Black British Women in Andrea Levy's Novels

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Sveučilište u Zadru

Odjel za anglistiku

Preddiplomski sveučilišni studij anglistike (dvopredmetni)

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Izjava o akademskoj čestitosti

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1. Introduction

Andrea Levy (1956 – 2019), a Jamaican British writer, often explored the complexities of being a black woman in Britain in her novels. She offered portrayals of women grappling with racism, marginalization and discrimination. In the three of her novels that I am going to analyse in this paper, *Never Far From Nowhere (1996), Fruit of the Lemon (1999),* and *Small Island (2005),* Levy explores female identity within the context of race, nationality, and the immigrant experience. She was a daughter of the Windrush generation, as both of her parents came from Jamaica to England in 1948. Claudia Marquis points out that Windrush is frequently seen as a symbolic event of the rise of multiracial Britain. England was at the time willing "to spend West Indian lives in its own defense during World War II", but the tensions rose as Caribbean people began to sail back to England after the war and settle in modern Britain (39). However, the British empire was slowly falling apart as it was financially and physically devastated by the losses of World War II. Consequently, Britain initiated a shift towards a neo-colonialist economy requiring an inexpensive workforce. As Courtman states, "Windrush has now shifted in the national imagination to symbolise a generation's achievements and their contribution to the making of a multicultural Britain" (86). As her parents were part of the Windrush generation, she was very familiar with the experience of discrimination. Growing up in contemporary Britain during the time of racial tensions and the rise of multiculturalism, she effectively captures the aspirations and worries that her characters experience.

The first novel analysed in this paper is *Never Far from Nowhere*. The novel offers a look at racial hierarchies and the way they influence the lives of two sisters of Jamaican descent, Olive and Vivien. The story revolves around the complexities of belonging, the search for identity, and the resilience needed to navigate a society marked by racial prejudices. The second novel in this paper, *Fruit of the Lemon*, is a story about Faith Jackson, a young black British

woman who decides to travel to Jamaica in search of her heritage after suffering a mental breakdown caused by several instances of racism and racial prejudice. The novel addresses themes of cultural identity and the impact of colonial history on British society. In *Small Island,* the last novel to be discussed in my paper, Levy introduces us to Hortense Roberts, and Queenie Blight, two women from different cultural backgrounds, as well as Gilbert and Bernard, their husbands. Hortense and Gilbert are Jamaican immigrants in London and belong to the Windrush generation. The novel is set in post-war Britain and it delves into the experiences of first immigrants from the Caribbean. As Marquis states, *Small Island* "tells the story of the beginning of the diasporic shift that saw thousands of black West Indians migrate from the Caribbean to Britain" (39). It also shows us perspectives of white British women and men, and how different their outlooks on immigrants can be.

This paper will attempt to demonstrate and analyse ways in which Andrea Levy portrays black British women and their struggles in a still predominately white British society. I will focus on the difficulties Levy's women have to face on an everyday basis, considering their skin colour, gender, social class, as well as their relationships.

2. *Never Far From Nowhere:* Black Sister/White Sister

In *Never Far From Nowhere* Levy explores themes of self-acceptance and search for identity portraying the lives of two Jamaican British sisters, Olive and Vivien. Olive is much darker, whereas Vivien can almost pass as white, and this difference in their skin colour affect their lives tremendously. As Flajšarova suggests, the novel puts the theory of pigmentocracy in focus. According to this theory, „the darker the skin, the more likely people were to become victims of racial abuse" (3). As the sisters grow up in a predominantly white society, they face racial prejudice and discrimination on a daily basis. However, Vivien is in a better position than

Olive, as her skin colour is lighter. Unlike Olive, she rarely encounters derogatory terms directed at her. She blends in with her white peers without any problems and makes many friends. Olive, on the other hand, is mostly on her own. She finds it challenging to blend in with others, and she does not have many friends. Being dark-skinned, she faces more discrimination than her sister, but she is also very proud of who she is and aspires to break free from the limitations that society imposes on her. She has an unwavering drive to create her own destiny no matter the obstacles she faces every day as a black British woman. However, she consistently experiences a feeling of being, in Böck's words, "different" and faces challenges in forming her identity due to the absence of interaction with other black individuals who can relate to her and provide her with a sense of community (47). In the case of Olive being pulled over by the police, not only do they abuse her because she is black, but also because she is a woman as well, making her a victim of both racism and sexism. The police officers who stop her proceed to search her bag, falsely assuming she is a prostitute. They unjustly plant marijuana on her and subject her to psychological abuse, hurling derogatory remarks based solely on her skin colour. In their eyes, she is deemed guilty, despite the fact that these accusations are unfounded and driven by prejudice related to her skin colour and gender.

On the other hand, Vivien, who passes as white in a predominantly white British society, grapples with feelings of insecurity and self-doubt. She constantly struggles with her identity and feels pressured by society. The whole family evidently struggles with the prejudices they have to endure on a daily basis. They live in an almost exclusively white environment, and their distinctiveness from the wider society is predominantly based on racial differences rather than cultural ones. Vivien struggles with connecting to her ancestry far more than darker-skinned Olive does, but she still remains a target for discrimination. Embracing her black identity poses challenges for her, and she hesitates to fully accept it. She even goes as far as ignoring her own sister in public: " 'In't that your sister over there?' 'No,', I said, without looking" (Levy 108).

Even though she does not consciously attempt to pass for white, she avoids reflecting on her race in general (Böck 43). Olive, however, proudly accepts her black identity and proves it many times, especially to her mother: " "I'm black" I used to say, when I was old enough to butt in. "Don't be silly, Olive, you're not coloured, "No, Mum, I'm black" … Being black was not a bad thing, being black was something to be proud of" (11). As Pavlina Flajšarova notes, the sisters have a hard time understanding why they are struggling and why they are experiencing all the discrimination, while their mother Rose denies her blackness and her cultural and ethnic heritage in all the ways she can. Olive describes her mother's views as a person who "tried to believe that she was not black" (Levy 7).

The mother-daughter relationship is one of the central themes explored in this novel as well. The mother is partly to blame for the fact that the sisters grow up confused about their identity. She wants to assimilate to the British way of life. She tries to ignore racism and act as if it does not exist, while her children are aware of it but just cannot understand the reasons for it. The mother, being a first-generation immigrant, tries to raise her daughters to be fully British. As Böck notes, she associates blackness with a sense of inferiority, motivating her to work towards convincing her daughters that race holds no significance in shaping their identity (54).

With their views and aspirations constantly clashing with those of their mother, both girls have a very complex and difficult relationship with her, characterized by a mixture of love, tension, misunderstandings, and a lack of emotional connection. While Olive faces frequent punishment and insults from her mother, Vivien, on the other hand, is mostly neglected, as her mother hardly ever shows genuine interest in the things that bring Vivien joy. She wants her mother to be like other parents, to pay attention to what is important to her. In Vivien's eyes her mother has never loved her or done anything for her. This strained relationship between the mother and her daughters leads to anger, frustration, and a sense of not being understood. The girls consistently look for validation and support from friends or partners, as they do not receive

it from their mother, further deepening their disconnect from her. This relationship highlights the challenges of finding one's identity and fulfilling personal aspirations within restrictive and dysfunctional surroundings, as well as the challenges faced by immigrant families in a new environment.

The girls' identities as black British women are notably influenced by their relationships with peers and the feeling of belonging, particularly in their adolescent years. Böck claims that "this is a more challenging process for individuals who are marginalized on account of certain markers of social difference" (72). Böck also points out that the social environment in which they shape their identities is reflected in how they engage with people who are less closely connected to them (88). The main female protagonists strive for acceptance in a society marked by racial tensions and discrimination. Both of them face challenges in their quest for belonging while simultaneously seeking to connect with and embrace their Jamaican heritage. Olive, as already mentioned, longs for connection and belonging, as she accepts that she will never be able to fully fit in with white British people. She feels a deep longing to be somewhere among her own people, black people, who can understand her. On the other hand. She hangs out with white English friends and tries to act the same way as they do, even though she often feels uncomfortable. Vivien even tries to change the way she speaks and improve her accent in order to fit in better. All throughout the novel she constantly neglects her ancestry and finds it challenging to identify with her friends.

Another issue in this novel is the one of male-female relationships. Both Vivien's and Olive's relationships with men reflect tensions and power dynamics associated with race and gender. Olive's relationship with Peter is quite complex and problematic. At the beginning of their relationship, Olive thinks that he is "somebody who was going to change the world", but he ends up being successful only in changing her life for the worse (Levy 53). The problem arises when Olive gets pregnant. This poses a significant challenge for Olive because she

possesses limited knowledge about her own body, and she is equally uninformed about sex and protection, as no one has provided her with guidance in these areas of life. They begin a life together, but soon after their daughter is born, their relationship deteriorates. Olive, being a young mother, feels overwhelmed by the challenges she faces, yet Peter lacks empathy and comprehension. Evidently, Peter does not consider Olive his equal. During their fight, where she rightfully points out his failure to search for an apartment and recognizing the demanding nature of raising a child, he intensifies his insults even further: " 'You're definitely hysterical.' 'I'm not!' 'You are… You look like a stupid hysterical black cow to me' " (Levy 125). Insulting her based on her race and gender was something Olive found utterly unforgivable.

Just like Olive, Vivien also has trouble finding a boyfriend and developing a relationship, because, apparently "while the boys themselves do not want to date Vivien on account of her 'Black' features, they still treat her as a possession of theirs" (Böck 74). This highlights their perplexing stance on racial diversity, as these white British men express a preference for dating exclusively white women, leading them to avoid Vivien. This further reveals their dubious views on women, regarding them as mere objects and possessions. Nonetheless, she eventually forms a relationship with a white man. By doing so, she defies societal expectations and prejudices, shedding light on the intricate nature of interracial relationships. Unlike Peter, Eddie, Vivien's boyfriend, is a far more understanding and supportive character. He encourages Vivien and genuinely respects her and her sister. He helps the family as much as he can and offers Olive a crying shoulder. Even though he is respectful and does not care about Viven's social status, she puts an end to their relationship because he "embarrassed her in front of her college friends … demonstrating his lack of education" (Böck 88).

2.1. The issue of class in *Never Far From Nowhere*

By addressing aspects of social class, *Never Far From Nowhere* sheds light on other challenges black immigrants, usually from working class backgrounds have to face: "Olive and me were born in London. Not within the sound of Bow bells, wherever they were, but in Islington, north London…But what was then, and as we grew up, just a notch above a slum" (Levy 4). They constantly face financial struggles and have limited opportunities in comparison to their wealthier peers. They constantly feel the need to prove themselves, especially to white English children.

Vivien, who is a determined young woman, relentlessly strives to fulfil her aspirations of becoming a film director, aiming to overcome the limitations set by her working-class background. However, society is not letting her climb the social ladder. Once again, she becomes a target of prejudices and stereotypes. The principal at school does not let her do A-levels, because he thinks that she (as a black person) is unable to pass them. Trouble arises even from the language she uses, as the principal "thinks we're thick as shit, just 'cause we don't talk like that lot" (160). However, Böck states that she eventually "gains access to higher education despite the obstacles imposed by most of her teachers' low expectations and the lack of parental support, both of which are issues predominantly related to her working-class background" (92).

Olives' social class also influences the way she is perceived and treated. She faces a series of problems with social workers and the social security system which is often insensitive and unresponsive to the needs of immigrants and members of ethnic minorities. She found herself in a complex situation, as her husband left her for another woman, leaving her to raise a child alone without financial support. However, the process of getting money and an apartment from the unemployment office was extremely difficult. The consistent problem in contemporary London are the overcrowded unemployment offices and slow procedures, given

that immigrants are largely from lower socioeconomic classes. The racial biases at the time also contributes to the lack of empathy and support, making it difficult for her to access the assistance she needs. These struggles with social workers in the novel reflect broader issues of institutional racism and classism prevalent in contemporary Britain.

3. *Fruit of the Lemon:* Looking for the roots

In *Fruit of the Lemon* another young woman, Faith Jackson, is facing difficulties in finding her place within British society. Just like protagonists in other analysed novels in this paper, she is a second-generation Jamaican British woman who embarks on a journey of self-discovery, filled with questions about her cultural identity and belonging. Faith is extremely disconnected from her Jamaican heritage, as her parents gave almost no answers to her questions about Jamaica, their ancestors, and their family. She is, therefore, caught between two cultures and feels a strong desire to reconcile these conflicting aspects of her identity. The clash between, as Toplu says, her "black" and "British" identity stems mainly from society's failure or reluctance to acknowledge the black girl's entitlement to be treated on equal terms with any other British-born citizen, regardless of her race or colour (5).

Laursen argues that this second generation of children, born and raised in Britain, do not possess the necessary tools to understand "how modern racism is rooted in the traumatic histories of slavery and colonialism" because they have been deprived of stories of the past (58). Faith is forced to piece together information and form her own version of the family history because her parents rarely talk about it. While her parents aim to protect her by steering clear of discussions about Jamaica's history of colonialism and slavery, it has a completely opposite impact on Faith. She is left with "no source that can help her navigate her identity in a society that is often quite hostile towards her" (Conrod 17).

She faces racial discrimination from the early school days as children address her in derogatory terms and make hurtful remarks about her parents' arrival on a banana boat. Racist incidents occur all throughout her childhood and continue into her adult life. However, in the first part of the novel, Faith still identifies mostly with white British people, and she even shares a flat with three of them. Her flatmates consider her a friend and do not treat her any differently. In contrast, the family of her childhood friend Marion "treat Faith as one of the family, while exposing their hatred towards other blacks in Faith's presence" (Toplu 5). In Marion's words, it is a "cultural thing" (Levy 93). Nonetheless, it is evident that she does not enjoy the same benefits as her flatmates. They all have a higher social status than Faith, which further emphasizes the contrast between them. Eventually, she begins to notice that she attracts peculiar looks, prompting her to delve deeper into an identity crisis. Upon finishing art school, she becomes even more "color-conscious" (Toplu 3).

More issues arise when she gets the job in the costume department of BBC Television Centre, a predominately white work environment. She faces discrimination when seeking a job promotion as well. She wants to become a dresser, but the BBC "don't have black dressers" (Levy 79). They conducted the interview with no intention of hiring her, as they questioned her about unrelated matters and seemed to mock her. Despite this, she eventually manages to secure her position at BBC. According to Conrad, "this is the first time in the novel Faith openly and vocally acknowledges her skin colour and the fact that it may lead to discrimination" (25). Another instance where Faith confronts her black identity is when her parents express their desire for her to marry Noel, who is of the same cultural background as them. Faith is embarrassed by her parents' behaviour and she does not want anything to do with Noel. She does not want to "succumb to public expectation of a marriage within the same race" (Flajšarova 23).

3.1. Going (back) to Jamaica; "Everyone should know where they come from"

Faith becomes aware of her lack of cultural belonging after she visits her friend Simon's family home in the countryside. Walking around with him and his family, she acknowledges how everything around her is steeped in history and how much family history means to an individual. She also sees a family tree made of portraits in gilded frames on a wall, which makes her "painfully aware of her own lack of cultural belonging" (Assmann 131). This growing awareness of being black isolates her and alienates her from her white friends. However, she is compelled to recognize her "difference" only after she witnesses a racist attack against a black woman. The woman was injured in an attack, and her bookshop was demolished, but no one seemed to care and help her except Faith and Simon. As Conrod notes, Faith is deeply taken aback by the police's behaviour, as they accuse the bookshop of their own carelessness and blame it all on black people, so-called "thugs" (28). She is also the only one who has compassion for the black female bookshop owner, recognizing that the police were unjustly holding the woman responsible for the attack. Finally, with her friends being oblivious to the racially motivated attack and unwilling to sympathize with the black woman, Faith becomes hopeless. After she covers all her mirrors and isolates herself from everyone, her parents propose a trip to Jamaica, because, as her mother says "everyone should know where they come from" (Levy 162). Before she went to Jamaica, she could not associate her identity with the country and she did not want to exchange it with her British identity (Flajšarova 24).

At London's airport her first impression of Jamaican people is ironically equal to that of colonizers: "Shabby-looking people. Shabby-looking black people" (Levy 166). As she starts to explore her Jamaican roots, she finds out more about the legacy of slavery and its impact on her family's history which makes her question her place in society and her own understanding of her identity as a woman of Jamaican descent. As soon as she reaches Jamaica, she is faced

with an image she has never seen before – an entirely black environment. She feels out of place, but somehow it all looks a little familiar. While in Britain the thing blocking her from blending in with the others was her skin colour, in Jamaica it was her "ignorance of certain aspects of the culture" that made her stand out (Conrod 35). Throughout the journey, she gradually uncovers the stories of her ancestors through tales shared by various family members.

Even though she still holds on to some of the prejudices with which she came to Jamaica, she slowly starts to assimilate and realize that things are different from what she imagined them to be, and that maybe she could finally identify with her culture. She listens to the stories with passion and interest, which shows how eager she is to finally discover and firmly establish her identity. In Assmann's words, the family's history provides Faith with "a sense of rootedness and belonging", giving her a stable foundation to come back to (132). She now identifies with both British and Jamaican identity and realizes that they are complementary to each other. The poem "Lemon Tree" by Will Holt, written at the beginning of this novel indicates such an experience of identity:

> Lemon tree very pretty
>
> And the lemon flower is sweet
>
> But the fruit of the poor lemon
>
> Is impossible to eat (Levy, n.p.)

Fajšarova states that this nice, but inedible sour lemon represents the duality of identity. Although Faith might be officially recognized as a British citizen by law, she will never be accepted by the white public as a fully-fledged British citizen (25).

The already mentioned banana boat on which Faith's parents came to Britain is mentioned at the end of the novel too: "I was coming home to tell everyone…My mum and dad came to England on a banana boat" (Levy 339). Toplu claims that "the banana boat signifies all the Jamaicans who arrive in the 'Motherland' looking for work" (119). Despite finding it

offensive at first, Faith eventually becomes proud of this symbol. We can argue that Faith finally embraces her true self with no sense of shame, confidently affirming her identity as a proud British woman of Jamaican origin. However, she still feels like England is a place she can call home. Through the amalgamation of homeland and motherland, Toplu claims that "the text provides a view of a new global hybrid identity and the future of multicultural Britishness" (12). The ending points out her ability to connect with her roots which become an important part of her identity.

4. *Small Island:* Postwar London and where it all started

In *Small Island* Levy focuses on two main female characters, Hortense, a black Jamaican woman, and Queenie, a white English woman living in post-war London. Along with two female narrators, there are two male narrators, Hortense's husband Joseph Gilbert and Queenie's husband Bernard. As opposed to the two other analysed novels, which explore the lives of second-generation immigrants, *Small Island* delves into the experiences of the Windrush generation. Hortense, a Jamaican woman who moves to London as a first-generation immigrant, encounters racial discrimination and grapples with fitting into a society that perceives her as an outsider. Together with her husband, she rents a room at a boarding house owned by Queenie, a white British woman. Queenie begins to run a boarding house on her own after her husband Bernard goes to war and does not come back for a few years. She is a woman who hails from a rural background, challenges conventional gender norms, and forms unconventional bonds. However, as Duboin states, both Hortense and Queenie share a common destiny. Both of them departed from their homes at a young age to receive a proper education, aiming to enhance their prospects. Subsequently, both entered marriage as a means of escaping a less-than-promising social environment (30).

4.1. Hortense – to be or not to be British

Hortense Roberts embodies the struggle of black women in 1940s London, as she strives to discover and shape her own identity and find her place in society. She illustrates the ambition, hope, and determination of Caribbean women who left their homes to find a better life in Britain. In Evelyn's words, she wishes "to escape Jamaica … and step into the British middle-class life" (135). Before she leaves Jamaica, she marries Gilbert, as only married woman can travel without any hurdles. She is elegant, proper and carries herself with a sense of dignity and pride. Furthermore, Hortense wants to have a composed and refined life, and sees herself as the homemaker and cook. Her uptightiness is backed up by her middle-class upbringing in Jamaica, as she feels entitled to a certain social status in England too. Therefore, "Hortense's dream is a fiction of an English home based on the colonial ideals instilled in her" (Evelyn 145). Unlike Hortense who views life idealistically, Gilbert, her husband, has a more pragmatic and realistic outlook on life. Hortense never envisioned her life confined to a small, dingy room, as she expected her husband would provide her with a pristine English home. Her heavy misplaced trunk, represents both the "newcomer's will to take root in England" and their simultaneous struggle to find a stable and permanent place to call home (Duboin 26).

Throughout the novel, she constantly faces numerous challenges and eventually becomes frustrated with the way white English people treat her. This frustration, combined with isolation and cultural shock, adds to her internal struggles. Firstly, she encounters challenges as a black teacher even in Jamaica, highlighting differences between white teachers and black teachers keeping peace in class:

> Those white women whose superiority encircled them like an aureole, could quieten any raucous gathering by just placing a finger to a lip. … As I prepared my lessons ready

> for the next day, I resolved to summon every tissue of purpose within me to command that class to look on me with respect (Levy 69).

Furthermore, her attempts to fit into England's education system are usually met with rejection. For example, Hortense holds the belief that her academic credentials will open doors to a better life, but her dreams are shattered when the Department of Education rejects her. According to the Department, she is not qualified to teach in England, even though she was a teacher in Jamaica. For Hortense, even the most insignificant social interactions are imbued with the sense of awkwardness and detachment. This implies, according to Andermahr, "that for Black migrants trauma is not experienced as a single overwhelming event, but as an ongoing series of micro-aggressions" (12).

In addition to grappling with the unfamiliar culture she encounters, she also faces challenges regarding differences in manners and what is considered socially acceptable. There are many instances where she is shocked at how white British people behave. This can be seen in the part of the novel when Queenie and Hortense meet for the first time:

> I opened the door wider for her before she thought me impolite…But she walked straight through, even though I had not formally invited her (Levy 227).
>
> And then she sat down on a chair and invited me to come and sit with her. But this was my home, it was for me to tell her when to sit (Levy 229).

What we witness here are two women from completely different cultural backgrounds who are unable to understand each other and are unaware that their actions could potentially offend the other person.

4.2. Queenie – (not) a traditional English woman

The novel starts with Queenie reminiscing about her visit to London and the British Empire Exhibition when she was a little girl. As Duboin states, "the exhibition draws a new

cartography of Britain's hegemonic expansionism, since the edges of Empire, its scattered colonies, are de-territorialized to be re-located withing the center" (16). At the exhibition, she saw a black man for the first time in her life. Duboin adds that her childish reaction, fear, and embarrassment, clearly reveal a strong racial prejudice ingrained in her (17-18). She grew up in a household where, being the only daughter of a butcher, she had to do all the work and help her mother, while her brothers did not do anything. She was "maid-of-all-poultry – scruffy apron, tatty headscarf with a scraper and bucket" (Levy 243). Coming of age as a woman between the two World Wars in Britain involved contending with social constraints, leading to a sense of inferiority. Due to Queenie's rebellious nature, her mother sent her to London to live with her aunt, hoping that the change would help her become more ladylike.

After spending some time in London, Queenie meets Bernard, who eventually becomes her husband. However, he is soon enlisted in the military and stationed abroad, which means that Queenie is left on her own in London during the war. Queenie also feels "voiceless" and "to gain voice, she subverted dominant culture which told her it was not acceptable to have relationships and communication with black migrants by inviting black migrants into home" ("*Small Island*'s Queenie as a Proto Feminist Agent"). However, she finds herself attracted to Michael Roberts, a black Jamaican man with whom she has an affair. This affair defies her sense of loyalty and societal norms, forcing her to confront her identity as a white British woman. However, after he leaves, she finds out that she is pregnant and eventually gives birth to a baby boy.

As Andermahr points out, Levy represented the birth of the baby in a comical way, emphasizing the irony of the characters' post-war circumstances. This was accomplished through Hortense, now a married woman leading a respectable life, and Queenie, an unmarried mother of a mixed-race child (21). Furthermore, the baby's name, Michael, is the name of his father, a black Jamaican man. Therefore, he represents both a fresh start and the complex

inheritance of history (20). For Queenie, as Andermahr says, growing up in the era of the British Empire, the idea of a non-racist upbringing in the 1940s is unimaginable because white individuals dominate society (22). She thinks that only black parents can properly raise a black child. In order to keep her baby safe, she decides to give her baby to Hortense and Gilbert: “I just want him to be with people who’ll understand, Can’t you see? His own kind… I know you could give him a better life than I ever could” (Levy 522).

Her husband, Bernard, who eventually returns from the war, strongly opposes the presence of black people in their house and holds racist views. In Evelyn's words, Queenie’s boarding house was Hortense’s and Gilbert’s safe space, which lost its “role as a diasporic hub” when Bernard forced them to leave (143). Bernard’s actions symbolize an “exclusionary redefinition of national belonging“, as he attempts to send people back where they belong, treating them as mere “pawns to be moved about“ (144). Queenie’s worldview is strongly opposed to that of her husband, as she actively defies racist attitudes, and is tolerant of black people. She opposes the white racist society by welcoming blacks into her house and befriending them, as well as entering a relationship with a black man. This way, she demonstrates her ability to bridge cultural gaps and stand up against the predominately racist British society.

5. Conclusion

In this final paper, I have attempted to demonstrate and analyse how Andrea Levy portrays British-born girls of Jamaican origin in her novels *Never Far From Nowhere*, *Fruit of the Lemon* and women belonging to the Windrush generation in *Small Island*. I have focused on Levy's representations of black women in a predominantly white post-war and contemporary Britain and how the issues such as skin colour, gender and social class affect the formation of identity. Her characters are young black women trying to find themselves as well as fit into a society that continually marginalizes and discriminates them.

The first novel I have analysed is *Never Far From Nowhere*. Levy portrays two sisters of Jamaican descent, Olive and Vivien. Their stories offer a look into a society that marginalizes people based only on their skin colour. Vivien who has lighter skin and is sometimes perceived as a white woman. Olive who is darker is represented as a woman whose life is much harder than her sister's. Faith, the main protagonist in *Fruit of the Lemon*, also faces difficulties like the sisters in *Never Far From Nowhere* but has a strong desire to connect to her roots. Her journey to Jamaica helps her explore her black heritage, and she learns how to accept herself as a black British woman of Jamaican descent.

Unlike the female characters in the first two novels I have analysed, Hortense, one of the female protagonists in *Small Island*, is not a British-born girl, but a first-generation immigrant from the Caribbean. Hortense's perspective shows all the obstacles the first-generation immigrants faced as non-white people who just wanted to settle down and secure a better future for their families in postwar London and Britain in general.

Levy's works provide a platform for exploring the multifaceted experiences of black women, giving voice to their struggles, aspirations, and resilience in the face of social and cultural constraints. Levy shows in her novels that even though British society has turned multicultural towards the end of the 20th century, her protagonists often end up being caught in

the middle, not knowing where they truly belong. They experience difficulty identifying with their black culture and heritage, on the one hand, while still not being ‘English’ enough, on the other.

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7. BLACK BRITISH WOMEN IN ANDREA LEVY'S NOVELS: Summary and key words

This final paper sets out to explore the ways in which Andrea Levy, a contemporary British writer, portrays black women of Jamaican descent in three of her novels: *Never Far From Nowhere, Fruit of the Lemon,* and *Small Island*. The paper analyses Levy's novels and the main protagonists in the context of racism, discrimination, gender inequality and the formation of identity in post-war and contemporary Britain.

Key words: Andrea Levy, British identity, black woman, *Never Far From Nowhere, Fruit of the Lemon, Small Island,*

8. CRNE BRITANKE U ROMANIMA ANDREE LEVY: Sažetak i ključne riječi

Ovaj završni rad nastoji istražiti načine na koje Andrea Levy, suvremena britanska spisateljica, prikazuje crne žene jamajčanskog podrijetla u tri svoja romana: *Never Far From Nowhere, Fruit of the Lemon i Small Island*. U radu se analiziraju Levyjini romani i glavni protagonisti u kontekstu rasizma, diskriminacije, rodne neravnopravnosti i oblikovanja identiteta u poslijeratnoj i suvremenoj Britaniji.

Ključne riječi: Andrea Levy, britanski identitet, crna žena, *Never Far From Nowhere, Fruit of the Lemon, Small Island*