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Bittersweet (Be)Longing: Filling the Void of History in Andrea Levy's *Fruit of the Lemon*

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Andrea Levy's *Fruit of the Lemon* is an unusual historical novel in terms of its relationship to the plotment of history. On the one hand, Levy's novel takes as its subject the historically specific dilemma of belonging faced by the Afro-Caribbean diaspora in Britain during the 1980's. On the other hand, the narrative itself provides no explicit sense of this historical timeframe. The nuclear family tree that opens the novel does not provide birth dates and, consequently, the Jackson family is not overtly associated with the *Windrush* generation of immigrants to Britain. This lack of explicit historical contextualization is perhaps what has led one critic to remark that "the novel is primarily concerned with coming to terms with [Faith's] individual sense of identity rather than the wider social and political contexts of racism and gender discrimination."¹ However, the novel does connect the development of its main character, Faith, to an identifiable historical context via markers of popular culture, such as the movies and TV shows that the characters watch or the music that they listen to. The citing of *blaxploitation* movies such as *Shaft* (1971) or *Superfly* (1972), comments made regarding Margaret Thatcher (1979-1990), and Faith's mention of Lady Di as part of the royal family (1981) give the reader the sense that the novel is set sometime during the 1980's. By engaging and disengaging from the narrative of this history, *Fruit of the Lemon* points to the contemporary decontextualization of the public sphere while locating commodities as an alternate source of identification. The reader is forced to engage in a process of contextualization via pop culture and commodities, which Faith herself eventually embraces. The second half of the novel is situated in Jamaica, where Faith goes to recuperate a historically specific nostalgia, to "hear her family history, a saga inseparable from colonialism, stretching back to Cuba, Panama, Harlem and Scotland" (Prasad T4). Nostalgia ultimately figures as the space where the cultural valuation of commodities can occur, via the recuperation of a relationary historical context.

I will argue that *Fruit of the Lemon* links the identity crisis of the main character, Faith, to the workings of globalization, specifically the co-opting of multiculturalism. The novel portrays a British society wherein consumer multiculturalism does not translate into racial tolerance, but rather creates what I term a "regime of color-blindness" that violently dislodges the contexts of colonialism and racism. The structure and setting of the novel, Part One set in Britain and Part Two set in Jamaica, propose historical contextualization and consumer citizenship as a way of mitigating these destructive sociopolitical forces. Faith's travel to Jamaica involves more than simply a traversal of geographic space, but also a movement from rootlessness to belonging as facilitated by the combined context of history and commodities. Consequently, Andrea Levy's novel constructs a Caribbean diasporic identity through the nostalgic acquisition of a historical context that is invested or maintained by commodities. The novel ambivalently figures the global market as a space that opens and closes avenues for the construction of cultural and political consciousness. It is the workings of market multiculturalism that lead to Faith's emotional breakdown, and yet, it is through a combination of consumer citizenship and family history that Faith is later able to formulate an Afro-Caribbean and Black British subjectivity. This essay will consequently begin with an analysis of Part One and its depiction of British society, primarily the structures that lead to Faith's nervous breakdown. I

will then proceed to read how Part Two signifies Faith's recuperation in Jamaica in terms of contextualization and nostalgia. In particular, I will focus on the character of Constance within the family history and how she serves as a model for Faith's formulation of her Afro-Caribbean identity as informed by a historical and market-driven context.

Erased Identities, Silenced Histories

Faith Jackson, the novel's protagonist, is born and raised in a London filled with silences. These silences are both gaps in Faith's sense of her familial history as well as violent abjections of colonial history in the public sphere. The novel represents these gaps of familial and public contexts as failures or refusals of social recognition that have destructive effects on social interactions in the novel, eventually building up to Faith's identity crisis and breakdown. The novel's preface opens with a first-person narration of a childhood memory, with Faith recalling a racist playground taunt: "Faith is a darkie and her mum and dad came on a banana boat" (3). Faith's voice, by comparison, avoids providing racial markers while describing the incident. The perpetrators of this racial harassment are described in detail but with only oblique references to race, they were "boys with unruly hair, short trousers and dimpled knees that went bright red in the cold" (3). Faith is unable respond verbally to these taunts; she "began to cry" (3). Instead, her friends fill in Faith's silence by rejecting outright the narrative of her parents' banana boat passage, "Oh no they never. Leave her alone" (3). This childhood memory points to the decontextualization of the Black British community; the children in the playground access the image of the banana boat as symbol of Caribbean migration, but have no sense of its context or the socio-economic forces motivating such migrations. The banana boat is appropriated and resignified as a derogatory insult, one that highlights Faith's racial difference and otherness—she is essentially told that she does not belong.

Following this decontextualization, it is thus disconcerting for Faith when her mother does not dispute the accuracy of this banana boat as symbol for her Caribbean origins: "So it was a bit of a shock when Mum told me, 'We came on a banana boat to England, your dad and me'" (3). Upon hearing this, Faith remarks, "[t]he little white boys were right," for the first time actually defining them by their race (3). In so doing, Faith appears to connect the authority of the boys to their racial identity. What the narrative additionally reveals is that their racist logic is ingrained in Faith's imaginary as well. Although her mother explains that it was a "proper boat with cabins and everything," Faith pictures her parents "curled up on the floor of a ship, wrapped in a blanket perhaps, trying to find a comfortable spot amongst the spiky prongs of unripe bananas" (4).

While Faith's imaginary has been influenced by her interactions with other children, Faith also derives this banana boat image of her parents from the "illustrations of slave ships from my history lessons" (4). The school assignments coldly calculate the system's workings

without any sense of human suffering: “we had to write essays telling the facts—how the slaves were captured then transported from Africa to the New World” and “draw diagrams of how the triangular trade in slaves worked, like we drew diagrams of sheep farming in Australia” (4). While narrating the history of slavery, the educational system erases the slaves’ subjectivity and consequently reinscribes the system’s violence by equating the slaves with livestock. Faith interprets this as another layer of racist invective: “Although there were no small boys laughing and pointing, I felt them. ‘Your mum and dad came on a slave ship,’ they would say. ‘They were slaves’” (4).

While Faith connects the boys’ racist taunts with the logic of her school history lessons, she accepts that imaginary; she is ashamed to be connected with this context of slavery and yet cannot formulate an oppositional narrative. The violence of this public erasure is mirrored by the absence of a personal context that can serve as a different foundation for identity construction. Faith remarks that “there was no ‘oral tradition’ in our family” and consequently, alternative sources of contextualization are absent (4). Since “mum and dad never talked about their lives before my brother Carl and I were born,” (4) the reasons for the parents’ migration to Britain from the Caribbean are not accessible to Faith. The problem of family history is not simply an issue of silence, however, it appears that even Faith’s desire to know about her parents’ past is actively discouraged: “Most of my childhood questions to them were answered with ‘That was a long time ago,’ or ‘What you want to know about that for?’ (4). Such stonewalling is not ultimately sustainable, and when small admissions of the past are made, they are treated as personal secrets that cannot enter the public realm: “if Mum ever let something slip—‘You know your dad lived in a big house,’—then I was told with a wagging finger not to go blabbing it about to my friends, not to repeat it to anyone” (4). Faith’s mother hints here that the introduction of the family past into public is dangerous, thus highlighting the Jackson family’s vulnerability within British society.

While this strategy appears to be one of protecting the family, Faith sees herself as unmoored from any Caribbean past, and additionally anxious regarding the position that contemporary society has outlined for her. In order to make sense of the “little scraps of [her mother’s] past,” Faith must fill in the gaps with her own fictions, “like a game of Consequences I used to play as a child—fold the paper and pass it on—until I had a story that seemed to make sense” (4-5). In comparison to the public narratives of history, this family story is tenuously positioned not only because of its dependence on orality rather than so-called “historical facts,” but also due to the serious gaps of relation within that family story. Faith must imagine how the information she obtains can create a web of meaning and relation, but she can only reach a point where the story *seems* to make sense. Her parents’ unexpected announcement about their plans to leave England and retire in Jamaica calls into question the small hold Faith thought she had on understanding her family. Even though she knows that “my parents had come from there” and “we had relations there,” Faith believed that “what Mum and Dad really loved was snow and cold evenings” (45). While her parents try to allay her fears of being abandoned by giving her a

new car and buying “their way out of bad feeling,” Faith’s future is now uncertain—will her family leave her behind (47)?

The silences in her family history also mirror silences in the public sphere, specifically the decontextualization of British society from a colonial history. In separating the past from the present, colonialism cannot be invoked or connected to more contemporary structures of social organization such as globalization or consumption. It is therefore possible for Faith’s friend Simon to remark on how “they used to use ivory for these sort of portraits but you can’t nowadays” (121). Although these colonial traces are evident, the novel sustains Simon’s silence. No explanation is given for why ivory was used in “those days,” or why that system of production is no longer possible. This lack of historical context connects the public realm to the personal sphere of the family. The novel represents these silences as systemic, hinting that the unanswered question of how British society has been shaped by its colonial legacies is linked to the question of Faith’s own presence in that society—why and how did Faith’s own Jamaican family arrive there?

Without a concrete foundation of the connections between public and personal histories, the novel shows that Faith lacks the confidence to handle major challenges to her identity. The lack of family context in particular prevents Faith from being able to counter the racist images presented within the British public sphere, and her rootlessness produces a lack of self-awareness. For example, when her father asks “your friends, any of them your own kind?” Faith isn’t “sure what he meant” (28). Faith rejects the negative terms of racial identity and otherness to the extent she is also disassociated from all ethnic and cultural markers, and cannot read social interactions through any of these lenses. When her father clarifies his question, his tone alludes to his own discomfort with publicly acknowledging such markers: “I mean any of them ... any of them ...’ He looked around himself to see if anyone was listening and then whispered, ‘Coloured?’” (29). The father’s act of transgression reveals how strongly Faith represses any sense of racial identity. Rather than engaging her father in conversation, Faith explains that, “I didn’t ask him to explain. I didn’t ask him to finish what he was saying. I didn’t want him to” (29). The public systems of erasure are so ingrained within Faith that she now erases her self and silences avenues for alternative modes of self-consciousness and racial awareness.

But Faith is not the only color-blind character in the novel. *Fruit of the Lemon* represents a British society that is predicated on the consumption of the Other, through the commodification of culture and ethnicity. The novel reveals that market multiculturalism does not advocate or engender racial tolerance and equality, but instead establishes a regime of color-blindness that serves only to conceal the racist logic organizing the public sphere. Color-blindness and its insidious effects are evident during two pivotal moments in the novel. The first involves Faith’s experiences on the job market and the second revolves around a racist attack on a black bookstore owner. When Faith obtains her first job, she is told that she is one of the “lucky ones;” however, this career achievement is explained in terms of Faith’s race: “My tutor decided that it was something to do with my being black and everyone else on the course being white” (31).

While it may appear that this rationale is “color-conscious” rather than color-blind, it actually does not imply awareness regarding the function or context of race, but reduces race to a market(able) category. Indeed, it is the market appeal of Faith’s difference that the tutor interprets as the reason for Faith’s success, she tells Faith that her “work has an ethnicity which shines through” and is simply “exciting” (31). Rather than considering the possibility that Faith “was just better than everyone else,” the tutor leads Faith to view the job offer as inspired by “some sort of collective unconscious that was coming through my slave ancestry” (31). The logic of “eating the other”² erases Faith’s creative authorship in order to highlight the market value of difference, vaguely formulated as having an “African or South American feel” (31).

While the tutor’s explanation of the job offer from Olivia does not acknowledge Faith’s agency in the matter, it does serve to foreshadow the logic underlying Olivia’s work practices. Olivia appears in the novel as a consumer of Other cultures; for example, she is described as wearing an “upturned-multicoloured raffia bin on her head” (31). This appreciation for non-European fashion might be taken as an example of liberal open-mindedness and nonconformity; nevertheless, Olivia turns out to fit the model of a dishonest and manipulative employer. In fact, Faith finds out that Olivia intends to exploit her creative talents in an almost sweatshop-like environment. While Faith sits “on a stool in front of an old table loom” weaving new patterns for sample fabrics, Olivia “waft[s] about the room, chat[s] to her international clientele on the telephone” and ends up claiming Faith’s hard work by “stick[ing] them on little bits of card and call[ing] them her own” (32). The global nature of Olivia’s business enables her to distribute her goods widely, while never having to acknowledge the centrality of Faith’s creativity and labor to her project. By having Faith produce her work at Olivia’s home, Olivia owns the means of production and yet also negates Faith’s presence within that home-space; Faith comments that she has “no one else to talk to” and that Olivia never invites her to what could be egalitarian “tea breaks” (32). In the end, Faith is fired because her presence accidentally oversteps into Olivia’s intimacy, an intrusion that forces Olivia to acknowledge the now too-visible presence of her worker, ultimately leading her to decide that Faith is expendable:

Then one day I got to work early and caught Olivia standing by the door wearing a silk kimono, kissing a man [...] As she turned around startled, her breast slipped out. I stared momentarily at her porcelain-white tit with its tiny pert pink nipple [...] She, after suffering my mute sullenness for a week, packed a week’s wages in a window envelope and sacked me. (32-33)

Not only does Faith stray beyond the confines of her role as worker inside this home-factory, but she witnesses the unveiling of Olivia herself—this is the first and only moment in which Faith identifies Olivia’s whiteness, via her exposed breast. This whiteness is the flipside to the color-blindness regime, the whiteness that defines Otherness and difference, underlying the kimono, normally remains hidden from view. Faith’s sullenness indicates her own discomfort with recognizing the invisible privilege of whiteness; she remains mute, unable to articulate an alternative position in relation to the power dynamics of race, cultural production and the market.

The terms of the color-blindness regime entail the foregrounding of difference while absenting the category of whiteness that depends on the identification of this otherness. As a result, the novel reveals that this regime develops linguistic markers of difference, such as “black” or “coloured” but there is no vocabulary for Faith to access in order to describe the privilege of whiteness; whiteness is deemed a universal marker, and therefore invisible. This problem of language is particularly evident when Faith decides to apply for a promotion at the BBC television center where she works. Recognizing that she is “wasted sticking labels into costumes,” Faith wants to apply for a dresser position and “be on the studio floor—with the lights, the camera, the actors” (70). When Faith inquires about the procedures for such a promotion, she is encouraged to apply by her coworker Lorraine, but is reminded, “they don’t have black dressers” (70). Faith is consequently admonished for not “noticing there aren’t any coloured people dressing” (71). Lorraine’s comment focuses on the absence of Others in dressing positions, framing the presence of an Afro-Caribbean like Faith as an exception to the rule without actually voicing the “rule” in terms of whiteness. She attempts to comfort Faith by explaining that while the managers “didn’t think the actors would like a coloured person putting their clothes on them,” Faith’s boss Henry pointed out a gap in their analysis of the situation, after all, “what if the actor was coloured” (71)? As Lorraine explains “some of them are now on television,” “them” meaning Black British actors, Faith’s “hands beg[*in*] to shake” (71).

Despite the narrative’s first person format, the source of Faith’s anger is never explicitly named. In response to the question, “You’re not upset are you, Faith?” she is only able to shrug (71). Faith’s inability to voice this anger is directly a consequence of the color-blindness regime—to whom should she direct this anger and what exactly is she angry about? The reader can only make an interpretive leap and guess. The managers and her coworkers make Faith aware of the racist rules of the workplace only to “put her in her place” and marginalize her. While she is encouraged to apply for the position anyway “because everybody likes” her, Faith remains shocked into silence for several reasons (71). First, Faith’s own narrative consistently avoids racial markers and this conversation forces her to face the way that they shape and limit her experience, regardless of whether she is willing to acknowledge them. Secondly, Faith’s self-censorship and color-blindness makes her vulnerable because she cannot accurately read the power dynamics of such situations in order to navigate her way through or around them. Faith’s denial of such racist realities is so pervasive that the narrative consciousness only hints at her emotional condition by noting her physical gestures. The reader is in some ways as blind as Faith, only able to read the surface-level of social interactions, without accessing the depths and intricacies of identity consciousness and culture.

The attack on the black bookstore owner forces Faith to connect the verbal erasure of her racial identity to social violence, but this event is so traumatic that it ultimately leads to her nervous breakdown. After attempting to help the bleeding woman back into her bookstore, Faith sees that the violence marks not only the woman’s body but her life-work as well:

The shop had been sprayed with angry red paint. And all over it said NF, NF, NF.
The red paint was over the walls—over the spines of books—arcing down the shelves and along faces on posters ... A swirling hate of NF NF NF Fuck Off.
(151-152)

While at first, Faith perceives the violence to be aimed at an individual, the condition of the bookstore reveals a much larger scope of racist hate: “A half-full bag of shit was splatted on the table—while the other half of its contents slid down the bookcase of gay and lesbian books. And the black and Third World fiction was spray-painted with ‘Wog’” (152). Faith’s previous coping mode of denial cannot function in this space of blatant racist violence. Faith’s state of mind becomes evident in the physical marking of her own body due to her entrance into this space. In picking up the phone to call emergency services, Faith notes that the phone “had a shaft of paint across it on its way to finishing the F” and as she places the receiver back down after making the phone call, her hand gets stuck (152). In order to remove herself, Faith “had to hold it down with my other hand and pull it away with a force that left some of my skin behind” (152). The violence of Faith’s move signals the extent to which she wishes to separate herself, to not identify herself with this black woman, as well as revealing how the extreme danger and horror of this social violence is so vividly present for Faith that it becomes inscribed onto her own body.

But the racist violence is not simply an accident, the work of some extremists. The violence mirrors a more subtle institutional racism, which begins to erase the bookstore owner’s identity as well as the racist context of this particular attack. The police who arrive at the scene offer interpretations of the violence in terms that either downplay the racist overtones of the attack by calling the assailants “just a bunch of thugs” or even blaming the victim: “We’ve told them not to have people in the shop on their own. One woman like that on her own. I mean, they were just asking for trouble” (154). While these processes of erasure are occurring, Faith’s identification with the woman moves her in the opposite direction, formulating the bookstore owner as an individual and fellow person in suffering: “My head was hurting like it had come out in sympathy with Yemi. That’s was the woman’s name, which I learnt from the ambulanceman shouting” (154).

However, Faith finds herself very alone in her empathy with Yemi, especially when she returns to her house and hears her friend Simon retelling the story of the incident. Simon’s interpretive lens in narrating the story ends up erasing the identity of Yemi and thereby the racist motives for the attack, and it is these silences which Faith finds herself continually correcting: “I interrupted the story twice. ‘She was a black woman,’ I said. Simon has just called her the woman who worked there. Twice I had to tell them that the woman that was struck on the head was black like me” (156). Faith receives only silent nods in response to her corrections, and eventually her comments are ignored to the point that her own presence becomes erased as well. Her friends crowd around Simon, comforting him regarding the traumatic experience he has witnessed but none reference the trauma that Faith has experienced as well, having seen a woman “just like” her become a victim of racist violence.

Faith's identification with Yemi's doubled victimization through violence and erasure lead her to finally contextualize her surroundings, watching "three white hands and one black stretch forward" to pick up coffee mugs on the table (157). However, the weight of her erasure, the trauma of the violent attack and this sudden self-contextualization disturbs Faith's consciousness to the extent that she cannot maintain an engagement with her reality any further. In fact, having sustained such blows to her identity, Faith endeavors to erase herself from her reality by disappearing into her room. Remarking that, "I didn't want anyone to see me," Faith retreats to her bedroom to close the window shades that "let in too much life" so that "I could not see where I was stepping" (160). Faith creates this state of darkness in her room, thereby accepting the conditions of her social erasure by literally attempting to occupy a space of absence. In addition, Faith is following the logic of the color-blindness regime that has so dominated her life:

But as my eyes adjusted to the dark I could see my reflection in the wardrobe mirror. A black girl lying in a bed. I covered the mirror with a bath towel. I didn't want to be black any more. I just wanted to live. The other mirror in the room I covered with a tee-shirt. *Voilà!* I was no longer black. (160)

Faith aspires to universal identity, she just wants to live, but such a move is implicitly self-destructive because this universal is "not-black" and Faith endeavors to erase herself in order to fit into the privileged invisibility of whiteness. Without another context or source of identification, Faith escapes into the darkness of her bedroom, where she "was safe" and rejects all attempts for communication from her housemates (161). Faith also refuses to get out of bed for her job because "they didn't want me at the television centre. And I wanted to be wanted" (161).

Eventually, it is Faith's parents who offer a way out of this escapism by recognizing Faith's need for an alternative social and historical context. When told that her parents have planned a trip for her to Jamaica, Faith responds, "I don't want to go to Jamaica. It's too far. What's wrong with Spain or somewhere" (162). Her mother's insistence on the specificity of Jamaica as a location for Faith's recovery from her nervous breakdown is explicitly formulated in terms of a recovery of cultural roots. Explaining that the trip "might help you," Faith's mother tells her that "Child, everyone should know where they come from" (162). Having seen the covered mirrors in Faith's bedroom, her mother understands that Faith's lack of context is a gap that can only be filled by the acquisition of a cultural and historical foundation within the geographic space of the Caribbean, through her extended family.

The void of history ultimately prompts Faith to embark on a journey to the Caribbean where she negotiates her position as both a diasporic returnee and a tourist. By means of her travel to Jamaica, Faith acquires an oral family history that expands her formulation of the Jackson family tree, providing her with an Afro-Caribbean cultural and historical context. The narrative also situates the recovery of Faith's Caribbean roots within a tourist economy, refusing

to represent the trope of diasporic travel in solely utopian terms. The ambivalence of Faith's position as somewhere between authenticity and imitation, belonging and outsidership is foregrounded much earlier in the narrative. Indeed, the novel's concerns regarding the possibility of locating an authentic Caribbean culture are referenced by the title of the novel itself, *Fruit of the Lemon*. The lemon that produces the fruit of the narrative is a story about a family member in Jamaica and her mistaken assumption that eating lemons with sugar is a well-established British tradition. In order to emulate high British culture, this practice is imposed on Faith's relative, Constance, and contributes to her adult crisis of cultural identity. The sugared lemon symbolizes an object of consumption that is both sweet (desirable) and sour (unpleasant). The centrality of the lemon story intimates the importance of consumption and commodification within Faith's journey of identity, positioning Constance as a family model informing Faith's development. The novel also presents itself as the fruit of a fiction about cultural tradition and production, contextualized by a history of colonialism and reappropriation. The question regarding the location of an authentic culture is posed and answered by the text of *Fruit of the Lemon* that ironically valorizes this lemon, investing it with meaning due to its relevance within the family memory, despite its misguided origins.

A Diasporic Tourist's Recovery of Roots

The second half of *Fruit of the Lemon* plots Faith's return to Jamaica in terms of expanding her schema of family relations. By meeting her extended family in Jamaica, Faith gains entrance into a broader community, which connects her Afro-Caribbean background to her Black British subjectivity. These family encounters involve the accumulation of individual life stories that expand the nuclear family tree diagram that opens the novel, although they do not follow any particular genealogical order. Rather, the stories are organized by Faith's errantry,³ her journey on the island and the family members she speaks to. For the first time in the novel, other first person narratives that both contest her narrative authority and contradict each other, emphasizing no single truth or origin, interrupt Faith's first person voice. The project of reconstructing the family tree is consequently concerned with the context provided by these oral stories, and reflects the totality of the Caribbean and its history.

The context of family history encourages Faith to claim Jamaica as a space of belonging, via a new web of relations. Included in this web is the story of Constance, whom Faith meets during her travels. It is at a family wedding that Faith comes into contact with her narrative double, a member of the family who has undergone a similar crisis of cultural identity and community. Walking outside of the church, Faith is introduced to a woman with the "face of my mother—but my mother with a white skin" (301). The woman, Constance, is the cousin of Faith's mother, Mildred; however, she insists on being called Afria instead. Faith is overwhelmed by the physical similarities between her mother and Constance as well as the

differences: Constance's "skin was white and her eyes were the palest blue" and she wore "African queen" clothing (302).

After Constance creates a scene, having spit rum onto the bride, "for good luck [so that] they will fear no white man," Faith's aunt Coral tells her story (304). In order to explain Constance's strange behavior, Coral tells the story of Faith's maternal grandaunt, Matilda. Matilda, who is very light-skinned, marries an Englishman and is obsessed with teaching her daughter Constance the "ways of the English," which includes eating lemons with sugar and using knives and forks to eat mangoes (312). During World War II, Constance is sent to a boarding school in England, and upon her return she finds a changed Jamaican society. Whereas before the war, people admire Constance for her pale skin, she now finds that whiteness is no longer valued. Constance becomes good friends with Mildred, Faith's mother and while Mildred copies Constance to sound more British, Constance tries "to lose her rounded vowels and speak once more like a Jamaican" (316). Constance embarks on a journey quite similar to Faith's, researching the family history, attempting to find her grandmother Amy's grave so that she can be reburied in the family plot. Constance also travels to Sierra Leone in hopes of tracing her ancestry to Africa, but the people there do not accept her because of her whiteness.

The crisis in identity and community leads Constance to change her name to Afria and to adopt a more "African" style of dress. Constance's search for belonging in the Afro-Caribbean community appears as the flip side of Faith's experience, incorporating the acquisition of an historical context and "authentic" clothing. Constance's current occupation within the tourist industry indicates how tenuous this space of identity is. Tourism provides a place where she finds some solace selling "raffia baskets with 'Jamaica' woven on the side" to tourists (318). Within a tourist economy, Afria is able to occupy the space of authenticity ambivalently despite her skin color. The tourist industry, often figured as the quintessential site of globalization, provides Constance with a new cultural identity, Afria, otherwise not available to an individual on the margins of an Afro-Caribbean community. Afria is consequently a mirror image of Faith's identity crisis, foreshadowing Faith's own complex and ambivalent negotiation of her Caribbean diasporic identity. The novel consequently tempers what could become a utopic reading of Faith's recovery of roots through the figure of Afria.

Faith's acquisition of an Afro-Caribbean historical context and identity mirrors that of the market-enabled Afria. As Faith prepares to return to England, her suitcase is packed to the brim with t-shirts she bought from a tourist shop on the beach, saying "Jamaica," "Irie," "No problem," and "Don't worry, be happy" (322). Along with the shirts, Faith packs a clunky chopping board which her aunt assures her is an "all-Jamaican product" (322). Faith also takes with her a stone that she picked up at Fort Charles, which she imagines "could have been lying on that ground for several hundred years" and "that could have been kicked by the young Horatio Nelson" (323). Faith even packs a bag of red coffee berries that she intends to roast when she gets to London, "as my grandfather used to do" (323). The mix of commodities, authenticity, imagination-history, and a tradition of consumption come together to form an incomplete and yet

sufficient foundation from which Faith will rebuild her self. As products of consumption, they nevertheless provide Faith with reminders of the oral history she accesses in Jamaica—and just as those stories are shaped by audience and narrator, so these objects contain value despite their mass production, because Faith invests and locates cultural meaning in them. While packing her suitcase, Faith realizes that her Caribbean family has “wrapped me in a family history and swaddled me tight in its stories. And I was taking back that family to England ... I was smuggling it home” (326).

The last section of the novel represents Faith's return to England and her initiation into a historically contextualized nostalgia. Part Three of the novel, entitled “England,” completes a circle in terms of the narrative structure and the family history. Faith lands in England and notices the fireworks in the sky, thinking “it may be a welcome for me having traveled so far and England needing me” (339). It is Guy Fawkes night, the time when “there are always fireworks,” and the same day of her parents' first arrival in England, when they are also greeted by the lights in the sky. Repeating her parents' experience and travel, Faith claims England as her home and she comes with a mission: “I was coming home to tell everyone ... My mum and dad came to England on a banana boat” (339). Faith is inserted into a traveling community, the migrant generation of her parents, via the acquisition of a family history, a web of relationality that redefines the banana boat symbol from the beginning of the novel. The text closes with the family tree Faith has constructed and labeled, “fruit of the lemon,” the same title as the published novel. With its question marks and remaining gaps, the family tree stands as the context that Faith is lacking when she leaves England, a context she is bringing back with her from Jamaica and that she plans to narrate to whoever will listen. *Fruit of the Lemon's* ending celebrates Faith's initiation into a contextualizing nostalgia. With a suitcase full of commodified objects of nostalgia, Faith relives her parent's arrival in England with a difference. Faith claims her Afro-Caribbean *self* through these objects, as well as the inheritance of the *Windrush* generation and a colonial legacy:

I am the granddaughter of Grace and William Campbell. I am the great-grandchild of Cecelia 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. (327)

Fruit of the Lemon delineates nostalgia as a product of globalization that possesses the potential for resisting or transgressing its decontextualizing impulses. Faith clearly maintains nostalgia for Jamaica, the personal and public histories she obtains there, and via the objects she carries back to England with her. However, there is no question at the end of the novel that Britain is her home. Her identity is become strengthened, more whole, due to her contextualization within an Afro-Caribbean and transatlantic family history. At the end of the novel, Faith's claim to the identity of a “bastard child of empire” is possible because of her access to a family tree. Despite the fractured structure of this family tree and Faith's dependence

on the commodified objects that reflect it, the novel ultimately posits a bittersweet *relational* nostalgia as a means of allaying the destructive and decontextualizing forces of diaspora.

Notes

¹In the essay, “Home(land) or ‘Motherland’: Transnational Identities in Andrea Levy’s *Fruit of the Lemon*,” Şebnem Toplu interprets Faith’s struggle in terms of a binary conflict: “the binary opposition of Faith’s ‘black’ identity and her ‘British’ identity.” Not only does Toplu label this conflict an internal one, but also sees it as expressing a “right to be treated like any other British-born citizen, irrespective of race or color.” By contrast, I will argue that Faith’s identity crisis is derived from precisely this color-blindness version of equality that in effect veils and/or avoids direct confrontation of the racist logic organizing British society.

²I borrow bell hooks’ term here to reference her theorization of consumer culture and the exoticization of marginal cultures. What I find particularly useful about hook’s work is her analysis of contemporary consumption practices within a context of imperialist desires.

³My use of the term errantry here is indebted to Édouard Glissant, particularly *Poetics of Relation* (1997). Glissant describes errantry as “neither an arrowlike trajectory nor one that is circular or repetitive, nor is it mere wandering” (xvi). As a process of identity formation, errantry locates the subject “at every moment in relation to the other,” in a web of community (xvi). This strategy of relationality “strives to know the totality of the world yet already knows he will never accomplish this” (20).

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