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Home(land) or 'Motherland': Translational Identities in Andrea Levy's *Fruit of the Lemon*

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Identity! Sometimes it makes my head hurt—sometimes my heart.
So what am I? Where do I fit into Britain, 2000 and beyond?

—Andrea Levy, “This is My England”

The legacy of the British Empire has been highly visible since the last decade of the twentieth century. The people from former British colonies, Blacks and Asians from the West Indies, West and East Africa, South Asia, Hong Kong and elsewhere, brought “global civilization” to the “ever-insular” British (Mackenzie 34), along with multiculturalism and a new concept of Britishness. Multiculturalism for Bhabha is a “portmanteau” term for anything from minority discourse to postcolonial critique, from gay and lesbian studies to Chicano fiction, and it has become the most charged sign for scattered social contingencies that characterize the contemporary “Kulturkritik” (“Culture’s In-Between” 55). From the British point of view, Kathleen Paul argues that while disagreement continues about the future of Britishness, a common point is the assumption that Britishness was real in the past; that at least until the advent of devolution, there was a singular and universal British national identity which covered all inhabitants, not only of the United Kingdom, but of the whole British Empire (180). However, in successive legislative acts UK policymakers felt able to reveal gradually their “narrow understanding” of what constituted “true” Britishness and in so doing conveyed an implicit recognition of the end of empire (197). Britain is still struggling to come to terms with its imperial past and is trying to come to terms with the challenges presented by a post-imperial multi-racial society. Within this highly complex social structure, the novel has proved to be a fruitful site for investigating hybridized cultural forms of Britishness. According to Dominic Head, the migrant identities that are fictionalized in post-war writing are often embattled and vulnerable, and the evocation of vulnerability has frequently to do with the “inhospitable” nature of British and especially English society, which is often portrayed as “unsympathetic” to the goals of an “interactive multiculturalism” (156).

In *Narratives for a New Belonging*, Roger Bromley cites Lawrence Ferlinghetti’s *A Coney Island of the Mind*, “Home is the place one starts from” (Bromley 133); home is a point of departure.¹ Home is also at the center of Andrea Levy’s third novel *Fruit of the Lemon* (1999). Levy was born in London of Jamaican parents; in an identical situation that she creates for her first-person narrator Faith. Directing the focus of her fiction on England and Jamaica, Levy depicts the struggle of a Jamaican-British girl, Faith Jackson, to achieve a unified identity. Born in Britain as the daughter of black parents, the ambivalence created by her alterity is duplicated by racial and gender discrimination. Her color and background are labeled by the society; accordingly, Faith fights both racism and her parents’ gender discrimination. She belongs neither to her ancestral homeland, Jamaica, nor to England, the legendary “Motherland” of her ex-colonies. The hybridity created by these circumstances is resolved by Faith’s journey to Jamaica. Hence, this essay aims to explore the significance of places in identity formation, and the

function of homeland and motherland for the translated hybrid identities in Levy's *Fruit of the Lemon*.

The opening section of Levy's fiction outlines the journey of Faith's parents to England, the hardship they have to confront, the birth of their children Carl and Faith and the purchase of their first house, at which point they ironically exclaim: "We finally arrive home" (*Fruit of the Lemon* 11). Levy embodies the "Windrush generation" of West Indian immigrants in the late 1940s and 1950s, named after the *Empire Windrush*, which docked at Tilbury in 1948. The African-Caribbean and South Asian presence is the result of the post-war migrations when Britain's labor shortages were met by Jamaican and Trinidadian bus drivers, building laborers, hospital workers and nurses (Catherine Hall 27). Immigrants from the West Indies viewed England not merely as a land of opportunity, but also as a kind of home, a mother country whose history culture and literature were familiar to them from their school textbooks. At close range, however, things looked very different and the experience of disillusionment is artfully rendered in much fiction (Head, "Zadie" 109). Levy portrays Faith's parents Mildred and Wade as having the typical vocational background; the mother is a nurse and the father, a building laborer. For migrant Jamaicans like Faith's parents, Jamaica is their homeland and where they truly belong; their arrival in England is explained by their desire to earn money for a better living. The idea of England as a motherland is maintained by the fact that the British population is shaped by imperial history; the irony in England's welcoming of immigrants and their naïve faith in the Motherland is narrated in *Fruit of the Lemon* as follows:

The ship finally docked at West India dock on Guy Fawkes' night. As the ship pulled into its berth, Mildred and Wade heard the pop and whistle of crackers and saw fireworks lighting up the sky. Mum explained, 'At first we didn't know what it was for. In Jamaica you only get fireworks at Christmas. Your dad thought it might have been a welcome for us, having come so far and England needing us. But I didn't think he could be right. And he wasn't.' (8)

Sharing a common destiny with other immigrants, Faith's parents strive under terrible conditions until they start earning enough money to live decently. Bromley argues that for many families from the Caribbean entering Britain when British identity was still wrapped up in the concept of empire and "imperial destiny," poverty, unemployment, over-crowding, separation and racist violence were widely shared (133). The boxes they always keep ready for moving is an explicit metaphor of the parents' immigrant selves; it reflects the paradoxical situation that while they are ready to go back 'home,' they expect their children to settle down in England. The parents' unwillingness to reveal their own disillusionment to their children and especially to Faith, subsequently results in Faith's identity crisis, and yet, Wade remarks: "[t]hose days are best forgotten, Faith. Best forgotten" (10). Likewise, Levy concentrates more on the aftermath, the second generation, rather than the hardship of their parents, except in the introductory part of the novel.

As for the concept of “returning home,” Nasta asserts that the definition of ‘home’ has always been challenging for diasporic subjects who faced various difficulties during the process of defining what they could consider as their “home:”

[t]he voicing of *home truths* initially suggests an oppositional process, a means of writing a counter-narrative to the dominant or a process of cultural retrieval, or reclamation. Yet, often, home truths are also those ‘truths’ which are the most painful to accept because they come from within, from a knowledge gained by a great degree of intimacy, not necessarily as stranger but as friend. In addition, they are frequently seen to be articulated from a perspective which makes alien that which was once acceptable, that refurnishes and reconfigures the rooms, so to speak, of the master’s house and enacts a symbolic territorialization that is a way of moving forward rather than looking back. (Nasta 5)

Thus not only do postcolonial writers of the diaspora feel the need to reinvent and rewrite home, but they also want to come to terms with an exile from what they considered as their home. The experience of translation from the former colonies render the boundaries between “home” and “abroad” more difficult to define: “not only is the notion of ‘home’ increasingly mobile, enacting a deterritorialization that . . . can be both ‘a blessing and a curse’, but is also perhaps an illusory and fictional place constructed through the myths and fragments of the migrant imagination” (Nasta 133). Therefore, she concludes: “[t]he literary spaces of the diasporic imagery will therefore always remain contested ones because, with its current and contemporary focus on dislocated histories and the crossing of borders” (Nasta 136).

Different from their parents’ migrant experience, for the multicultural children in Britain, racist persecution is basically initiated at the school environment. Levy does not supply any clues about the racism Faith’s brother Carl experiences, and this leads the reader to observe a propensity to discriminate against women rather than men. As Levy’s text reveals, the “bully boys” at the primary school Faith goes to, make fun of her by referring to something she has no idea about: “Your mum and dad came on a banana boat” (3). Ironically, Faith depicts them similarly by observing their color difference: “[t]he boys with unruly hair, short trousers and dimpled knees that went bright red in the cold” (3). Faith’s family circle consists of her mother Mildred, her father Wade and her elder brother Carl; consequently, with this very limited circle Faith can only rely on her parents for her cultural background. However, as mentioned above, the parents not only do not talk about the discrimination they confronted, they never expose details about their Caribbean homeland to their children either, except for some minimal information, hoping that their children will adjust as “true” British to their motherland.

Faith becomes more color-conscious by the time she completes her art education. She is offered a job at her degree show; yet according to her tutor, “it was something to do with [Faith’s] being black and everyone else on the course being white” (31). This is unequivocally emphasized by Olivia who offers her the job: “Your work has an ethnicity which shines

through... A sort of African or South American feel which is obviously part of you. Don't you find that exciting, Faith?" (31). Ignorant of her true background, Faith points out: "As I was born and bred in Haringey I could only suppose that I had some sort of collective unconscious that was coming through from my slave ancestry" (31). Thus, racism in Levy's fiction is positioned in a dichotomy; on the one hand, the society emphasizes her blackness, whether positively or negatively, and on the other hand, Faith tries to disregard being "different." Faith's hybrid identity is equally enforced by her parents; though they emphatically deny racial discrimination, they try to convince her to keep close to her "own kind." Faith principally complains about being oppressed by her family rather than by her society:

I had lived at home all through my art college life. The grant authority had ummed and ahed for months before they decided my parents didn't live far enough away from the college to warrant them giving me independent status. And for four years I had had to juggle late-night parties, sit-ins and randy boyfriends, with 1940s Caribbean strictures. (16)

Consequently, the first part of the novel which is set in England, is mostly taken up with Faith's leaving art college, leaving the family home, sharing a flat with three white friends, and trying to come to terms with her identity in a hybrid, syncretic culture. Faith works in the costume department of BBC Television Centre and although she is conscious that she is exploited for her token ethnicity, the novel is primarily concerned with coming to terms with her individual sense of identity rather than the wider social and political contexts of racism and gender discrimination.

What is particularly interesting in Levy's fiction is the way she constructs the binary opposition of Faith's "black" identity and her "British" identity; these two identities conflict primarily because of the society's inability or unwillingness to recognize the black girl's right to be treated like any other British-born citizen, irrespective of race and color. Faith's identity crisis is further accentuated by the attitude of her archetypal first-generation immigrant parents, who consider her British and therefore expect her to have the necessary social attributes, advantages and opportunities that any "white" British-born citizen presumably enjoys. The sense of hope and optimism articulated by Faith's parents is, of course, an archetypal motif within the immigrant genre, though interestingly it is counterbalanced by Faith's elder brother Carl who chides Faith about her "Anglicized" lifestyle, and her futile attempts at trying to be like the English. This underscores the fact that second generation young black people are not accepted as British, despite the fact that they are born and raised in Britain. Commenting on the films that follow the same conceptual line, Stuart Hall observes that, "[w]hat this brings into play is the recognition of the immense diversity and differentiation of the historical and cultural experience of black subjects," terminating the notion of the "innocent black subject" (28). Thus, "Black Britishness" represents a set of relations which are more subtle and complex in their construction.

Faith's "white" housemates Mick, Marion and Simon do not treat her differently and the text does not hint at any particular reason why. Yet, her childhood friend Marion's family, including the father, mother, and two young sisters, demean blacks in the curious way that the English have; Marion's family treats Faith as one of family, while exposing their hatred towards all the other blacks and explicitly using derogatory terms in Faith's presence. When Faith declares that she is also black, Marion's father succinctly states that she is "different." Marion tries to denounce this paradox by declaring that this phenomenon is a "cultural thing" (93).

On the other hand, Faith's parents, in order to protect her, also oppress her by trying to persuade her to accept a somewhat arranged marriage with Wade's Jamaican employee, Noel. Her brother Carl, who never seems to have any trouble with his family or English society, intends to marry a black girl, Ruth, setting an example for her from the parent's point of view. Carl introduces her to Ruth saying: "My sister . . . lives in a house full of white people. She doesn't really like black people" (142-43). Faith does not object to this: "I must have looked close to tears, I couldn't think of a word to say;" so before parting Ruth says: "Perhaps you need to spend some more time among your own people" (143).

Faith's propensity to believe that white people around her, especially her housemates, are accepting of her difference, gradually comes to a climax after sporadic fights with racism over her job promotion, or people she randomly meets with, shattering her chosen lifestyle. During a visit, it is Simon's mother who makes her realize the absence of her family background by her inability to answer simple questions such as, "'Do you have a big family in Jamaica?' . . . 'Are your grandparents still alive?' . . . 'Do you have a lot of aunts and uncles?'" (132). Faith replies, "'I'm not sure' . . . 'I don't know' . . . 'I think so'" (132). Yet, she unequivocally resists acknowledging her ancestry since her denial of family denotes her refusal to recognize her alterity. Only after witnessing a brutal racial assault on a black woman, and hearing the view points of her housemates, is Faith coerced into acknowledging her "difference" although Simon heroically assists the woman, back home they start joking about it. Disillusioned, Faith leaves the house in anger and runs to her parents for shelter. Since her shock at finding herself different is the result of the accumulation of many incidents of self denial, the outcome is predictable: Carl's girlfriend Ruth who tries to push the whole Jackson family into recognizing their "Blackness" and acting against racism, appears with her "white" family at Faith's parents' house. The mother of the radical black feminist Ruth is white because Ruth is the offspring of an affair between her English mother and a student from Guyana; she has two white half brothers and a white stepfather. This revelation intensifies Faith's agony at a point when she thinks that Ruth is justified in her hatred of white people. Faith finally has to confront the fact that she is betrayed by friendly white people, and even by Ruth's family. Thus the self-denial of her blackness reaches a climax; she goes back to the house she shares with her friends and does not leave her room for days. Conversely now, all she sees is "[a] black girl lying in bed. I covered the mirror with a bath towel. I didn't want to be black anymore. I just wanted to live. The other mirror in the room I covered with a tee-shirt. *Voilà!* I was no longer black" (160).

Racism is a reality that forced a transformation of identity on most colored people in Britain. Levy handles the topic with some degree of humor and optimism, focusing more on Faith's desperate yearning to be considered white among the English, by denying her Jamaican background and her hybridity. Krishan Kumar, in *The Making of British Identity*, claims that for many black and Asian citizens of Britain, both the principles of liberalism and those of multiculturalism remain aspirations rather than realities. In 2000, the Runnymede Trust, "an independent think-tank devoted to the cause of promoting racial justice in Britain," published the report of its Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain (256). Past research had shown that while it was common for blacks and Asians to call themselves "British" as well as "black," "Asian," "Muslim," etc., they resisted an identification with "English" (Kumar 256-257). As a result of their own research, the Commission agreed that the concept of Englishness often seems inappropriate to Asians, African-Caribbeans and Africans, "since to be English, as the term is in practice used, is to be white," but "in a bold . . . move" they rejected Britishness as well as also "racially tainted:"

Britishness, as much as Englishness, has systematic, largely unspoken, racial connotations. Whiteness nowhere features as an explicit condition of being British, but it is widely understood that Englishness, and therefore by extension Britishness, is racially coded. "There ain't no black in the Union Jack" [Paul Gilroy's book title (1987)], it has been said. Race is deeply entwined with political culture and with the idea of nation. (*Parekh Report* 38 qtd. in Kumar 258)

However, Kumar maintains that in the case of the summer riots of 2001, two years after Levy's *Fruit of the Lemon* was first published, it was Asian Muslims, "not, say, Asian Indians or Asians in general," who felt that the "dominant white culture had singled them out for particular hostility" (259). Thus Kumar concludes, far from groups interacting, learning from each other, being mutually shaped by each other's influence, they seemed to be in the presence of "even greater estrangement and fragmentation" than was previously thought (259). Levy appears to subscribe to this notion of fragmentation, by choosing to isolate her protagonist from the other blacks, so that the dichotomy seems to exist solely between the Jamaican and the English.

Faith's estrangement from herself lasts for days until Faith's parents convince her to go to Jamaica to visit her aunt Coral. Not quite realizing the source of her trouble, or perhaps resisting unconsciously, Faith refuses to go, saying: "I don't want to go to Jamaica. It's too far. What's wrong with Spain or somewhere?" (162). Her parents, ironically, have never been back, either. Considering the silence of the past and Jamaica as an absence, Faith is compelled to interrogate her mother's simple and seemingly uncomplicated utterance: "Child, everyone should know where they come from" (162). This precipitates the second half of the narrative in which Faith "returns" to a place from which she has not come. It is significant to note here that according to Bromley, the use of "child" in that sentence is not accidental, even if it is a familiar/familial usage since Faith's arrival in Jamaica is a prelude to another shifting intersection between a

different space and different body (136), which is revealed in the concluding paragraphs of the novel.

Faith is compelled to go to her ancestral home. Yet, Brah writes that the question of defining the meaning of "home" in diaspora is not confined to the colonial/imperialist past. Rather, "home" is subject to various interpretations as an aspect of particular relevance in the present-day context:

[o]n the one hand, 'home' is a mythic place to desire in the diasporic imagination. In this sense it is a place of no return, even if it is possible to visit the geographical territory that is seen as the place of 'origin'. On the other hand, home is also the lived experience of locality . . . In other words, the varying experience of the pains and pleasures, the terrors and contentments, or the highs and humdrum of everyday lived culture that marks how, for example, a cold winter night might be differently experienced sitting by a crackling fireside in a mansion as compared with standing huddled around a makeshift fire on the streets of nineteenth-century England . . . The question of home, therefore, is intrinsically linked with the way in which processes of inclusion or exclusion operate and are subjectively experienced under given circumstances. (192)

Furthermore, diasporas are places of long-term "community formations," even if some households or members move on elsewhere. The word *diaspora* often invokes "the imagery of the traumas of separation and dislocation, and this is certainly a very important aspect of the migratory experience. But diasporas are also potentially the sites of hope and new beginnings" (Brah 193). This aspect of diaspora reveals the dynamic nature of identity since it can never be represented as fixed or pre-given but always in process. On the other hand, the ambivalence created by hyphenated identities in British society has also become the starting point of most fiction particularly by the writers of dual backgrounds, whether they are the postcolonial writers in diaspora or the multicultural British. About the former; arguing for the works of the British-Indian writers who write about India in diaspora, Salman Rushdie states that:

(The word 'translation' comes, etymologically, from the Latin for 'bearing across'. Having been borne across the world, we are translated men. It is normally supposed that something always gets lost in translation; I cling, obstinately, to the notion that something can also be gained.) (229)

Elaborating on 'translation,' Rob Pope also suggests that the "nature of translation" is, in its broadest sense, "an activity of transformation: between languages and/as cultures" (137). Since the new concept of Britishness involves 'transformed' identities constructed by diverse cultural backgrounds, British identity has also become an intriguing concept that scholars of British cultural studies are trying to define in recent years.

The second part of Levy's novel, which is set in Jamaica, reveals the dominant British side of her hyphenated identity: away from Britain, Faith's first impression of Jamaicans is ironically equal to that of a colonizer:

I was halfway through the lounge making my way to the Jamaican Airlines check in when I saw them. Shabby-looking people. Shabby-looking black people, with men dressed in baggy trousers held up at the waist with belts . . . Women with huge bottoms in tight-fitting skirts with no tights and sandals on their feet . . . There were only about twenty of them but they looked so out of place in the plush setting of an American airport. They looked too poor to fly. (166)

When Faith lands in Jamaica's Kingston airport, it is black faces that she notices initially: "The large arrival lounge was packed with black faces. Everywhere I turned—black faces. Black faces of people in uniforms. Black faces waiting for luggage. Black faces behind counters" (168). Faith explains her feelings as "culture shock" while the term itself is ironically identified with Englishness: "I felt out of place—everything was a little familiar but not quite. Like a dream. Culture shock is how the feeling is described. A name made up by someone with a stiff upper lip who wanted to deny the feelings of panic and terror" (169).

Faith finally meets her Aunt Coral and cousin Vincent who belong to the Jamaican side of her family, yet, the text reveals that the disparity between the old and new generation of Jamaicans is explicit in their views of "decolonization." Aunt Coral represents the view of Jamaicans who are proud of the way they were, while her cousin Vincent and his wife Gloria represent the syncreticity of the new generation. The young couple is critical of shortcomings in the application of the Western systems such as the traffic and telephones, and they are keen on teaching perfect English language and manners to their children. Levy neutrally represents the debates which Ashcroft (et al) summarized as follows:

Some of the most vigorous debates in post-colonial societies have centered on exactly what . . . 'decolonization' implies and how it should be achieved. Some critics have stressed the need vigorously to recuperate pre-colonial languages and cultures. For the most resolute of these critics, colonization is only a passing historical feature which can be left behind entirely when 'full independence' of culture and political organization is achieved (Ngugi 1986). Others have argued that not only is this impossible but that cultural syncreticity is a valuable as well as an inescapable and characteristic feature of all post-colonial societies and indeed is the source of their peculiar strength (Williams 1969). (Ashcroft et al 29)

On the other hand, Faith retains her prejudice about Jamaica for some time; when she arrives in her aunt's modern house she declares: "I don't know what I was expecting but somewhere in my mind was an image of a mud hut with a pointy stick roof and dirt floors" (180). The idea of "mud huts" coincides with the image of the immigrants from the other side of the globe: India. Hanif

Kureishi in his essay "The Rainbow Sign" narrates confronting a similar prejudice at school: "When I was nine or ten a teacher purposefully placed some pictures of Indian peasants in mud huts in front of me and said to the class: Hanif comes from India" (73). However, when Faith overcomes colonizer-induced prejudice about her aunt's house, she confesses to herself that "[i]t reminded me of home" (180), paradoxically adding: "[a]ll the familiarities made everything more strange" (181), because it is "originally" her home.

The real Jamaica, however, where "they come from," is simply not available to Faith; there should be the voices and visions of others infused to her. For that reason, Levy chooses to narrate the Jamaican part of her novel not only by Faith, but polyvocally by other characters, especially by Aunt Coral, as well as cousin Vincent, or her aunt's friend. Consequently, different voices narrate the stories of Faith's family members reaching back many generations. Coral's becoming a secondary narrator likewise helps in making the spaces of Jamaica readable for Faith, as the layers of family history unfold, intersect and crossover. This act of conveying ancestral history is important; the sociologist Connerton argues that the phenomenon of learning about the past is the crucial element in social memory: "all beginnings contain an element of recollection," so it is impossible to make a new beginning without the past recollection because then the beginning has nothing to hold on to; "in all modes of experience, we always base our particular experiences on a prior context in order to ensure that they are intelligible at all" (6). As for the significance of oral history as a narrative technique, Ashcroft (et al) observes that traditional indigenous forms are especially important both in the syncretic practice which develops, and as an expression of a renewed sense of identity and self value in the independence period (180). Levy employs the oral narrative tradition in the stories of Faith's ancestors, circling back from present to past and building a tale within a tale.

In this context, though, the past exposes pain, especially for the women of the family who as slaves had been raped and suffered; yet, it needs to be explicated, as Fanon asserts in "On National Culture:"

In order to ensure his salvation and to escape from the supremacy of the white man's culture the native feels the need to turn backwards towards his unknown roots and to lose himself at whatever cost in his own barbarous people. Because he feels he is becoming estranged, that is to say because he feels that he is the living haunt of contradictions which run the risk of becoming insurmountable, the native tears himself away from the swamp that may suck him down and accepts everything, decides to take all for granted and confirms everything even though he may lose body and soul. The native finds that he is expected to answer for everything, and to all comers. He not only turns himself into the defender of his own people's past; he is willing to be counted as one of them, and henceforward he is even capable of laughing at his past cowardice.

This tearing away, painful and difficult though it may be, is, however, necessary. If it is not accomplished there will be serious psycho-affective injuries and the result will be individuals without an anchor, without a horizon, colourless, stateless, rootless—a race of angels. (375)

For this reason, while Jamaican people reveal their past they narrate the history of generations of family and, by infusing Faith's British individuality with it, they reinforce her hybrid identity. For Homi K. Bhabha, this version of cultural hybridity is an "interstitial passage in-between fixed identifications," which "entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy" (*Location* 4); in other words, it is having access to two or more ethnic identities. Levy enables this process by reinforcing Faith's cultural hybridity; by strengthening the Jamaican side of her identity, Levy supplies Faith with a prior context to hold on to.

As a sign of her transforming identity, Faith changes her style of dress a few days after her arrival and after hearing her maternal grandmother Grace's story as told by her Aunt Coral:

I changed my clothes. Out of my jeans and into a cotton blouse and a skirt that I could flap at my knees. I put sandals on my feet and pulled my hair back tight off my face and into a bun on the top of my head. When Auntie Coral saw me, she gave me that look I had wanted before—the misty-eyed tearful look. She gasped, threw her hands into the air, clapped and shouted, 'Ahh, my Faith, but now you look like a Jamaican!'. (238)

Ironically, right after this display of Jamaican spirit, while Coral is narrating her father William's story she reveals that William is the son of a Scottish man, James. James marries (as Faith supposes) a Jamaican housemaid, Amy, whose mother is a slave and whose father is not known. Consequently, Faith's ancestry is woven by the "English, Irish, Scottish, Indian or Welshman;" as her cousin Vincent remarks, "[w]e had them all on these shores so who can tell?" (257).

Moreover, the stories reveal that among black people the lighter color of skin is very important and it causes the ruin of some girls as in cousin Constance's story: she has an English father and a Jamaican mother as a result of which she has fair hair, blue eyes, and fair skin. She is sent to England to be better educated but ironically, as Coral points out, she comes back home saying that her father "had come to Jamaica to oppress the black man" (317). The story of Constance ends tragically; with the paradox of her fair skin and radical ideas, she belongs nowhere, alienated by the black Jamaicans and not capable of tracing her African past. Constance renames herself Afria and lives "on her own in the small wooden house . . . She still sits in the sun to keep herself dark . . . And she wears African clothes . . . quite happy . . . until of course she drinks too much rum" (319).

After the catharsis of her family history is revealed by layers, at the end of her two week's stay Faith declares: "I was going home to my mum and dad, to Carl and Ruth, to Mick, Marion and Simon, I was going home to England" (320). Coral, however, warns her that, "Well,

now you know a little, Faith. But there is more. There is always more” (325). The disparity is not quite overcome. While Coral is talking about the imperial past and the Mother Country, Faith thinks “[t]he country where I live [the Mother Country], among people so unaware of our shared past that all they would see if they were staring at my aunt would be a black woman acting silly” (326). Nonetheless, as Michel Foucault maintains, discourse is always a matter of power as well as knowledge (Harrison 19). The compromise and recognition attained through a shared past and the image of rebirth through the journey “home” to Jamaica, that was foreshadowed by her mother’s calling her “Child,” is finally revealed as such:

Let those bully boys walk behind me in the playground. Let them tell me ‘You’re a darkie. Faith’s a darkie.’ I am the granddaughter of Grace and William Campbell. I am the great-grandchild of Cecilia Hilton. I am descended from Katherine whose mother was a slave. I am the cousin of Afria. I am the niece of Coral Thompson and the daughter of Wade and Mildred Jackson. Let them say what they like. Because I am the bastard child of Empire and I will have my day. (326-27)

As mentioned previously, the text exposes the racist connotations of the school children’s mockery at the beginning: “Your mum [Faith’s] and dad came on a banana boat” (3). The text ends with the same statement uttered by Faith herself: “. . . [m]y mum and dad came to England on a banana boat” (339), signifying the symmetry of rebirth and dislocation. It is also possible to see symmetry in the family tree which starts with the basic family of four, keeps developing with each individual tale throughout the text, and ends by developing into a highly complex family tree that ironically includes Mr. Livingstone, a plantation owner, and Katherine’s mother—a slave woman with no name to record. Levy supplies the reader with the extended family tree after each section, both maintaining the reader’s memory with names and also visibly using it as a metaphor of Faith’s growing recognition of her family. The banana boat signifies all the Jamaicans who arrive in the ‘Motherland’ looking for work. Nonetheless, what appears to be an insult, or an indelible mark initially, concludes with what Faith Jackson takes pride in. The symmetry balances the dichotomy, and consequently an identity crisis is transformed into a hybrid identity, reinforcing the notion of what Rushdie coins as “translational” identities, and what Pope refers to as “transformational.” Furthermore, it is implied that the parents’ balanced identities are based on their being already translational, and Carl’s never seeming to acknowledge his Jamaican background suggests that as a man he never goes through the same experiences that Faith encounters. One might also note that with one exception, each story told in the Jamaican section is a woman’s story. As Bromley puts it, this “gendering of remembrance” indicates that *Fruit of the Lemon* is not only “migrant” writing, but is also operating in the spaces of the body and the unconscious: the public in the private and the private in the public (140).

To conclude, although Levy’s title and the epigram, “. . . the fruit of the poor lemon/ Is impossible to eat,” suggests negative connotations, she maintains a positive and optimistic stance from textual and contextual points of view. Textually, the protagonist experiences gender and

racial discrimination and her ambivalence results in a nervous breakdown which is also brought about by self-denial of her blackness. Faith's literal and metaphoric journey to her past fortifies her identity, yet paradoxically her mixed race ancestry complicates her hybridity even further. Hence, by combining homeland and motherland, contextually, the text provides a view of a new global hybrid identity and the future of multicultural Britishness.

Notes

¹Bromley does not provide a source for his quote from Ferlinghetti, but the line appears in "Autobiography" (*A Coney Island* 60-66). The line is borrowed from T.S. Eliot's *The Four Quartets* ("East Coker" V, line 90).

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