141). What is especially interesting in this quote is the notion of curiosity and the want to learn. Dike is a curious child, and he wants to explore and learn things about himself, Nigerian culture and American culture, but his mother keeps putting up barriers he cannot break through. In this context he is a young non-American black boy in America asking questions about his background from his Nigerian mother, who does not want to answer them. This also means that Dike has a difficult time identifying with others, because the majority of the population around him is white, and therefore, they do not know anything about his cultural heritage either.

Throughout Adichie's novel, Dike is constantly subjected to prejudices projected at him by others and mainly by white Americans, who do not have any understanding of his Nigerian background and instead categorise him as an African American black. At one point, Dike is accused of hacking into his high school's computer system, even though he is not especially good at using computers. Ifemelu is astonished by this accusation, but Dike's only reply is: ""You have to blame the black kid first," he said, and laughed" (2013a 349). In this case of injustice, an intersectional analysis can be used to explore why Dike reacted with a laugh and why he is accused of being the hacker. Firstly, it proves that Dike has been through these sorts of accusations or reactions before due to his age and skin colour. He has also often received the following question from his peers: "Hey, Dike, got some weed?" and greetings such as "What's up, bro?" (2013a 349), which are only addressed at Dike due to his complexion. This implies that they are reacting to him as if he were an African American black. Secondly, it also shows how prejudices are integrated into the society, where the people around Dike treat him differently due to their presumptions of his race. These examples are cases where they express their stereotypes of black people towards Dike, even though

he is an unconventional black in the US. This treatment of Dike becomes another example of Appiah's critique of America and their lack of recognition towards e.g. blacks of different descends.

This is also one of the concerns Ifemelu has of Dike's life in America and the labels others put on him: "... she thought of Dike, wondered … what he would be considered, American African or African American. He would have to choose what he was, or rather, what he was would be chosen for him" (2013a 141). Ifemelu herself had the opportunity to learn and explore her own labels due to her age, and the experiences she had had both in Nigeria and then in America as a non-American black. She had the opportunity to make her own evaluations and e.g. write her thoughts and feelings down in her blog. However, Dike does not have the advantage of age and the knowledge of his home country, and consequently he can only learn about life in America as an African American. This results in a loss of cultural identity, which in the end has devastating consequences for Dike.

After Ifemelu has finished getting her hair braided at the hair salon, she receives a phone call from her aunt, Dike's mother, where she tells Ifemelu that Dike tried, and failed, to commit suicide (2013a 365). Ifemelu is determined that the suicide attempt is the result of the lack of recognition on Dike's mother's part, whereas Dike's mother is arguing that it is the result of a depression:

> "Do you remember when Dike was telling you something and he said 'we black folk' and you told him 'you are not black'?" she [Ifemelu] asked Aunty Uju … "You should not have done that."
>
> "You know what I meant. I didn't want him to start behaving like these people and thinking that everything that happens to him is because he's black."
>
> "You told him what he wasn't but you didn't tell him what he was… You never reassured him."
>
> "Ifemelu, his suicide attempt was from depression," Aunty Uju said gently, quietly. "It is a clinical disease. Many teenagers suffer from it."
>
> "Do people just wake up and become depressed?"
>
> "Yes, they do."
>
> "Not in Dike's case. ... His depression is because of his experience, Aunty!" Ifemelu said…
>
> (2013a 379-380)

Dike's mother argues that her son simply has a depression and how it has nothing to do with her lack of acknowledgement resulting in an identity crisis. Herein, it is interesting that Dike's mother upholds an American concept of depression as the source of Dike's troubles, since she at a previous time accused America of inventing mental diseases that no Nigerian before had felt, e.g. the concept of conflict of identity. However, other Nigerians did not feel the same form of cultural misrecognition as Dike did. Their mothers did not withhold Nigerian beliefs, values, and norms of Nigerian life from their children, since they were already a part of the Nigerian society and received their information through dialog with not only family members, but also friends, neighbours, school teachers and so forth. This, Dike was denied, and since he was also repeatedly told by his mother that he was not black either, he did not know where to turn. Everything he knew was being an African American. Thus, he tried to identify with young African American boys and he took on their verbal phrases and sayings, as well as what African American culture and history entailed. But, as it appears in the quote above, Dike's mother did not want him to consider himself as black, since, in her home country, he is not, and he does not share the culture and history of African Americans. Hence, the labels everybody else create their identities based upon are not available to Dike, and he becomes confused, depressed and self-destructive. This is one of the worst ramifications the denial and oppression of cultural recognition can result in, which is why both Taylor and Appiah address its issues and consequences through their theoretical work. In their eyes, this would probably not have happened if Dike had not been denied cultural knowledge regarding his Nigerian roots.

Furthermore, in relation to Brah's perception of diaspora and identity, it is difficult for him to establish concepts of us versus them, because his mother always categorises Dike as the 'other'. Therefore, he has no opportunity to create cultural ties with the people around him. Moreover, it also becomes evident how diaspora effects Dike and his mother differently, due to their difference in age, gender, and nationality, which Brah argues are fundamental aspects to a person's experiences with diaspora. Even though Dike is Nigerian, his mother never lets him be Nigerian, and as a consequence he does not experience the American society the same way as his mother did when she immigrated. For example, his mother saw the travel to America as a new start away from the troubles she had in Nigeria, whereas Dike simply sees America as the only way of life. He does not know that there is a different way to live, and that is why he tries to cling to American culture and why his identity is challenged every time his mother claims he is something different but does

not give him an alternative. For this reason, it is important to consider the concept of generational shifts to understand the social context of Dike's suicide attempt, and why his mother did not understand him.

However, the longing for Nigeria and its culture that both Dike and Ifemelu feel is often the cause of confusion in others. As it was mentioned earlier, Ifemelu received many incomprehensible remarks due to her wish to return to Nigeria, and in the same way many do not understand why Dike felt the need to end his life. In Nigeria, one of Ifemelu's friends makes a remark about Dike's suicide attempt, wherein he shares the opinion Dike's mother had about the concept of suicide:

> "I don't understand how a fine boy like Dike would want to kill himself. A boy living in America with everything. How can? That is a very foreign behaviour."
> "Foreign behaviour? What the fuck are you talking about? Foreign behaviour? Have you read *Things Fall Apart*?" Ifemelu asked, wishing she had not told Ranyinudo about Dike. She was angrier with Ranyinudo than she had ever been, yet she knew that Ranyinudo meant well, and had said what many other Nigerians would say, which was why she had not told anyone else about Dike's suicide attempt, since she came back [to Nigeria]. (2013a 425)

Again, this is a notion of how the thought of the American Dream with its materialistic and stereotypical notions would shine through in Ifemelu's friends' stereotypical perceptions of America. According to Ranyinudo, Dike should not have felt the urge to commit suicide, since he had everything he could have asked for: a life in America where his material needs were met. Again, it becomes obvious that this conflict of identity Dike has gone through is unnatural or incomprehensible by others, who have not themselves been through some of the same challenges as Dike has. Ifemelu, even though it was not to the same extend, experienced the conflict of cultural and historical differences between Nigeria and America, and she too went through a crisis of identity. Therefore, Ifemelu understands and empathises with Dike's actions, and this is why she wants to show him Nigerian culture so that he will get a better insight into his origins.

When Ifemelu moves back to Nigeria, she offers Dike to come and visit her and experience the Nigerian culture first hand and hopefully prevent him from having suicidal thoughts in the future. In Nigeria, Dike, for the first time, experiences being part of a majority and he finally has an opportunity to be part of a 'we' instead of the 'other': "Oh my God, Coz, I've never seen so many

black people in the same place!" he said (2013a 420). This statement in and of itself proves to Ifemelu that Dike has missed a place where he can be a part of a crowd and not be the odd one out. His exploration into Nigerian culture happens quickly, and even though he has a short adjustment period of getting to know the differences between Nigeria and America e.g. the electricity and the food, he soon drives around Nigeria with confidence and turns on the generator without a problem: as if it is the most obvious thing to do (2013a 423-424). Dike is finally experiencing what Hall calls a rediscovering of cultural identity, which brings a feeling of 'oneness' into Dike's life, where he learns about Nigerian customs and his father, aspects of the Nigerian background his mother had kept from him. Dike can now acknowledge the hybridity he has felt his entire life, the hybridity of being both a child of America and Nigeria, and the different implications these two cultures entail. Thus, throughout the intersectional analysis of Adichie's novel *Americanah* it has become evident, how different factors of race, gender, class, age, culture, history, and context have influenced the characters' lives, and how and why the creation and challenges of their cultural identities have differentiated from one another.

Comparative aspects of the African novels

Through the analysis of the two African novels through an intersectional framework it becomes evident that history and culture are essential factors that must be considered to achieve a greater contextual understanding of the characters and their societies. In both novels we are made aware of how the Western culture has permeated into not only the social structures of the postcolonial societies, but also into the identity of its inhabitants. In *Nervous Conditions* this is evident through the illustration of the educational system. It is run by Western missionaries who choose which African to educate and how to use him for the greater good. The curriculum is Western and does not feature any local cultural aspects. The Western influences in *Americanah* are also present in the educational system, but Adichie focuses more on how Americans can only see cultural and historical aspects of society from their own perspectives and as being universal.

The novels portray themes regarding race, class, nationality, generational differences, gender, and how the different perceptions of these themes influence the creation of the characters' identities. Both novels depict the challenges of having a hybrid identity, by choosing two teenagers, of both genders, to illustrate how different vantage points of cultural norms and misrecognition can result in a crisis of identity. In *Americanah*, Dike's mother denies him knowledge regarding his

Nigerian background and of identifying himself as a black American: he is prevented from becoming a part of a 'we' and always sees himself as the 'other'. In *Nervous Conditions*, Nyasha, on the other hand, deals with the problems of being half African and half English in her mindset: being too African when in England and too English when in Africa. The conception of cultural identity differs between generations, and the novels delve into the consequences of these differences through the relationships between adults and teenagers, and how they struggle to understand each other. The parents' identities have been constructed in their home countries, and they find it difficult to relate to their children's struggles, hybridisation, and desire for something more.

The novels have different focus points. In *Americanah* the focus is on the different conceptions of being black based on historical and cultural experiences of their national background in Africa versus America. The different ways in which these intersect is important to the main theme of the novel. Adichie explores the different structures of society and the historical events that has shaped them: in Nigeria the society is structured around the concept of class, whereas in America everything is dependent on race. In *Nervous Conditions* the main focus delves into the social injustices towards women in the patriarchal society of Rhodesia. For these reasons gender differences are one of the main subjects explored in the novel. Dangarembga's protagonists are mostly subjugated women whose only chance for a better life is to become educated and break free from male oppression.

Even though both authors are African they come from two significantly different countries: Nigeria and Zimbabwe. The two countries have different histories, cultures and languages, and the two authors have very different ways of expressing themselves. In *Americanah* this is evident through Adichie's description of the living conditions in Nigeria versus in America, where her own experiences and thoughts regarding American culture shines through in the character Ifemelu's reflections and blog posts. In *Nervous Conditions* the setting is in a homestead where women are subjected to the men due to a patriarchal culture. In addition, there is a generational gap between the two authors, which also influences their themes and settings. Hence, through an intersectional analysis with a focus on cultural and historical aspects, the factors of race, gender, class, age, and nationality are perceived differently based on the authors' backgrounds.

Comparative aspects of the four novels

The authors of the four novels have all chosen settings for their stories which were familiar to them, whether it be from their childhood or from their adult life. This means that there have been different cultural and historical factors, which have influenced their writings individually creating four very different novels. It is interesting to observe how few similarities there are between the two Indian and the two African novels. Even though the two Indian novels take place in the same time period, their focus differs greatly due to their geographical settings. Desai's novel *The Inheritance of Loss* takes place in Northern India, while Roy's *The God of Small Things* takes place in Southern India. Therefore, even though the novels take place in the same country there is a distance of 2500 km between them, which means there is also a world of difference regarding the characters' cultural and historical points of view. The African novels also take place in two highly different countries, where the time period is essential to the creation of the novels. Adichie's novel *Americanah* takes place in modern Nigeria and the US in the 21st Century, while *Nervous Conditions* takes place in the late 20th Century.

Adichie, as the youngest author of the four, is mainly focused on looking towards the future for resolutions, instead of blaming colonisation for current situations in Africa. There are traces of colonisation and Western influences in Africa in form of the school system and material objects, but her main focus is primarily on how young generations of Africans need to evaluate what they want their futures to entail. In comparison, the other three authors are more focused on looking towards the past and judging it for creating the unfair structural hierarchies they have inherited.

The difference between the generations is also a prominent subject in the novels. The younger generations are attempting to break free from their parents and their cultural constraints, which at times can result in a severe disconnection between the two parties. This is especially evident in the three novels: *Americanah, The God of Small Things* and *Nervous Conditions*, where the teenagers' lack of cultural foundations results in 'crises of identity', which their parents find incomprehensible. However, in *The Inheritance of Loss,* Sai and her grandfather share a Westernisation that has shaped their identities, which creates an understanding between the two, but simultaneously creates a void between them and the rest of the Indians. All the novels portray how their characters look to the West for answers, and while the older generations conform to the answers given by the West, the younger generations do not. An example of this can be seen in the portrayal of Nyasha, in Dangarembga's novel, who is highly influenced by the West after living in England. She detests the

ramifications of colonialism on her people and how they have lost their history. At the same time, she believes in the Western cultural ideology of gender equality, and therefore refuses to conform to patriarchy, which creates a huge conflict between her and her father. Through an intersectional analysis with the focus on age, gender, cultural and historical perspectives, as well as power relations, it becomes clear how these different factors can be used to examine the generational divide between the characters. This is also evident when it comes to the authors and their different approaches to themes, since their cultural and historical backgrounds also interconnect in different ways due to their individual experiences. Hence, an intersectional frame can not only be used when analysing a novel, but also when trying to understand an author's underlying intentions.

When looking at our four authors it is evident that their work are social commentaries on the structural hierarchies they have encountered, whether in their own homeland or abroad. Dangarembga and Desai are critical towards the havoc the colonists have left behind and express how that has challenged their native people. However, they have different approaches to their criticism. Dangarembga addresses what it does to a people to lose their history and their cultural foundation, while her main critique is on the patriarchal oppression of women. Desai comments on the multiple challenges of a mixed society, where some of the inhabitants have been systematically misrecognised: first by the colonists and then by the Indian government. On the other hand, Roy critiques the caste system and the upholding of ancient myths that deprive a people of opportunities for change. Thus, even though both Desai and Roy are Indian, their social commentary is split into two different directions. When it comes to Adichie, since she is from another generation, her social commentary has another focus. Her main critique is directed towards the American society and how they consider their culture to be a universal truth: e.g. in the novel she showcases how the Americans expect everyone to know and understand their 'tribal' hierarchy, which determines the way you are treated primarily dependent on your skin colour.

Even though the social commentaries of the four novels are centred around different subjects, they still have one theme in common: gender roles. Especially Dangarembga is preoccupied with the oppression of women through a patriarchal constructed society, but the other authors also concern themselves with gender roles and how women should behave according to the cultural norms and values in their societies. In every novel there are female characters who are trying to either break free from these norms and values they are subjected to, or females who do things their own way to the dismay of others. Adichie's novel, as previously mentioned, differs from the others

due to the fact that it is a current novel dealing with contemporary multicultural questions of cultural identity in modern Nigeria and America. Her female characters are born after the insurgency of feminism and they have found a voice of independence. However, there are still traces of patriarchy in her illustrations of gender roles.

Through an intersectional analysis it becomes evident how in all four novels culture and history shape people's lives, their society and their cultural norms. Those in power, whether it be the government or the head of the family, create the structures of interrelations that affect people for generations. Social injustices, in many cases, become normalised through repetition. In the novels the discourses of race, gender, religion, nationality, and class all have their own hierarchical importance, depending on the authors' culture, focus, and underlying intentions with their social commentaries. Thus, it is necessary to analyse the relationality of the discourses and explore how they intersect to fully comprehend how they influence and shape the sequence of events in the novels.

An assessment of the intersections between theory and fiction

It became evident through the analysis of the four novels that the authors were writing with a purpose. They all have their own form of social commentary implemented in their stories, which they explore and illustrate in four different ways. These commentaries are influenced by factors such as the authors' nationalities, home countries, cultures, histories and generations. In the following assessment the comparative aspects from the analysis will be explored and there will be a focus on what has affected these four authors' writings and how their backgrounds and political involvements influence their thematic choices. There will also be an assessment of our chosen theories and how well they interconnect with the four novels and the authors' underlying intentions behind their work.

A common factor between the four writers is their social commentary on their home countries and the countries they have visited or lived in for an extended period of time. Even though their home countries are extremely different in their geographical placement e.g. India, Nigeria and Zimbabwe, they still have the same underlying elements in their commentaries. One of the factors all four authors address in their writings is the notion of gender roles and for three of them also the concept of patriarchy. Furthermore, they also have similar intentions behind the illustrations of

gender roles. Both Dangarembga and Adichie have expressed that their views of and portrayals of gender in their novels stem from a criticism of society and the values which have been accepted as the norm. Dangarembga credits her driving force as a female author back to her own childhood, where she as a young woman became aware of inequality between the genders:

> I'd been reading for years, I was in my twenties when I wrote it, and I had not encountered a girl like myself in literature. ... so I thought, well it was up to me, if there is a lack, if there is a gap, I am going to fill it. And I was also aware of the issues, I had encountered growing up, you know, with the brothers being favoured and this kind of thing, that I felt that it was high time that somebody did something for young girls. (Dangarembga 2015 00:08:28- 00:09:03)

The lack of representation and awareness of gender inequalities made Dangarembga decide to help future generations of girls to feel recognised through literature. Through her literature, she wanted females to imagine a world wherein the genders were equal and where both genders would be able to put their individual mark on the world.

This is one of the same reasons behind Adichie's work as a feminist. Even though the two, Dangarembga and Adichie, have significantly different geographical and generational backgrounds, they still address and emphasise the importance of equality between the genders in their writing. In Adichie's Ted talk from 2013 "We should all be feminists" she talks about Nigeria's future that she wants to experience and be a part of. She especially addresses the concept of gender and the preconceptions there are to the norms of being a boy versus being a girl, and how she believes in a different world: a world where boys and girls have an opportunity to choose for themselves without society's norms holding them back. Thus, what creates intersections in Adichie's and Dangarembga's writings are their childhood experiences of being young girls in cultures, where inequality between the genders have affected their lives and perspectives. For this reason, even though the four female authors come from four very different geographical places, they still share the same concern regarding gender roles and wish to change them.

Adichie is confident that these changes can be made and says that: "I'm also hopeful, because I believe deeply in the ability of human beings to make and remake themselves for the better (Adichie 2013b 00:10:38-00:10:46). One of Adichie's arguments for this change to be possible in a country such as Nigeria is that "cultures are constantly changing" (Adichie 2013b 00:27:13-

00:27:15) and even though some might perceive feminism as a Western concept, other cultures can and should, according to Adichie, begin to implement feministic views into their gender politics. Hence, Adichie and Appiah agree on the idea that cultures can change and that generations can and should keep the cultural aspects which are relevant to them. Both Appiah and Adichie are part of multicultural societies and they recognise that being stuck in the past hinders the creation of identity and its hybridity.

The social commentary Roy's novel centres around is the concept of the Indian caste system. Roy is a political activist, and she has not been afraid of criticising Indian authorities, elites, and even 'legends' such as Gandhi for preserving the caste system and profiting from it, quoting him saying that: "Caste represented the genius of Hindu society" (Roy 2014 00:18:30 – 00:18:35). Her focus on political subjects has transferred into her novel, *The God of Small Things*, where the main subject of social commentary was the caste system, as the analysis also showcased. Thus, in comparison to Adichie and Dangarembga, Roy's authorship has been influenced by her home country's concept of the caste system, which is present in Indian culture and which has shaped Indians hierarchical structures for generations. Roy's political writing over the years has produced essays, documentaries, and books mostly on the issues she feels plague her country such as: Hinduism, multinational capitalism, the war in Kashmir, and the 'Government's' agenda to take over the mineral rich lands of indigenous tribes of the Indian forests. In an interview with NDTV Roy said that all these talks she has had and the discussions were becoming layered in her and that she had not decided to write a book but that: "fiction visited me again" (Roy 2017 00:01:15 – 00:01:17). This shows that Roy writes her novels to unburden herself of the weight of the experiences and discussions that are layered in her. Therefore, her novels are written as political social commentaries, with the aim to spread awareness about the issues she is advocating for. It becomes obvious that Roy, as an activist and novelist, speaks for those who have been misrecognised and silenced by social injustices. When exploring Roy's authorship, it becomes apparent how her writing of e.g. gender is also influenced by religion, and especially Hinduism and the caste system, which was also evident throughout the analysis. This is yet another factor to consider in an intersectional analysis, where not only her gender, age, and nationality is important, but also the religious struggles which have plagued her home country.

When looking at Desai and her social commentary in *The Inheritance of Loss* it becomes evident how her family's experiences with diaspora, as well as the significance of geographical

settings, are essential to her themes and how she approaches them. As previously mentioned, Desai has lived in England, America and Kalimpong, and this is fundamental to what she has chosen to illustrate in her novel. Her portrayal of Biju's struggles of immigration into America in the 1980s are reflections on her own experiences of migration to the US and how difficult it could be for immigrants without financial security and without the prospect of education to create a good life in the US. In the same way that Biju was looking for a new life and had high hopes for the American Dream in the beginning, so did Desai. However, both came to realise that their Indian identity was not recognised in the US and that their hopes for America was not met: "I hoped for a much simpler dialogue, and to feel more simply about the whole process. It's a natural human desire, I suppose. You just want your contentment, a long time before you're willing to look at darker things" ("Kiran Desai: Daughter of the diaspora"). Thus, the troubles Biju goes through in the novel is a depiction of how difficult it can be to fit into the American society, when you do not come from a wealthy family and have the funds to become an American citizen. This struggle is not only influenced by Desai herself, but also by her grandfather's migration experience in England, where he did not have any financial security and had kept many of his Indian traits ("Kiran Desai: Daughter of the diaspora"). This shows that when Desai is writing her social commentary she is drawing on her own experiences with diaspora and the difficulties of assimilating into a new society: "I see so many parallels with my generation [and the novel] ... Going to America, because it's clear where the balance of power lies, wanting to join in and learning the accent, learning the right lines to say - trying to make up a version of yourself to fit the picture" ("Kiran Desai: Daughter of the diaspora"). In this sense, there is a parallel between Adichie's and Desai's novels, where the characters realise that their new society: America, is not able to or wants to recognise their cultural identities, which creates a form of repression of their identities and forms them into something that they are not. In the novels the characters have to travel back to their home countries to feel complete again, and this creates a sentiment of: 'there is no place like home'.

Desai also writes about historical events such as the conflict involving the Indian Gorkhas, since it took place in the area she once lived in in India. Therefore, when assessing Desai's writing through an intersectional frame, it is important to consider her experiences with India and diaspora when analysing e.g. gender and nationality, and how they are presented in correlation to the events of the novel. It also explains why Desai did not choose to focus on the caste system, as Roy did, since the caste system did not affect Desai in the same manner as it did Roy. The geographical

settings and experiences are important to their conceptions of religion and how they have chosen to illustrate them in their novels. Instead of the caste system, Desai has a focus on her family's experiences of immigration, which have influenced her writing greatly. Desai's novel belongs to the storytelling of the past, since her subject is centred around a historical event and the former migration of her grandparents and herself. She is exploring issues which might not be as prominent today, or issues which have changed due to new developments in India. Hence, Desai's social commentary is different from Roy's as it is more autobiographical and focuses on issues of the past, and not on contemporary issues. On the other hand, Adichie presents a social commentary, which is influenced by and centred around contemporary issues in modern Nigeria and America.

The generational gap between Adichie and the three other authors also means that Adichie's approach to the subject of gender roles is influenced and affected by the cultural and historical changes that e.g. the third wave of feminism has brought forth, whereas the other three novels are produced before or during the third wave. Therefore, Adichie's assessment and exploration of e.g. gender roles is an extension of an already changing discourse regarding gender, whereas the other three authors wrote in a time where the concept of patriarchy had not yet met the changes the third wave influenced. This is yet another intersectional aspect of the authors' authorship which has to be considered to fully understand why the patriarchy is more prominent in for example Dangarembga's novel than Adichie's. These historical aspects and the generational gap are also something which differentiate Adichie from the other three, since she is fundamentally part of another generation of young transnational intellectual writers.

Although Adichie is the odd one out, being of another generation, the three remaining authors are also part of a transnational intellectual group of people that are influenced by Western education and multiculturalism. Adichie, Dangarembga, and Desai have all lived and studied in Western countries and have experienced living in multicultural societies. Adichie and Desai chose to stay and live their lives in the US, while Dangarembga chose to move back to Zimbabwe to take part in the political and social changes in her country. However, Roy's education took place in India, and she has lived there her whole life, but she experienced Western culture, since the Indian educational system is based on a Western curriculum and Western values. All four authors work on a global scale, where they write, travel, and speak worldwide. They are influenced by the West, and while they are preoccupied with the issues of their home countries, they do so in relation to a Western context and Western values e.g. feminism, global exploitation and cultural identities. Thus, our

authors' work with cultural identities and cultural changes correlate with our cultural theorists and their theoretical work. Not only do the authors' characters experience the difficulties of diaspora, racism, and misrecognition due to multicultural influences, the authors themselves have also experienced the same things. Hence, our cultural theory cannot only be applied to the authors' novels, but also to the authors themselves.

Throughout the analysis it became evident how Taylor's theory regarding politics of recognition could be used to explore the creation of the four authors' characters. This form of recognition and the creation of identity happened through interactions and in dialogue with the people the characters surrounded themselves with and met in the novels. Some of the characters were faced with misrecognition at home, while others were not recognised by society, both in their home countries and abroad. The lack of recognition Taylor puts forth can result in devastating ramifications, both to the individual and to a group, and it can develop into a form of oppression and create a negative self-image. These negative consequences are present in all four novels in relation to e.g. Dike, Nyasha, Dalits, and the Gorkhas to mention a few. There are also many other intersectional clashes between races, cultures, and genders that do not recognise each other. In the novels the authors focus on creating an awareness of misrecognition and the societal structures which keep it in place. Their usage of extreme consequences such as a suicide attempt, anorexia, murder, and civil war showcase the severity of what misrecognition can result in, and through their social commentaries they criticise the issues they wish to change. Taylor's theory intertwines appropriately with the authors' social commentaries and the connection between Taylor's concept of misrecognition and the authors' exploration of cultural identities amalgamate effortlessly.

Appiah agrees with Taylor when it comes to the creation of cultural identity through dialogue, the importance of recognition, and that misrecognition can have devastating consequences. However, he does not support Taylor's belief that it might be necessary to implement juridical decisions in the effort to maintain specific cultural characteristics. He says that future generations will automatically continue the cultural specificities that they find relevant and useful. Consequently, legally binding cultures to certain behaviours or customs are damaging to future generations' autonomy. These aspects are evident in the novels, when looking at how the younger characters are battling to free themselves from norms that are oppressive and continue unequal social structures based on gender, class, or other sociocultural aspects. The novels use dialogue between the characters to exemplify the cultural clashes of the generations, and by reading the

novels the reader becomes a part of that dialogue. In this dialogue of information there are three dimensions at work: Firstly, the author's creative dimension: writing the novel and presenting the social commentary. Secondly, the characters enacting and reacting to social structures. And finally, the reader is reacting to the novel and its message. Thus, all three dimensions are part of a dialogical process that questions some aspects of culture, making the reader contemplate on future cultural alternatives and changes.

When looking at the novels' cultural settings it becomes apparent that it is primarily two of our chosen authors, Adichie and Desai, who deal with the modern multicultural society in the West. Appiah believes that the modern multicultural West does not fully recognise the cultural specificities of certain groups, e.g. blacks of different descends, homosexuals, and the handicapped to mention a few. They have been locked inside a stereotypical and often degrading identity and as a consequence have a difficult time of both being and being seen as their authentic selves. Desai and Adichie depict this problem through the experiences of Biju and Ifemelu, who automatically are placed into stereotypical categories when arriving to America. In relation to Biju's experiences in America, this categorisation happens through his skin colour and his nationality, where mostly white Americans discriminate against him due to these factors. However, when it comes to Ifemelu, she experiences a lack of cultural recognition e.g. in her relationship with Blaine. As showcased in the analysis, he expects her to understand how African Americans experience blackness based on their cultural and historical background, while Ifemelu, as a Nigerian, has an entirely different perception of being black and expects Blaine to understand her point of view. This implies that it is not only the multicultural West that does not recognise cultural specificities of certain groups, but also the misrecognised groups themselves that lack recognition of each other. It is possible to argue that lack of cultural recognition does not only take place in the multicultural West, but everywhere - both by majority and minority groups.

When it comes to multiculturalism, there is also the aspect of hybridity. Hall's paper discusses the Caribbean people's struggle with finding their cultural identity. The same is the case when it comes to some of the characters in the novels, especially Nyasha and Dike. The latter has some commonality with the Caribbean people, in that he does not know his past, since it is kept from him. Furthermore, Dike cannot speak his native language, Igbo, and although it is often used around him, it primarily has a negative connotation, since it is used in relation to punishment. Dike tries to find out where he comes from to become a whole person, a hybrid: a hybrid of two different cultures.

Thus, Dike is trying to achieve what Hall describes as a form of rediscovering of one's cultural identity to bring a feeling of 'oneness' to himself and become a part of a group, a feeling he has been denied by his mother. Likewise, Nyasha wants to embrace her hybridity, but is denied her Englishness by her father. Before she went to England she had known her culture and its language: Shona, but after she returned she had lost that knowledge. This created a rupture in her cultural identity that she misses and tries to reconstruct. Dike's and Nyasha's lack of native languages set them apart from their origin and prevents them in expressing themselves and relating to their native roots. As Taylor says, language is a part of 'the cultural identity toolbox', and lacking one of the tools, makes you unable to fully connect to your cultural identity. The parents are attempting to deny their children what they consider unwanted trades of hybridity: the Englishness of Nyasha and the African American blackness of Dike. Arguably, this could originate from the parents' different subjection to Western values. They grew up in their native countries and did not become as Westernised as their children while living abroad. The intersection of generational gaps in relation to cultural and historical experiences have affected their relationships both between parents and children, and between their conceptions of what their cultural identities entail. This shows that Hall's theory of hybridity can take many forms and it depends on many different factors, which means that people can experience different modes of hybridity, even though they might share the same spatiality. Thus, our three cultural theorists' theories can be used to explore the creation of cultural identity and its different shapes and forms.

Compared to our cultural theorists: Taylor, Appiah, and Hall, who have been used consistently throughout the analysis, the feminists used for this paper have been used sporadically when found relevant. As the main themes of the novels are about cultural identity, there has been a lesser need for the feminists. However, since they too are preoccupied with issues of: gender, culture, race, history, context, class, diaspora and spatiality, they have been important in each their own way to explore the underlying reasons behind the characters' actions. Our chosen authors are also preoccupied with the same themes and subjects as the feminists, since both are influenced by the changes that happened around the third wave of feminism. Even though the usability of the feminists has been sporadic in this paper, they have been relevant in the exploration of the abovementioned themes and issues.

One of Ang's focuses is on the importance of context and understanding how context can determine what some people might perceive as the norm compared to others. In *Americanah* the

preconceptions surrounding the notion of race becomes apparent in relation to Ifemelu and Blaine's relationship, where they have their own cultural and historical perception of what it means to be black. The two characters are unable to identify with each other's experiences and realities of blackness, which inevitably results in their breakup. Ang's theory proves relevant when trying to understand why people might see a certain situation differently depending on their own experiences, and why it is important to consider every aspect of every case or situation. Another of Ang's focuses is on the permanent dislocation of those who have been 'othered': they feel left out of the world. This was the case with Ammu and Velutha in *The God of Small Things*, who felt they had nothing left to lose in a world that did not value them or include them as equals. This led them to take a chance on love, Ammu with the children's father and later with Velutha, knowing that it probably would destroy them. Hence, Ang's theory is useful to show how the desperation of otherness can make people do things, which they normally would never dream of. Had Ammu still been a respectable woman of a higher caste, she would never have involved herself with Velutha, nor allowed her children to interact with him.

Ammu and Velutha also break what Avtar Brah calls the borders or dividing lines, which in this case are both physical and spatial. According to the caste system, Velutha is not allowed to share neither the space nor the human touch of a person from a higher cast. These social, cultural, and political borders are meant to keep the unwanted 'other' out, and Velutha violates this. The idea of borders comes from power relations, where keeping someone out was a part of an oppressive method, whether it be geographically or through social relations. Brah's perception of diaspora and its relation to identity was also relevant in *Americanah* when it comes to Dike, who had a different experience with diaspora compared to his mother. Brah, like Ang, argues that the intersections of factors such as: age, gender, and nationality are fundamental to individual's or group's different experiences, and thus their relation to diaspora will differ from one another.

When Mills talks about borders she is more preoccupied with the borders that are constituted by social relations, especially when it comes to gender and the colonial space. Her theory became relevant in *The God of Small Things* where there is a spatial difference between genders. This is evident when Chacko, as a male, has the right to inherit his mother's factory after his father's death, although the mother was still alive. This shows that the spatial difference is not only preserved to the privacy of the family life, but is also expressed through the law, a law written by the colonists. Ammu's different lifestyles and behaviour in Kerala and in Assam can also be traced to the

different spatiality of social relations. Different places have different rules and norms that are constructed by the social relations of that place, which descend from the cultural, historical, political, and religious customs of that place. Hence, Ammu, as a woman, has different opportunities to express herself, according to where she lives and whom she associates with. Furthermore, the importance of contextualisation and the consideration of historical and cultural influences are also present in Mills' theory. In the novel *The Inheritance of Loss* Desai creates a detailed illustration of the conflict between the Gorkhas and the rest of the Indian people, which gives the reader a contextualised insight into the characters' actions and reactions. Without this contextualisation the reader would find it difficult to understand why the Nepali-Indians were agitated, and why this influenced the relationship between Sai and Gyan. This supports Mills' argument that the relationship between dominant and submissive roles, e.g. between genders, and the intersections which create them can only be understood correctly through a contextualised analysis.

Bell hooks talks about the oppositional gaze and its power. When a person is denied the possibility to return the gaze he or she is demoted to subjectivity by the other. This is a part of what hooks calls 'the strategies of domination'. In *The God of Small Things* this strategy is evident in the treatment of the untouchables, and especially in the way they were treated in Mammachi's and Vellya's time, where untouchables had to crawl backwards with a broom to wipe their footprints away so the higher castes would not be tainted by them. The Indian strategies of domination resemble those of the white Americans against the black slaves, and therefore hooks can be used to further an understanding of the dominative methods used in India and the devastating effects they have on the people they are used on. In the novel Vellya is so used to the subjectivity that he has internalised it and consequently he cannot see any other possibility than to tell 'his masters' about the fatal crime of Velutha. Hooks' theory regarding the importance of the gaze was also relevant in relation to Ifemelu's experience with the word 'nigger' in *Americanah*. As hooks explained, black women have been objected to discrimination through one-dimensional characters in films, who often were portrayed as the 'other'. The usage of nigger could be an example of this otherness, which was created by white filmmakers, when describing black women as angry and racially different from the norm: white people. Thus, the way in which the word 'nigger' is explored in Adichie's novel showcases how young African American women, as well as other university students, perceive the word to be negative and racist, due to the historical contexts the word often

has been used in. However, since Ifemelu and her fellow non-American black student do not have the same associations with the word, they are able to distance themselves from it and use it when they find it historically appropriate. In this example, Ifemelu's and the African Americans' reactions can only be fully understood, when the reactions are put into a cultural and historical context and the different experiences the two have with the concept of race. Therefore, regarding the word 'nigger' it is essential to consider hooks' historical explanation of black women's discrimination through film, but also the importance of Mills' focus on contextualisation.

Contextualisation is also important in relation to Narayan's theory about situated knowledges, since they are situated within the partial perspectives of each person. Narayan explains how nobody can have a full knowledge of his or her society, and instead only knows it from his or her own limited access to it. This explains why Tambu and Nyasha in *Nervous Conditions* although being of: the same age, from the same family, and belonging to the same homestead, have different knowledges about their country and their culture. Their experiences of the same things affect them differently. The wedding between Jeremiah and MaShingayi is an example of this, where Nyasha thinks it is a sweet and funny little event, while Tambu finds it a grotesque ridicule of her parents and their culture. Another example of difference in situated knowledge is MaShingayi and Maiguru. While Maiguru is an educated woman who has been abroad, both to South Africa and England, MaShingayi is uneducated and only knows the homestead. Their views on things could not be more different, although their background is similar. The awareness of the character's limited knowledge is important when analysing why and how they react differently to things. For these reasons, Narayan's theory proved fruitful in relation to decoding the aforementioned relationships.

The feminists' and cultural identity theorists' inputs combined create a symbiosis of analytical tools useful to this paper. The theorists' inputs have emerged out of a preoccupation with social opposites and social hierarchies and their relation to the creation of identity. This emergence occurred in connection to a new contemporary political and sociological concern with identity politics, which largely grew out of the third wave feminists' work with identity politics and power structures. As a result of the third wave, the theory of intersectionality began to spread and became more prominent both in academia and in social politics. This paper has found Collins and Bilge's 6 core ideas of intersectionality: Social inequality, power, relationality, social context, social justice, and complexity, to be a beneficial tool when dealing with cultural identity and social structures in the novels. The contemporary method of analysis through a framework of intersectionality brings

forth a broader and a more complex analysis, where there is a focus on how different aspects of power, politics, history and culture affect both each other and the novels' characters. Hence, intersectionality does not only put factors in individual boxes, but also creates an interconnection between the boxes and the factors within them.

Intersectionality has not only occurred between the novels' characters, but also between the authors themselves and their different themes and points of view. Even though all four authors arrive from decolonised countries, their individual treatment of colonialism and its prominence throughout their novels are different. While Desai and Dangarembga are focused on colonialism and its aftermath, Roy is less so. Desai's focus on the aftermath of colonialism is understandable when looking at the historical context it is written in. She herself experienced the conflict depicted in her novel, and her social commentary on the subject is influenced by her own experience. Dangarembga's focus on colonialism also stems from her own experiences, since she grew up in a Rhodesia governed by a minority of whites, with apartheid and other discriminatory oppressive methods of dominance. Roy's focus is mainly on the caste system; but she also blames the West for exploiting the Indian society both during colonisation and currently through global economic forces. All three authors blame the white man and the Western culture for the ruptures and social changes in their countries. This correlates well with older postcolonial authors, who were adamant on blaming the white man for almost everything that had gone wrong in their society. However, Adichie has another point of view and does not concern herself much with colonialism or blaming the white in her novel *Americanah*. Instead, she looks at how coloured people act among one another, and how they also have discriminatory and racist tendencies towards each other. This is understandable when looking at her age and her background: she is a generation younger than the rest of our authors and has not experienced colonialism first hand. Her focus is on current matters such as racial issues in the US, cultural identity, and the growing Westernisation of Nigeria. This change of focus from colonialism and blaming the white man is a tendency amongst new young transnational global authors, such as Adichie. Due to the generational gap between the authors and the publication dates of the novels, it is obvious that there is going to be a difference of focus. In this case the change can partly be traced back to the emergence of third wave feminism and multiculturalism, and how they have influenced literature and academia. Thus, even though all four authors come from decolonised countries and arguably are producing postcolonial literature, they have different vantage points and their approaches to colonial issues and their ramifications differ

greatly. Hence, the intersections of the authors' individual experiences and backgrounds affect them and their subjects of choice.

We have found intersectionality to be a useful tool in our work regarding cultural identity in the four chosen novels. It has created a broader perspective and brought to light the complexity of cultural identity and social structures, which we argue would not have been possible to achieve without the interplay and relationality of our entire theoretical body. Through the paper's intersectional framework, we have been able to examine the layers of power institutions and social politics, and how they interconnect with the characters' cultural identities as well as the authors'. We have also been able to discover and explore the three dimensions of dialogue: text production, interrelations of characters, and reader's response, which we might have overlooked if not for the intersectional angle. Consequently, intersectionality has broadened our field of analysis and enabled us to analyse the complexity involved with the creation of cultural identities.

Conclusion

Throughout this paper it has become apparent how numerous different factors such as race, gender, class, nationality, age, religion, culture, social and historical context intersect and influence the creation of cultural identity, both in relation to this paper's chosen authors and the characters of the novels. We have applied the theories of cultural identity and feminist postcolonial theory to our novels, and through an intersectional framing we have gained a greater insight into the aspects that shape and reshape cultural identities. Regarding cultural identity, we have had a focus on Taylor's theory of misrecognition and the authentic self and the negative ramifications misrecognition can result in. The development of identity through dialogue is also an important aspect of both Taylor's and Appiah's theories, which we have chosen to incorporate into our analysis. We have also used Appiah's theory of generational differences to examine why some generations choose to rebel against the norms and why some choose to continue their cultural life scripts. In addition, we have used Hall's theory of hybridity and positioning of cultural identity to explore the difficulties of a multicultural background, both within our novels and in relation to our authors.

Feminist postcolonial theory has been applied where it was found relevant to this paper. Ang was used to examine different perceptions of race based on social and historical backgrounds and contexts, and the concept of permanent dislocation. Brah's theory was used to delve into the

problematics of diaspora, borders, and the 'homing' desire. She was also used to examine the generational differences and their different perspectives on diaspora and culture. Mills's theory was used to examine: gender, colonial space, spatiality, and how different social structures perceive discourses' relationality differently based on cultural and historical context. Hooks' theory of strategies of dominance and the power of the gaze have been applied to explore the different tools of oppression and the one-dimensional portrayal of coloured women. Furthermore, Narayan's theory of multiplex identities and hybridity have been applied to showcase the problematics of multicultural backgrounds.

All of these theories have been applied inside an intersectional framework, where we have focused on Collins and Bilge's 6 core ideas: social inequality, power, relationality, social context, social justice and complexity. This framework has helped to bring forth the problematics of social injustices and power relations in our novels, and how the intersection of the 6 core ideas have had an influence on the creations of the protagonists' cultural identities. Through the use of an intersectional frame it becomes evident how these different intersections affect one another, and how important it is not to analyse e.g. race and gender separately, but instead look at how they interconnect and influence each other.

When we applied the theoretical approaches to our paper, we were able to examine and explore the intersections of the previously mentioned factors. This was done through a comparative analysis of all four novels. First, we compared the two Indian novels to each other, and then we did the same with the two African novels. Lastly, we compared all four novels to detect similarities and differences between them, to explore how they used the different factors of e.g. race, gender, age, religion, nationality, class, culture, social and historical context. In the analysis of the Indian novels we were able to delve into the importance of historical and cultural contexts in relation to people's actions and reactions, and why certain factors within these contexts were more significant than others. This was for example evident in connection to the concept of colonialism, where Desai and Roy depicted the influences of the British rule differently in their novels, as well as the negative ramifications it had on the country. Likewise, both authors differ in their portrayals of gender roles, religion, class, nationality, age, and race due to their individual experiences and world views. The analysis of the African novels showed how geographical settings and generational dispositions intersected and created different illustrations of Western influences in African countries and their culture. Both novels were focused on the problematics of hybridity and multicultural identities

through different discourses and their intersections of race, gender, age and nationality. Again, the importance of historical and cultural context proved relevant to the intersectional analysis of the novels, due to their influence on both the characters of the novels and their authors. For this reason, the intersectional analysis proved that even though all four authors come from decolonised countries, their focuses in the novels differ greatly due to a number of intersecting factors such as: age, historical and cultural context, nationality, and geographical settings. Although our authors are focused on the same issues e.g. gender roles and cultural identity, their individual experiences and world views affect their approaches differently. While three of the authors are looking towards the past and searching for someone to blame, Adichie is looking towards the future searching for new solutions to Nigeria's problems. Thus, the generational differences are visible through the authors' viewpoints and social commentaries. Through their commentaries they all focus on similar culturally created discourses, but they arrange the hierarchical structures of these discourses differently depending on their own experiences and the significance they apply to them.

Through our assessment of intersections between theory and fiction it became apparent that the theories used in this paper proved useful when analysing the connections between the creation of cultural identity and the numerous factors it involves. It became evident that it was important to consider the intersections of factors such as class, gender, nationality, race, religion, age, culture, and social and historical context when analysing fiction, as well as in relation to the authors' backgrounds and the underlying intentions behind their work. Furthermore, we looked at the authors' focus on postcolonialism, due to their categorisation as postcolonial writers. This showed us that while three of the authors looked towards the past to look for someone to blame, one of the authors: Adichie, looked towards the future for solutions to the current problems of Nigeria. Her viewpoint correlates with the viewpoints of other new globalised writers from decolonised countries, which shows that postcolonial writings are changing and shifting their attitudes: instead of looking back they are looking forward. Hence, by using an intersectional framing to analyse both the novels and their authors' underlying intentions, we have showcased the interconnections between the two, and discovered that there is more than one single story to be told about a postcolonial people.

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