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FULL PAPER

The Configuration of the National Identity in Andrea Levy's Novel Fruit of the Lemon

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Abstract
This article examines the formation of the national identity of a second-generation female character in the postcolonial novel, *Fruit of the Lemon*, written by the British-Caribbean novelist, Andrea Levy. Using Homi Bhabha's concept of "Cultural Hybridity" and Benedict Anderson's theory of "Imagined Communities," the article explores how first- and second-generation immigrants experience different stages in formation of their national identities. Racism plays a significant role in highlighting the conflict between Whites and Blacks in multicultural London, as well as shaping their sense of belonging and non-belonging within the national space. Faith, the protagonist, undergoes three stages in reshaping her national identity and understanding her sense of belonging. In her early years, she integrates into the British community and adopts a British identity. After graduation, a racist society forces Faith to consider her skin color and rethink her past and place of origin. Finally, after Faith returns from Jamaica, she resolves her identity crisis and neutrally accepts both nationalities, Jamaican and British.

Keywords: Immigration, Nationalism, Post-colonialism, Racism, Hybrid National Identity

Andrea Levy'nin *Fruit of the Lemon* adlı eserinde ulusal kimliğin oluşumu

Özet
Andrea Levy'nin *Fruit of the Lemon* adlı postkolonyal romanında, ikinci nesil kadın karakterin ulusal kimlik oluşumunu inceleyen bu makale, Homi Bhabha'nın "Kültürel Melezlik" kavramı ve Benedict Anderson'ın "Hayali Cemaatler" perspektifini kullanarak, birinci nesil ve ikinci nesil göçmenlerin ulusal kimliklerini yapılandırmak için geçtikleri farklı aşamaları tartışmaktadır. Irkçılık, çokkültürlü Londra'da Beyazlar ve Siyahlar arasındaki çatışmayı ve onların ulusal mekâna aidiyet ve aidiyetsizlik duygularını vurgulayan önemli bir noktadır. Romanın başkahramanı Faith, ulusal kimliğini yeniden şekillendirmek ve aidiyet duygusunu anlamak için üç aşamadan geçer. Faith, İngiliz toplumuna entegre olmuş ve İngiliz kimliğini benimsemiştir. Mezun olduktan sonra, ırkçı toplum, Faith'i ten rengini fark etmeye ve geçmişini ve kökenini yeniden düşünmeye zorlar. Jamaika'dan döndüğünde, kimliğini belirler ve hem Jamaika hem de İngiliz kimliklerini tarafsız bir şekilde kabul eder. .
Anahtar Kelimeler: Göç, Milliyetçilik, Post-kolonyalizm, Irkçılık, Melez Ulusal Kimlik

Introduction

The sense of belonging to more than one nation and its impact on the conduct of the second-generation female character are the crucial issues in the contemporary postcolonial novel, *Fruit of the Lemon*, which is written by the British-Caribbean novelist Andrea Levy. Issues such as identity crisis, racism, diaspora life, gender discrimination, and self-determinism are frequently discussed in the literary works of Black and Asian British female novelists, reflecting the significance of the immigration and its impact during the second half of the twentieth century. This study aims to trace the development of the protagonist's gendered national identity in Levy's postcolonial novel, *Fruit of the Lemon* (1999), in which she goes through three main stages to form her hybrid national identity: integration, accepting the past, and neutrality.

Historically, the existence of colored people in England is as longstanding as the British Empire itself. The mass migration of Black and Asian people to Britain, after WWII, was a significant turning point in the history of British society. It shifted the demographic structure of the society to a modern and multicultural one. During that period, Britain became a hub for immigrants from its ex-colonies.

Certain historical events contributed to forming the mass migration process and the arrival of populations of coloured people from various ex-colonies to Britain. The partition of India from Great Britain in 1947, and the arrival of the Empire Windrush from the Caribbean in 1948, to some extent, were pivotal events that profoundly impacted British culture by introducing Black and Asian heritage. Along with these significant events, in 1948, there was an important National act that gave immigrants and minorities their rights in Britain. "The 1948 British Nationality Act gave British citizen status to all

Commonwealth subjects and confirmed their right to settle and to take employment in the UK." (Nasta and Stein 200) Consequently, this legal privilege allowed more colonial subjects to arrive in Britain.

In terms of literary history, Post-war Black and Asian British writers, referred to as the "Windrush generation", reflect their experience in Britain with all its cultural compatibilities and intersections. Since they are from different nations, cultures, and histories, they transfer their stories to England, and consequently, these stories contribute to changing the English stories in England. London has become a major city for immigrants from different geographical, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds. London is the "keeper of precious diversity." (Alibhai Brown) As Homi Bhabha states in his book, *The Location of Culture*, London is "the city that the migrants, the minorities, the diaspora come to change the history of the nation." (169-70)

Immigration leads to changes in the city. London is continuously evolving because of the different cultures, religions, traditions, and values that the immigrants bring. To prove their identity in the host country, the immigrants show a close connection to their roots and history. They try to preserve their traditions and cultural values as much as possible. Conversely, they face challenges such as rejection, racism, inferiority, suppression . . . etc. Due to this conflict between the old and new cultures, first-generation immigrants fight on two fronts, on the one hand, they struggle to define their ever-changing identity, and on the other hand, they grapple with second generation immigrants who quickly assimilate into the new culture.

Before discussing the novel, it is necessary to briefly review the definitions and interpretations of the term "nation". Ernest Renan defines nations as "the artefacts of men's convictions and loyalties and solidarities." (7) To shed light on the "elusive" concept of a nation, Renan explains that two individuals belong to the same nation only if they have a common culture, which he defines as a system of beliefs, symbols, associations, behaviors, and forms of communication. This interpretation underscores that the term "nation" serves as a broad concept, encapsulating all culturally shared practices within a unified community.

Similarly, Anthony Smith has contributed to the definitions of the term "nation", he indicates that a nation may refer to a group of people united by a shared history and region, collective myths and memories, a widespread public culture, a unified economy, and a set of legal rights and responsibilities shared by all members. (14) He adds to this definition, the nation as an ideology, the point that nationalism, as a form of politics, must be treated as a "cultural phenomena." (i) Moreover, Smith illustrates that nationalism, the ideology and movement, is a "multidimensional concept, and extended to include a specific language, sentiments and symbolism." (i)

Along with these definitions, Benedict Anderson's book, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, is a significant starting point for defining "nation" and "nationalism". In the introduction, Anderson defines a 'nation' as "an imagined community", and 'nationalism' as a "cultural artefact of a particular kind". (6) He justifies the reasons behind these definitions and indicates that even in the smallest country, people will never see, know, or even hear of the majority of their fellow residents, yet they all have an idea of their common identity. Since a nation is "imagined" and nationalism is a "cultural artefact", as Anderson argues, national identities are not necessarily determined by ethnic, religious, historical, or biological factors. In this context, national identities are socially and culturally formed and constructed.

In a multicultural society, where social and cultural diversity restricts representation, immigrants are often seen as hybrid citizens. They neither belong to their original country (the first space) nor fully

adapt to the culture of the host country (the second space). They stand in between, and this in-betweenness is the "Third Space". In his book, *Identity, Community, Culture, Difference*, Ball states that Jonathan Rutherford presents an interview with Homi Bhabha who emphasizes the point that hybridity is the "third space", and it is the space from which new identities can emerge. (211) Hybridity emerges in the transcultural relationships that immigrants form in the Western world. Dominic Head claims that the idea of durable national identities is problematized by the cultural hybridity brought about by postcolonial migration. (119) Hybridity not only extends beyond transcultural relationships but also alters the perceptions of national identities. The sense of belonging of immigrants becomes hybrid, and the new affiliations have blurred the national lines.

Based on Homi Bhabha's argument of "Hybridity" and its impact on the national perceptions of the immigrants in the host countries, Behnken and Wendt propose "to use the term -hybrid national belonging- and its auxiliary, 'hybrid national identity'—to describe these multiple, interrelated belongings and their transnational or transcultural dimensions." (5) The terms "hybrid national belonging" and "hybrid national identity" are the key concepts in this essay, and they are significant elements for analyzing the literary work under discussion. These terms offer an accurate understanding of how individuals relate to their nations in the context of cultural diversity. Instead of viewing national identity as a singular and static construct, these terms recognize the complex and multifaceted nature of contemporary identity formation. "Hybrid national identity" suggests that individuals may have multiple layers of belonging beyond traditional notions of nationality. In this framework, the nation is just one aspect of a person's identity, alongside other cultural, ethnic, religious, or transnational affiliations. These various attachments intersect, shaping how individuals perceive themselves and their place in the world. Moreover, the term emphasizes the dynamic and fluid nature of identity construction. Identity is shaped by ongoing interactions and negotiations between different cultural, social, and political forces. Individuals may navigate between multiple identities, adapting to and reinterpreting them in response to changing circumstances and experiences. In addition to that, the concepts of "hybrid national belonging" and "hybrid national identity" provide a framework for understanding the complexities of contemporary identity formation in an increasingly interconnected and diverse society.

Andrea Levy's *Fruit of the Lemon*

Andrea Levy was born in England, and her parents were first-generation Jamaican immigrants, and Levy is a second-generation immigrant. As Black British woman author, Levy reflected the cultural aspects of the Caribbean diasporas and the mix of ethnicities in England. In the understudy novel, *Fruit of the Lemon*, Levy presents her semi-autobiographical story, her search for identity. To emphasizes this point, Stuart Hall, in the chapter entitled "New Ethnicities", states that:

"a process of cultural 'diaspora-ization' has become increasingly prevalent within black British artistic production since the mid- 1980s, producing a diaspora aesthetic that privileges 'unsetting, recombination, hybridization and cut-and- mix." (33)

In addition to a brief introduction, the literary text is organized into three major sections. It is told in the first person from the viewpoint of Faith Jackson, the main character. In the first part, the novel indicates the assimilation of Faith Jackson in the English society, and how she embraces the British identity. Faith visits Jamaica in the book's second section, and there she learns different stories from different voices about her black race and her Jamaican history, and she step by step accepts her Jamaican identity too. In the third part, Faith comes back to England, to her "Mother Land" to experience neutrally

her hybrid national identity. In this sense, the novel tells the story of Faith Jackson's development and transformation in her understanding of the sense of belonging and the meaning of the national identity.

Many scholars have come across the concept of determining one's identity in a multicultural and multiethnic society like London. In his *Black Atlantic*: *Modernity and Double Consciousness*, Paul Gilroy uses the term "double consciousness" as he examines the "relationship between 'race,' culture, nationality, and ethnicity which have a bearing on the histories and political cultures of Britain's black citizens [Gilroy argues that] striving to be both European and black requires some specific forms of double consciousness." (3) By the same token, dealing with the same novel, Şebnem Toplu writes *Home(land) or 'Motherland': Translational identities in Andrea Levy's Fruit of the Lemon* to discuss "the significance of places in the identity formation, and the function of homeland and motherland for translated hybrid identity." (1-2) As can be seen, the above essays focus on the impact of the mixture of ethnicities and cultures on the formation of the cultural dimension of the identity. In this study, the focus will be on the reformation of Faith's national identity which goes into three stages, integration, acceptance of the past, and neutrality as reflected in *Fruit of the Lemon*.

In the first part of the novel, Levy depicts the arrival of Wade and Mildred, the protagonist's parents in England. They are first-generation immigrants from Jamaica, arrive with many ambitions and dreams of a better life in England. In addition to being a place of opportunity, immigrants viewed England as their motherland, a nation whose literature, history, and culture they were already familiar with from their educational materials.

Due to Great Britain's colonial history, Faith's parents, Wade and Mildred, are haunted by the notion of England as a haven. Ironically, they believed that England welcomed them "as the ship pulled into its berth, Mildred and Wade heard the pop and whistle of crackers and saw fireworks lighting up the sky." (8) They thought they can easily adopt into the British society. In contrast to their expectations, and like many other immigrants, Mildred and Wade endure appalling living conditions until they begin to earn enough money to live comfortably. Faith's mother didn't expect that life in England to be so hard and miserable, she says "I never thought English people lived like that." (9) Wade and Mildred were shocked to realize that England had little to offer them. They had to confront this sub-standard life and struggle to survive. They encountered discrimination based on their color and origin. Unable to openly express their roots and history, and they were marginalized by their race. This inability to discuss their past is reflected in how they raised their children, Carl and Faith. As Faith notes, "My mum and dad never talked about their lives before my brother Carl and I were born." (4) The family avoided sharing stories of their history, and most of the children's questions were answered with "That was a long time ago."(4)

Moreover, after a few years, Wade and Mildred came to believe they had achieved a British identity when they managed to own a home. Even in a less wealthy London district, Faith's parents saw home ownership as an indication of authentic Britishness. "When Mildred and Wade closed the door of their house for the first time, they both hung their heads and shut their eyes in prayer. 'We finally arrive home,' they said."(11) They considered themselves a part of British society. This belief stemmed from the British educational system that Mildred and Wade were exposed to in Jamaica. Educated by British teachers, Mildred and Wade had long regarded Great Britain as their mother nation. They believed Jamaica's history was just a part of Britain's, and by adopting a British identity, they thought they had transitioned from an inferior to a superior society.

These presumptions prompted Wade and Mildred to hide from their children their past, ethnic affiliations, and interpersonal relationships—anything that would highlight their racial identity. They

adopted this strategy to shield their kids from danger and facilitate their integration into a largely white society. the families of migrants frequently stuck out their tongues in hopes that they could preserve their kids from harm. (Caryl Philips,114) However, this silence did more harm than good. As she grew older, Faith became anxious about her origin and sense of belonging.

Faith's early childhood was shaped by a British identity. She and her brother Carl grew up in England, unaware of their heritage or past, living typical English lives. Faith never fully connected with her parents' history. She found the lessons on slavery in school and college demeaning and couldn't relate to them. She imagined that the place where she grew up was her original community, she believed she was British because of her British lifestyle, western system of education, and social circle of British friends—until life's circumstances began to challenge this belief.

Racism plays a significant role in reshaping Faith's sense of belonging. Faith's race distinguishes her from her white British companions. Toplu describes how Faith's opposing identities are constructed in a binary fashion, Black and British, and she argues that "these two identities conflict . . . 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." (4) In the novel, Faith's understanding of racial issues becomes more pronounced after college, especially when she moves in with three white friends. This move reflects her rejection of any form of discrimination or racial categorization. Faith's reluctance to discuss race and her own identity is so strong that when Faith's father, Wade, asks her if she has any friends who are "like her," she finds it difficult to understand him. Even after Wade explains that he meant "colored," Faith won't talk about it. Furthermore, because she feels her brother Carl does not fit into the largely white society, she is attempting to fit into, she feels alienated and distant from him. She calls him "large and dark" and "a big man with a dark complexion" on different occasions (59).

Among the situations that reveal Faith's black identity is her relationship with Marion. Marion is a white working-class British girl, who lives in the same house with Faith and the other two white British friends. Marion and her friends treat Faith as if she was not black. For instance, Trina, Marion's sister, discusses a fight she got into at school, she says "I had a fight with some wog at school. Stupid coon spat on me and pulled my hair. So I hit her."(108) Trina's dad is just upset about having to deal with the girl's parents; he doesn't seem to be concerned that she "clocked some darkie" (109). Furthermore, Marion's father's hostility toward a black artist is revealed when Faith, Marion, and Trina attend a comedy night. When Marion reproaches him, he dismisses it by saying, "Oh, Faith's different" (110). But as Faith becomes more conscious of her black identity, she starts to take these comments personally and thinks about them.

Faith also faces racial conditions in the BBC's Costume Department, where she is the only Black employee. Despite her qualification, she is not allowed to practice her work for three months. The department does not typically accept black people, but because of her intimidating record and the sensational question she poses to them during the interview, she was accepted into the department despite not being allowed to practice her work for three months. Her mother and her friend Lorraine encourage Faith to be strong in the face of racial discrimination.

For Faith, life becomes harder as she realizes her difference in colour from white Britons. Faith's questioning of her sense of belonging results from her relationship with her family members and the pressures of the black community. Ruth, a Black rights activist and Carl's girlfriend, attempts to make Faith notice the racial distinction she lives in and encourages her to fight against it. Ruth insists, "Black people must stand together"(112) and she asks Faith to avoid the White society. "Hundreds of years of oppression by white people that shows no sign of stopping. Black people have to fight . . . it's black

against white." (113) Ruth and Carl accuse Faith of betraying the black community by associating with white people. Faith's earlier belief of fitting into society is shattered by her increased understanding of race, which forces her to accept that she is different.

Consequently, when Ruth's mother recounts how she met her husband, a man from Guyana, Faith becomes upset, she doesn't want to hear more, and leaves the house. She is not interested in hearing any more tales of racial and ethnic discrimination. When she shuts down the curtains in her apartment after running back to her room, she looks at the mirror and sees her black complexion. She says "I didn't want to be black anymore I just want to live."(187) Faith longed for a shared national and cultural identity, but she was no longer able to belong to any of the nationalities, Jamaican or British.

When her parents see how she is, they advise her to go to visit her family in Jamaica, believing that this will help her process her identity crisis. Her mother says, "Child, everyone should know where they come from." (190) Though this suggestion comes late, it becomes a key factor in changing Faith's life. As Stuart Hall claims, identities are always in the formation process, they are never finished or completed. When it comes to the mixture between Whites and Blacks, most people "were blocked out and refused an identity and identification within majority nation, having to find some ground, some place, some position on which to stand. Blocked out of any access to an English or British identity, people had to try to discover who they were" ("Old and New Identities" 52).

In the second stage of the formation of Faith's hybrid national identity, also the second part of Levy's novel, Faith travels to Jamaica to explore her roots, past, and background. She tries to gain a better understanding of her history, which is essential for the formation of her sense of belonging. Faith describes this impression and states:

"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." (166)

At her arrival to Kingston airport, Jamaica, Faith notices black people everywhere. She describes the airport scene as a "culture shock". The language, faces, temperature, and lifestyle are all different in Jamaica. At the airport, her emotional breakdown continues as she struggles to adjust to the new community, questioning her mother's statements, trying to live up to her expectations, and searching for her roots and past. Being the daughter of a Jamaican family, she feels that she should know where she is from, and she wants to fit in and feel at home.

Faith is picked up by her relatives, Aunt Coral and cousin Vincent, who help Faith to learn many stories and facts about her past. Toplu asserts that Levy, for narrating different Jamaican stories, uses different voices. She states that:

"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." (9)

In Jamaica, on her way to Aunt Coral's house, Faith observes the life of the Jamaican people and notices the colourful decorations in her Aunt's house. Life in Jamaica reminds Faith of her mother. As the days pass, Faith learns that racial hierarchy is an issue in Jamaican society. She discovers that race was an obstacle in Coral and Oscar's marriage. Coral explains: "You see his mother thought he could do better. I was too dark. You must understand, Faith, that was how it was in those days." (193) Not just Faith, but

the conception of the Blacks and Whites has haunted the people in Jamaica too. The colonization of the minds makes the people consider the superiority of the lighter skin.

Later, throughout the stories of both her mother and her father, Faith gradually completes the tree of her family. She realizes that the family members are uncomfortable with their past, and they dislike their skin colour. She learns that race can determine one's status in the society. Moreover, Faith discovers she is of Scottish origin, as her grandmother, Grace, married a lighter-skinned man named William Campbell. This means that Faith had a connection to the British heritage before her parents arrived in England. This hybrid genetic identity makes Faith accept her past and rethink her national belonging. She begins to imagine a new community where she shares ideas, beliefs, heritage, traditions, and a sense of belonging. Faith's view of her race, origin, and people changes profoundly through the stories and experiences passed down to her. She has now integrated and assimilated herself into Jamaican culture. Faith's acceptance of her Jamaican identity signifies her experience of cultural hybridity. As a sign of this transforming identity, Faith states that:

"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 shouted] Ahh, my Faith, but now you look like a Jamaican!"(238)

Consequently, dressing according to the Jamaican culture refers to Faith's sense of belonging to that culture. She becomes more used to the weather and the fashion as she spends more time there. In Jamaica, attending a wedding ceremony is a significant event in Faith's self-determination and accepting her Jamaican identity. As she entered the ceremony, she noticed that she "was just one of the crowd", and " no one stared at [her] or whispered, Who is she?" (293) Faith feels accepted in her community, she belongs to her ethnic and racial group and feels content blending into the crowed, no longer standing out. She is also thinking about working in Jamaica. She realizes herself because she is appreciated by her race. In other words, she finds a home, and the word "home" refers to her acceptance of her skin color and racial heritage, which she now sees as part of her true self.

Faith hears personal memories as well as stories from Aunt Coral and Vincent about Jamaica's ties to British history. The Jamaicans held England in the highest regard. She finds out that Wade, her father, and Donald, his brother, both have excellent schooling in Jamaica. According to her Aunt Coral both brothers learn the territories of the Empire and both of them sang "God save the King" . By weaving together Jamaican and British history, Faith establishes a connection between herself, Jamaica, and Britain to create a hybrid national identity.

At the novel's end, when Faith returns to England, she remembers the school days and the statements the bully boys made about her, she turns the shameful feeling of that time into pride. She states that "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 bastard child of Empire and I will have my day." (326-27) The self-confidence and neutral attitude toward her hybrid national identity enable Faith to live in Britain comfortably. She belongs to both nationalities. Her identity crisis has been solved by identifying with both countries, Jamaica and Britain. Being a second-generation girl born in London, Faith has overcome the racial discrimination she faces, the conflicts with her family, and the anxiety of not knowing where to live. She discovers that home is more than just the house where she was raised, and she recognizes that it means accepting her color, ethnic heritage, and connection to her past. Faith also realizes that she belongs to both Jamaica and England, since, historically, Jamaica was a part of England.

To sum up, in Levy's *Fruit of the Lemon*, Faith, a second-generation immigrant, navigates different stages of a sense of belonging. In her first stage, Faith is brought up in British society, fully integrated into this community till she considers herself British. In the second stage, as an adult after finishing her college, racial discrimination makes Faith feel nervous about her double identities, Black

and British. When she accepts her parents' suggestion to visit Jamaica, Faith assimilates with the Jamaican community within a couple of weeks because she originally belongs to that ethnic group of people. There, she discovers her genetic hybridity and learns about the shared history between the colonized Jamaica and the colonizer Britain. In the final stage, Faith comes back with a hybrid national identity which evokes her neutral attitude towards both nationalities. Therefore, the combination of ethnic diversity and the sense of belonging in a multicultural city, like London, not only produces cultural diversity but also leads to the compatible relationship between the colonizer and the colonized as they consider their history.

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