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**Maps of Belonging:  
Black British Identity in Andrea Levy's *Fruit of the Lemon***

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## Abstract

This MA thesis aims to explore Black British identity and perceptions of belonging in Andrea Levy's *Fruit of the Lemon* by paying attention to the stories that connect Jamaica and Britain. Although the migration from Jamaica to London is conventionally thought to have started with the arrival of the *Empire Windrush* in 1948, the public narratives of the Windrush moment should not take precedence over other stories. Drawing on Paul Gilroy's notions of *roots* and *routes* in his *The Black Atlantic* and Christina Sharpe's metaphor of *the wake* in her book titled *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*, this thesis argues that *Fruit of the Lemon* could be read as a literary intervention to the public narratives of the Windrush history. The analysis addresses the silence regarding racism and colonial history. It also shows how these silences create tension between Britishness and Blackness. By examining how the protagonist of the novel, Faith forges a firmer sense of belonging; this thesis claims that Faith's engagement with her family history can be modelled on Sharpe's metaphor of *the wake*. The analysis suggests that Faith is able to embrace her Black British identity only after learning about intertwined stories and *routes* that connect Jamaica and Britain.

## 1.Introduction

“Identity! Sometimes it makes my head hurt - sometimes my heart. So what am I? Where do I fit into Britain, 2000 and beyond?” (2000, 1) asks Andrea Levy in her essay titled “This is my England”, addressing issues of national identity and belonging, two key concepts shared by both contemporary British studies and postcolonial theory. In the colonial context of Britain, migration necessarily evokes an image of the ship and one of the most remarkable ships in British collective memory is the *Empire Windrush*, which sailed from then a British colony Jamaica, to the imperial centre London on 22 June 1948, carrying 492 Jamaican migrants and thus marking the beginning of post-war mass migration to Britain. The period between 1948 and 1971, then came to be known as “the Windrush era”. This historical moment of arrival as J.Dillon Brown and Leah Roade Rosenberg observe “stands metonymically as a marker for the emergence of an increasingly multicultural national polity, in which the old self-understanding of Englishness as racially white gradually cedes prominence to a newer conception of Britishness” (2015, 3).

The Windrush narrative has been challenged over time as several historical inaccuracies were noted regarding the number of passengers, their profile in terms of gender and nationality along with the assumed route of the ship (Mead 2009, 141-142). Similarly, it was discovered that there had been other ships bringing immigrants to London (Kushner 2012, 164). Nevertheless, the *Empire Windrush* remained a powerful signifier in British cultural memory and it stood for the beginning of post-war migration from the colonies, particularly from the Caribbean, as Matthew Mead convincingly argues:

*The Windrush myth attains its symbolic resonance and power not through historical accuracy but precisely through the selective construction and repeated inscription of this “moment” on the national consciousness at a profound time of cultural change which confirms, validates and values the arrival and continuing presence of a Caribbean community* (2009, 144).

As a symbol, the Windrush moment received public attention repeatedly and gained new meanings over time. The 50th anniversary commemoration of the arrival of the *Empire Windrush* in 1998 was the most notable event in remembering the legacy of the iconic journey. The event was followed by a BBC adaptation of the story for television, which introduced Black British history to a larger audience. The public visibility of the Windrush moment increased with the opening of Windrush Square in Brixton and the suggestion of a Windrush Day to be celebrated on June 22 (Peplow 2019, 212-219). In 2006, the *Empire Windrush* was named among national icons for ‘The ICONS - A Portrait of England’ project. Although this choice might seem ironic at first glance, it proves how the legacy of Windrush is embedded in collective memory; portraying British society as welcoming and multiracial, an understanding motivated by the political agenda of the time. Simon Peplow, too, interprets the

inclusion of the *Empire Windrush* in the list as “New Labour’s promotion of its multicultural policies” (2019, 223).

The *Empire Windrush* continued to be a cherished symbol and gained even more popularity after its representation in the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games in 2012. However, in 2018, the name “Windrush” hit the headlines with a scandal regarding the immigration policy. The status of a number of Caribbean-born Windrush immigrants was deemed illegal due to inadequacy of documentation. Consequently, these people were excluded from getting legal residency, medical care, and employment (Hewitt 2020, 108). The incident became widely known as “the Windrush Scandal” and the name “Windrush” came to be associated with exclusion from rather than inclusion in society. Recently, scholars have started to address this ambivalence regarding the legacy of the *Empire Windrush* and study it alongside Brexit. Ronald Cummings, for instance, reads the Windrush history and Brexit as “narratives of arrivals and borders” (2020, 596). Indeed, the Windrush moment signifies the relocation of colonial subjects to the imperial centre and problematizes the borders of the empire while Brexit brings about re-evaluation of national borders in the contemporary geopolitical context. Both concepts raise several questions which boil down to perceptions of belonging as Cummings observes “Brexit and the Windrush scandal as twin manifestations of border anxieties that structure debates about citizenship and belonging in contemporary Britain” (2020, 593). Given the story of the *Empire Windrush* and what it represents in collective memory, literary reflections of the Windrush era frequently dwell on identity, belonging, and displacement.

Andrea Levy’s family history is closely linked to the Windrush narratives, since her father sailed on the *Empire Windrush*, from Jamaica to Britain in 1948 and her mother followed him after six months. Levy was born and raised in London, so her works are conventionally categorized as part of contemporary British literature or Black British literature rather than the Caribbean or Anglo-Caribbean literature. Edward Baugh discusses whether to include London-born writers like Levy in the tradition of Caribbean writers and points out the impossibility of distinguishing between those labels when he comments on Levy’s situation as follows: “She has described herself as ‘a British person’ but she is also a product of the Caribbean diaspora, and her writing is very much concerned with the Caribbean diaspora in Britain. All of this suggests the reductiveness of categorization” (2007, 49). Among these debates in terms of categorization, Levy published five novels, *Every Light in the House Burnin’* (1994), *Never Far From Nowhere* (1996), *Fruit of the Lemon* (1999), *Small Island* (2004), *The Long Song* (2010) and a collection *Six Stories and an Essay* (2014) yet, she is mostly known for her award-winning fourth novel *Small Island* (2004). Having received the Whitbread Book of the Year Award and the Orange Prize for Fiction, *Small Island* was adapted to television by the

BBC, which earned Levy a broader public recognition. It is also possible to say Levy's previous novels have been overshadowed by the appraisal of *Small Island* and they have not yet received sufficient scholarly attention despite playing a significant role in the development of Levy's narrative style and keen interest in exploring connections between the stories of the two islands, namely Jamaica and Britain. Levy's third novel, *Fruit of the Lemon* (1999) is exemplary in that regard. The novel focuses on Faith Jackson, a London-born daughter of Jamaican parents who migrated to Britain during the Windrush era. Levy explores Faith's identity crisis and how she forges a firmer sense of belonging in London after learning about the intertwined history of Britain and Jamaica. *Fruit of the Lemon* is divided into three main chapters: England, Jamaica and England again. There are several subdivisions within the Jamaica chapter, each named after stories told to Faith, mostly by her aunt Coral and sometimes by other relatives or acquaintances during her visit there. As we hear new stories, the family tree presented on the first page of the novel grows and Faith gradually gains a better understanding of the interwoven roots of empire, which gives her a better understanding of what belonging amounts to.

*Fruit of the Lemon* was well received by critics. The novel won the Arts Council Writer's Award in 1998 and the Authors Foundation Award in 2001. Most critical studies on the novel analyze the concepts of home, displacement, identity and memory. Although Levy's writing is not conventionally considered to be part of postcolonial literature, postcolonial theory proved to be helpful for the analysis of Levy's novels as Michael Perfect observes "Levy has increasingly sought to address complex questions about the relationship between contemporary Britain and its imperial history, and her third and fourth novels – *Fruit of the Lemon* (1999) and *Small Island* (2004) engage directly with colonialism, migration and diaspora" (2010, 31). Two Saidian notions, *the travelling theory* and *the contrapuntal* were employed in the reading of *Fruit of the Lemon* by Weihsin Gui (2012) and Michael Perfect (2010) respectively.

Gui offers Edward Said's *travelling theory* for the analysis of V.S. Naipaul's *The Enigma of Arrival* and *Fruit of the Lemon*. He claims that both writers take migration as their starting point and provide a critique of Thatcherite heritage discourse and thus, their novels become post-heritage narratives. In that sense, these novels are in parallel with Saidian *travelling theory* that blends the movement of people with the movement of ideas. Gui also notes travelling in that sense is an enriching process given that Naipaul's and Levy's critical interventions to the mainstream British heritage narrative add up to the heritage discourse. Perfect introduces another Saidian notion, *the contrapuntal*, to understand silences as well as the multiplicity of the voices. Said borrows the notion from musicology and adapts it for the reading of the texts engaging with colonialism. According to Said, a text can be read

*contrapuntally* by attending to its interwoven stories, voices and its historical silences that unfold the complexities of experiences that might go unnoticed in mainstream narratives. In his article, Perfect argues that not only Levy's works can be read *contrapuntally* but they also constitute a form of *contrapuntal writing* by engaging with historical silences and employing several narrators.

As exemplified in *Fruit of the Lemon*, historical silences and repression of unpleasant memories might have psychological outcomes so the notion of memory is revisited in several readings of the novel. Ole Birk Laursen (2012) argues that the arrival of the *Empire Windrush* to Britain was a rupture in British history and Levy's works embody this rupture in their form and subject matter. Since Levy started to engage more closely in the shared history of the two islands and the legacy of colonialism with her third novel, Laursen examines *Fruit of the Lemon* and Levy's more recent works, *Small Island* and *The Long Song*. In her analysis, Laursen introduces Marianne Hirsh's concept of *postmemory*, which characterizes "the experience of those who grow up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth" (53) and she links this concept with Levy's writing since Levy writes about memories of slavery, colonialism and migration. In this regard, Laursen claims that Levy's works take the form of *postmemory*. Claudia Marquis (2012), too, borrows Hirsh's concept of *postmemory* for her analysis of *Fruit of the Lemon* and compares Levy's novel with George Lamming's *In the Castle of My Skin* as both writers focus on decolonization and experiment with narrative styles. Marquis' analysis of *Fruit of the Lemon* concentrates on how family chronicles unfold the collective memory of slavery and colonization. Marquis argues that the Caribbean is a *post memorial* place for the children of immigrants who grew up in Britain and she draws attention to the treatment of family photos as links between the past and the present in *Fruit of the Lemon*, which aligns her reading of the novel closely with Hirsh's notion of *postmemory*. Thomas Bonnici's (2009) analysis of *Fruit of the Lemon* dwells on memory as well. He sees collective memory as a powerful tool against the discourse of colonialism. For Bonnici, orature is a vehicle to pass on collective memory and to rewrite the history of the Caribbean people. Thus, he problematizes the lack of oral tradition in *Fruit of the Lemon* as well as social and historical silences regarding slavery and migration. Bonnici concludes that reconnecting with folk history helps resolve Faith's identity crisis.

Elena Machado Sáez (2006) draws attention to silences in terms of race, colonialism and migration both in Faith's family and in society at large. Sáez sees these silences as a result of consumer multiculturalism which does not facilitate an understanding of colonial history and its impact on contemporary society but instead creates indifference and reduces ethnicity to a commodity. She relates Faith's nervous breakdown to this ongoing social situation as she struggles to define her place in British society in the face of systematic silences. Njeri Githire (2010) takes consumption into focus



and explores how the sensory and cultural associations of food are connected to identity by not only studying the way taste brings people together but also the role of cultural encounters and colonialism in this process. Githere also draws attention to how food is employed as a trope in diasporic narratives and asserts that Levy's works use food as an effective tool to highlight the legacy of colonialism and as a marker of belonging and non-belonging to a society. In connection to the notion of belonging, Şule Okuroğlu Özün and Canan Kuzgun explore the understanding of home in the diasporic context of *Fruit of the Lemon* as they introduce two concepts: homing desire, which they define as "one's wish to have a place that can be named as home" (2018, 302) and homing conflict, which corresponds to "the experience of the immigrants from former colonies who have not lost touch with their native culture" (*ibid.*). They conclude that the protagonist of the novel suffers from homing desire but reconnecting with her ancestral land grounds her sense of belonging as she re-evaluates her relationship with the two islands as well as with the past and the present.

Şebnem Toplu (2005) suggests that the protagonist of *Fruit of the Lemon* struggles with both racism and gender discrimination. She supports her claim by noting the lack of male experience, which could be exemplified in the case of Faith's brother, Carl's. Since there is not enough textual evidence that Carl goes through the same difficulties as Faith, Toplu suggests that Faith is doubly marginalized as a black female character. While Toplu believes that Faith's nervous breakdown results from the incompatibility between her black identity and her British identity, her argument is criticized by other scholars. Bonnici finds this claim reductive (2009, 194) and Sáez opposes Toplu's idea by asserting that it is not an internal conflict stemming from a tension between race and citizenship, it is rather a social conflict, resulting from a state of difference blindness that discourages engagement with the problems experienced in a multiracial society (2006, 13).

Both Gui's and Marquis' approaches to *Fruit of the Lemon* gesture towards a notable pattern in the analysis of Levy's works. Her novels are often compared with novels written by the previous generation of Caribbean writers such as V.S Naipaul, George Lamming and Sam Selvon, given that both the first and second generation writers of the Caribbean diaspora engage in similar themes but offer their own perspective on the Windrush era. For instance, the works of first generation writers are primarily male-centred but as a female writer, Levy is interested in "women being written back" into the Windrush narratives. (Evelyn 2013, 131). Historical silences and memory are discussed in many analyses such as that of Bonnici, Perfect and Sáez, which suggests another pattern. Sharing the same focus, some interpretations are still limited in scope. When Laursen proposes using the idea of rupture to historically and psychologically contextualize the Windrush narratives, she narrows down her attention to trauma theories despite the potential to be explored as a broader concept. Surprisingly, the

image of the ship, though being in the centre of the Windrush narratives as an epoch-making trope, is largely missing in the analyses of *Fruit of the Lemon*. Instead, critical attention appears to concentrate on notions of home, trauma and memory. However, the ship as an image has a prominent role in journeys between Jamaica and Britain, from slavery to migration and the *Empire Windrush* becomes the embodiment of these relations. It functions as a cultural symbol that is perpetuated in collective memory and turned into a myth for explaining and justifying the presence of people from the colonies in multiracial Britain.

Inspired by the significance of the ship in the Windrush history, I will trace the wake of those ships crisscrossing the Atlantic and intertwining histories of Jamaica and Britain. Drawing on Paul Gilroy's understanding of *roots* and *routes* and Christina Sharpe's conceptualization of *the wake*, I will explore Black British identity and perceptions of belonging in Andrea Levy's *Fruit of the Lemon*. While the following chapter titled "Crisscrossing the Atlantic" will elaborate more on the theoretical framework, the chapter named "Submerged Histories, Uncomfortable Silences" will analyze *Fruit of the Lemon* as a literary intervention to the Windrush myth and focus on systematic silences about colonial history, slavery and racism. Finally, "*Routes to the Wake*" will combine Gilroy's and Sharpe's ideas to understand how Faith overcomes her identity crisis and merges a firmer sense of belonging through learning about the complexities of imperial history which brings the shores of the Atlantic closer.

## 2. Crisscrossing the Atlantic

Dwelling on the figure of the ship and the legacy of the *Empire Windrush* inevitably brings the Atlantic into focus. From slaves to modern-day migrants, passengers crossing the Atlantic bring the distant shores of the ocean closer by their stories and experiences. Paul Gilroy's and Christina Sharpe's ideas unite in their attention to the ocean, ships, and slavery. While Gilroy is interested in the sailing ship as a motif, Sharpe focuses specifically on slave ships along with their historical and cultural consequences. Since both critics are keen to explore the dimension of black identity, their ideas will be useful in the analysis of *Fruit of the Lemon*.

### 2.1. Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic*

Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* has been highly influential in cultural and literary studies. Since its publication in 1993, it has inspired discussions on limitations of nationalist perspectives, possibilities of transnationalism and connections between culture and politics. Gilroy starts the first chapter of his book by claiming that “[s]triving to be both European and black requires some specific forms of double consciousness” (1993, 1). Unfolding this color-coded doubleness becomes one of the tasks Gilroy undertakes in his book. Gilroy goes against reductive formations of national identity and culture that position blacks as non-beings in the context of Britain. He problematizes the way race is understood as a marker of belonging since it creates a contradiction between blackness and Englishness. Gilroy believes that this binary opposition is artificially created by political discourse and it reflects the idea of culture as being rooted in ethnic and racial difference so he writes “These strange conflicts emerged in circumstances where blackness and Englishness appeared suddenly to be mutually exclusive attributes and where the conspicuous antagonism between them proceeded on the terrain of culture, not that of politics” (*ibid.*, 20). When thinking about the definitions of culture and cultural studies, Gilroy asks whose culture is being taken into focus and highlights the strong ties between English culture, history, politics and cultural studies as a discipline. He believes a broader perspective, which will situate blacks as a legitimate part of these definitions, is necessary.

The limitations of binary thinking lead Gilroy to come up with other means to understand and describe Black British experience, so he sets out on “an intellectual journey across the Atlantic” (*ibid.*, 4) as he puts it. This intellectual journey inspires Gilroy to focus on things that connect and separate the shores of the Atlantic ocean. While dwelling on oceanic journeys, Gilroy recalls the prominent English painter J.M.W Turner's maritime paintings that establish the image of a ship as an aesthetic part of British culture. He then turns his attention to one particular painting that depicts a slave ship throwing

dead bodies overboard. He recognizes the painting's "self-conscious moral power and the striking way that it aims directly for the sublime in its invocation of racial terror, commerce, and England's ethico-political degeneration" (*ibid.*, 16), but he is more interested in what the ship as a symbol has to offer. For Gilroy, the image of a sailing ship symbolizes mobility and characterizes the relations between Africa, Europe, the United States and the Caribbean. This image also functions as a reminder of a slave ship, which is essential to understand the historical aspect of these relations as Gilroy writes:

*The ship provides a chance to explore the articulations between the discontinuous histories of England's ports, its interfaces with the wider world. Ships also refer us back to the middle passage, to the half remembered micro-politics of the slave trade and its relationship to both industrialisation and modernisation (ibid., 17).*

This new way of thinking concentrated on transatlantic connections helps Gilroy to challenge nation-focused and ethnically-exclusive frameworks through which belonging is described. Rather than relying on narrow nationalism, he suggests that "cultural historians could take the Atlantic as one single, complex unit of analysis in their discussions of the modern world and use it to produce an explicitly transnational and intercultural perspective" (*ibid.*, 15). Gilroy is keen to describe the black history, diaspora and modernity in more fluid terms than what he considers to be inherently rigid in Eurocentric or Afrocentric thoughts. He introduces the concept of *the black Atlantic*<sup>1</sup>, which brings the Atlantic ocean and transatlantic journeys into focus to understand the transnational dynamics of the black diasporic identity. So he believes that critical engagement with the ships that sailed across the Atlantic and with their transnational *routes* offer a broader perspective to the experiences of black communities across the Atlantic, than the fixation on *roots* and *rootedness*. For Gilroy, *the black Atlantic* is a concept that "transcend [s] both the structures of the nation state and the constraints of ethnicity and national particularity" (*ibid.*, 19). As can be understood, Gilroy is interested in exploring movements and connections, he aims to show how the movements of black people across the ocean contribute to re-evaluation of nationhood, citizenship and belonging.

In the context of Britain, the black diaspora has a long history marked by movements across the Atlantic. The majority of the black community still residing in Britain are descendants of those who migrated after WWII, which makes migration a shared memory. Gilroy shows how they forge a new sense of community based on this memory of migration and express it through music. In fact, Gilroy privileges music as a tool of self expression, racial solidarity and community building dating back to the times on the slave ship and plantation. Similarly, for the black community in Britain music became a uniting force that accommodates ethnic variety and shared experiences of migration. Gilroy

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<sup>1</sup> *The Black Atlantic* written in italics with capital letters refers to Paul Gilroy's book while *the black Atlantic* written in italic lowercase letters refers to the concept developed throughout the book.

exemplifies his claims by analysing the development of Reggae. He argues that Reggae is no longer exclusively Jamaican, it has evolved into an alternative language through which black diaspora experience is being told. Gilroy claims these alternative forms of connectedness “create a new topography of loyalty and identity in which the structures and presuppositions of the nation state have been left behind” (*ibid.*, 16). Although creating a sense of community through music exemplifies the multilayered and eclectic nature of the black atlantic as Gilroy envisions, he still believes it should not be taken as a substitute for *roots* to ground one’s entire identity. Instead of finding a tangible common value and holding onto it, Gilroy proposes exploring connections and interactions that bring people together and help them form a sense of community.

Despite criticizing the desire for finding and holding onto *roots* among the members of the black diaspora, Gilroy understands that it stems from a particular historical context. He considers this obsession with *roots* to be “a simple and direct response to the varieties of racism which have denied the historical character of black experience and the integrity of black cultures ” (*ibid.*, 112). Likewise, he sees the rise of black nationalism as another response to the same situation. Nevertheless, he finds the idea of black nationalism problematic since it disregards particularities and relies solely on race to affirm one’s belonging to a community. Gilroy considers the term black nationalism to be “loose” (*ibid.*, 31) and he believes that it does not function as a replacement for *roots*. In fact, Gilroy finds this preoccupation with *roots* unnecessary and he notes that *rootlessness* turns into a problem only when having stable roots is perceived as a requirement for the integrity of the self and the community. Rejecting this view, Gilroy is convinced that an alternative understanding of belonging should be adopted.

While searching for alternative modalities of belonging, Gilroy also challenges the exclusion of slavery from the narratives of modernity. He believes that the slave experience is purposefully excluded from the accounts of modernity because it does not align with the idea of progress. Yet, a critical engagement with history by acknowledging colonialism and scientific racism together with their consequences will bring overlooked issues of terror and brutality into focus and add a new dimension to the debates around modernity. Gilroy follows W. E. B. DuBois’ footsteps in re-evaluating modernity and they meet in their “desire to demonstrate the internal situation of blacks, firmly locked inside the modern world that their coerced labour had made possible” (*ibid.*, 121). While this makes DuBois one of the key figures in *The Black Atlantic*, his term *double consciousness* becomes a concept Gilroy employs to understand the experience of the black community in Britain, though the term was initially used to characterize black American identity. DuBois explains the term as follows:

*[D]ouble consciousness emerges from the unhappy symbiosis between three modes of thinking, being and seeing. The first is racially particularistic, the second nationalistic in that it derives from the nation state in which the ex slaves but not yet citizens find themselves, rather than from their aspiration towards a nation state of their own. The third is diasporic or hemispheric, sometimes global and occasionally universalist” (ibid., 127).*

Besides providing a framework to comprehend the situation of the Black British, DuBois is important for Gilroy’s analysis because his life provides an example of the vantage point created by the multiplicity of *routes*, rather than the fixity of *roots*.

Another significant figure in Gilroy’s analysis is Richard Wright. Gilroy considers Wright to be part of Pan-africanism movement that seeks to unite the ideas of Africans with that of blacks in America, the Caribbean and Europe. Although he seems to be positioned as opposed to the exclusivist white perspective, Wright actually stands on a blurry line. Gilroy is critical of Wright’s ambivalent situation when he claims “His work articulates simultaneously an affirmation and a negation of the western civilization that formed him. It remains the most powerful expression of the insider-outsider duality which we have traced down the years from slavery” (*ibid.*, 186). Wright himself ponders on this ambivalence and sees the black subject as being caught in an internal conflict between the expectations regarding citizenship and racial identity. He terms this situation *double vision*, an idea similar to *double consciousness*, put forward by DuBois.

The final chapter of *The Black Atlantic* concentrates on tradition. Gilroy claims “The idea of the tradition has a strange, mesmeric power in black political discourse” (*ibid.*, 187). Having this power in mind, tradition is often contested with modernity and deemed to be its opposite. This is mainly because modernity’s fragmentalizing perspective is perceived as a threat to the stability achieved by holding onto tradition. Gilroy believes understanding Africentricity is essential for the discussion of tradition. Africentricity relies on the premise of “find[ing] psychological and philosophical nourishment in the narratives of Africa” (*ibid.*, 189) as he summarizes. In a way, tradition provides emotional shelter from any perceived threats to the integrity of the self and the community. Since tradition primarily aims to protect and generate positive emotions for one’s own heritage, the experience of slavery is effectively erased because it is deeply associated with suffering and trauma. Gilroy problematizes this erasure as it prevents a critical engagement with the past and leads to a rather romanticized version of it. In this romanticized view, Africa and African tradition serve the purpose of psychological recovery. Thinking along the lines of therapeutic journeys, Gilroy sees artistic expression as another way of reflecting on traumatic experiences that provide “means towards both individual self-fashioning and communal liberation” (*ibid.*, 40). While Gilroy singles out

autobiographical and creative writing as examples, he is more interested in the expressive potential of music.

Gilroy considers both Africentrism and Eurocentrism to be limited in scope and proposes a more accommodating concept of *the black Atlantic* instead. He defines *the black Atlantic* as “a non-traditional tradition, an irreducibly modern, ex-centric, unstable, and asymmetrical cultural ensemble that cannot be apprehended through the manichean logic of binary coding” (*ibid.*, 198). Gilroy’s *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* was well received by its critics back then and it still continues to be a significant work. Evaluating the book in retrospect, Laura Chrisman considers Gilroy’s ideas in *The Black Atlantic* to “mesh neatly with the 1990s metropolitan academic climate, which saw the rise in popularity of concepts of fusion, hybridity and syncretism as explanatory tools for the analysis of cultural formation” (2003, 73). Indeed, Gilroy’s concept of the black Atlantic, which he imagines to be “a webbed network, between the local and the global” (1993, 29) favours multiplicity and interconnectedness; yet, this project might seem too broad in scope. Perhaps that is why Gilroy focuses largely on Anglo-American context, especially when he reveals that *The Black Atlantic* started out with him dwelling on the experiences of the Black British and when chooses to analyze the works and ideas of notable Americans such as W. E. B. Du Bois and Richard Wright. Though this focused outlook may appear as a shortcoming of Gilroy’s project overall, it makes his insights fitting for the analysis of *Fruit of the Lemon*. Along with the focus on the Black British experience, the emphasis on the interconnectedness of histories and the trope of the ship brings the two texts closer.

## **2.2. Christina Sharpe’s *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being***

Christina Sharpe explores the legacy of terror, violence, suffering and vulnerability in the aftermath of slavery and she experiments with the possibilities of language to describe these experiences. She develops the notion of *the wake*, which she positions as “problem of and for thought” (2016, 12). She argues the mindset that led to slavery is still operating and the repercussions of slavery are being felt in today’s world, despite the tendency to think of slavery as a historical fact that belongs to a particular time period, hence something we have moved away from. While dwelling on the legacy of slavery, Sharpe develops the metaphor of *the wake* and offers a multilayered understanding of *the wake* based on the word’s several meanings. She names the critical engagement with the legacy of slavery *wake work*, and explains both of concepts as follows:

*If, as I have so far suggested, we think the metaphor of the wake in the entirety of its meanings (the keeping watch with the dead, the path of a ship, a consequence of something, in the line of flight and/or sight, awakening, and consciousness) and we join the wake with work in order that we might make the wake and wake work our*

*analytic, we might continue to imagine new ways to live in the wake of slavery, in slavery's afterlives, to survive (and more) the afterlife of property (ibid., 20).*

Sharpe's analysis consists of four chapters, in which she elaborates on "ongoing locations of Black being: the wake, the ship, the hold, and the weather" (*ibid.*). *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* starts with a personal chapter where Sharpe looks back on some episodes of her own life. In a way, these personal experiences prepare the grounds for her conceptualization of *the wake* as she explores other locations. When writing about racism, she reflects on her family history: "The overriding engine of US racism cut through my family's ambitions and desires" (*ibid.*, 11) and considers racism to be "the engine that drives the ship of state's national and imperial projects" (*ibid.*). Sharpe reminds readers of the definition of *the wake*, in which the ship becomes the ship of the state. Following this metaphor, the hostility created through discourse and perpetuated by social and institutional practices becomes the pattern left on the surface of the water, disrupting the ideal flow of life and obstructing black aspirations. Aspiration here can be understood in both meanings of the word since racism leaves the black community with little room to breathe freely and with limited chances of self-realization. Sharpe revisits the idea of aspiration when she elaborates on *wake work* later in her discussion.

In an environment that is essentially antagonistic to black aspirations, Sharpe also investigates the notion of opportunity. She notes that the word is derived from Latin *ob* 'toward' and *portu(m)* 'port' so the word is inherently connected to the movement, which captures the experience of the black people (*ibid.*, 11-12). She recalls how her family moved to the suburbs in an attempt to seek opportunities and connects this memory with black migration from the global south to the north. She also touches upon the disillusionment experienced by those who travel by saying "Like many of these Black people on the move, my parents discovered that things were *not* better in this 'new world': the subjections of constant and overt racism and isolation continued" (*ibid.*, 12). Thus, in the wake of slavery, racism still operates and continues to be exhibited in many ways that those travellers could not envision.

Despite all the effort to start anew, the past never goes away so understanding the past becomes a necessary task for coping with present circumstances. Sharpe attempts to find "a method of encountering a past that is not past" (*ibid.*, 18). She is concerned with the continued black exclusion that pushes them to the point of non-being and how these issues are reflected in society, media, and arts. In fact, she is more interested in understanding these relations than undertaking a mission to resolve these long-standing problems as she says "With each of those definitions of wake present throughout my text, I argue that rather than seeking a resolution to blackness's ongoing and irresolvable abjection, one might approach Black being in the wake as a form of *consciousness*"



(*ibid.*). For Sharpe, this consciousness is achieved by learning about history and using this knowledge to find ways to live in a world shaped by racism.

When positioning blackness as a form of consciousness, Sharpe is aware that it involves endurance and resistance to terror and brutality so she asks “In the midst of so much death and the fact of Black life as proximate to death, how do we attend to physical, social, and figurative death and also to the largeness that is Black life, Black life insisted from death?” (*ibid.*, 20). She proposes *wake work* as a method to cope with the realities of everyday life. As Sharpe explains, *wake work* requires a willingness to learn about the past and understand its reverberations in the present. Since ferocity is a significant part of both the past and the present, *wake work* presupposes an engagement with death and the dead, too. However, she differentiates *wake work* from mourning by pointing out the impossibility of mourning for a continuing situation.

Having established death as an everyday occurrence and a continuous threat, Sharpe revisits a similar location, the deck of a slave ship. Sharpe believes that the slave ship still continues to symbolize the experiences of black people as she writes “In the wake, the semiotics of the slave ship continue” (*ibid.*, 23). She proceeds to explain in what ways she holds this true by saying “As we go about *wake work*, we must think through containment, regulation, punishment, capture, and captivity and the ways the manifold representations of blackness become the symbol, par excellence, for the less-than-human being condemned to death” (*ibid.*). Sharpe recalls the incident of *Zong*, a slave ship from which enslaved people were thrown overboard due to lack of resources and prospects of getting insurance money. Similar to Gilroy’s discussion in *The Black Atlantic*, Sharpe turns to the same painting by J. M. W. Turner, depicting a slave ship from which bodies are overthrown. For Sharpe, the image of a slave ship overthrowing bodies becomes a symbol of atrocities experienced in the Middle Passage. Sharpe also believes the mentality that led to the incident of *Zong* is still prevalent and determines the value attributed to the lives of the groups of people labelled as the other. Thinking black lives in connection to ships, Sharpe presents a striking image of a girl with a label that reads *Ship* on her forehead and questions what it signifies: “Is *Ship* a proper name? A destination? An imperative? (...) Is *Ship* a reminder and/or remainder of the Middle Passage, of the difference between life and death?” (*ibid.*, 39). She questions in what ways ships and black lives are linked to one another and to what extent the word *Ship* represents the girl’s destiny. In her discussion, Sharpe shows how the word “ship” becomes a shorthand for black lives, replacing a proper name, and thus justifying the place of ships among “ongoing locations of Black being” (*ibid.*, 20).

Dwelling on ships presupposes an engagement with the ocean, so Sharpe revisits Gilroy's concept of *the black Atlantic* and develops it further. She coins the term *Trans\*Atlantic* and defines it as a "s/place, condition, or process that appears alongside and in relation to the Black Atlantic but also in excess of its currents" (*ibid.*, 29). She goes beyond Gilroy's formulation by adding "I want to think *Trans\** in a variety of ways that try to get at something *about* or *toward* the range of *trans\**formations enacted on and by Black bodies" (*ibid.*). Her use of asterisk signals the inclusiveness of the term, which opens itself up for different transformative processes. Tracing relations between the body of water and black bodies, Sharpe turns her critical gaze to the course of the ship and questions the possibility of return once it reaches its destination. "What does it mean to return? Is return possible? Is it desired? And if it is, under what conditions and for whom? The haunt of the ship envelops and persists in the contemporary" (*ibid.*, 48), Sharpe writes. Going back to the departure point lingers in the minds of those who seek opportunities on different shores and suffer from shattered dreams upon their arrival.

Along with voluntary or forced journeys and (im)possibilities of return after arrivals, Sharpe analyzes what happens in between, which she names as *the hold*. The third location Sharpe discusses in relation to blackness is defined by the overwhelming presence of violence, which continues even today. In her understanding of violence and ferocity, Sharpe also invokes the image of a refugee boat and argues "The *Zong* repeats; it repeats and repeats through the logic and the calculus of dehumanizing started long ago and is still operative" (*ibid.*, 56). In the face of such violence, Sharpe ponders the possibilities of care and affection and delves into meanings of motherhood and childhood when she asks "What kind of mother/ing is it if one must always be prepared with knowledge of the possibility of the violent and quotidian death of one's child?" (*ibid.*). She explores what it means to be a black child and a black teenager by giving examples from the media, showing how they are never treated as mere children or teens but seen as potentially dangerous to others and to society. Thus, she concludes black children and teenagers are placed in *the wake*, in the sense that "in the line of recoil of (a gun)" (*ibid.*, 61). The stories she chooses from the news prove that the gun in this definition could refer to an actual gun or a sum of practices that undervalue the lives of black children and teenagers and position them as potential threats.

In relation to trauma experienced by the black community starting from an early age, Sharpe names the last location of Black being in her discussion 'weather' and justifies her word choice by saying "In my text, the weather is the totality of our environments" (*ibid.*, 75). Then she adds "In what I am calling the weather, anti-blackness is pervasive as climate. The weather necessitates changeability and improvisation; it is the atmospheric condition of time and place; it produces new ecologies" (*ibid.*).

Though it may initially seem a rather bleak vision, Sharpe still opens up some room for altering the antiblack atmosphere. Following atmospheric metaphors, Sharpe returns to the concept of aspiration. Sharpe thinks of aspiration in all its meanings and questions the possibilities of “keeping and putting breath back in the body” (*ibid.*, 81). She argues for the necessity of returning to the stories of slavery and slavery’s repercussions in the contemporary world with a mission to find the right words and methods to tell these stories. In doing so, Sharpe offers the concepts of *Black annotation* and *Black redaction* as means to look closely into the story in order to make the black experience noticeable. *Black annotation* and *Black redaction* join *wake work* because they both start with care for black lives, willingness to understand their side of the story and desire to go beyond what meets the eye. She illustrates both practices by paying attention to details in the image of the girl with the word *Ship* written on her forehead and redacting the news about a black girl facing a penalty for writing “Hi” on a school wall. Sharpe adds that *Black annotation* and *Black redaction* should not be seen as opposites to one another, because they both aim at making the black lives visible and their stories heard. Sharpe’s metaphor of *the wake* and her understanding of *wake work* can provide a conceptual model for Faith’s engagement with the family history and the awareness she develops along the way.

### 3. Submerged Stories, Uncomfortable Silences

The arrival of the *Empire Windrush* was used as a symbol for the start of multiracial and multicultural Britain, highlighting British hospitality and successful integration policies. The visibility of the *Empire Windrush* erased other stories of migration from the colonies. In a way, those ships carrying migrants from colonies to the imperial centre were effectively sunk in the collective memory in order to give way to a more refined version of the migrant experience. Attempts to understand the Windrush history can be interpreted as salvaging those shipwrecks and submerged stories. Besides creating an airbrushed version of the story of arrival, the Windrush myth portrays a welcoming society that is keen to integrate the newly arrived colonial subjects. However, the integration was not as smooth as suggested and many suffered racism. Their disillusionment with the reality of the Mother country joined issues of imperial history, racism, and violence to be swept under the rug and resulted in uncomfortable silences.

#### 3.1. *Fruit of the Lemon* and the Windrush Narratives

When reading a literary work, we often intuitively look for pieces that link the work to its author's life and sometimes we find them. While this is not necessarily the case every time, it is especially true for Levy's first three novels. Levy has a strong personal connection to the Windrush history as her father sailed on the *Empire Windrush* in 1948. She was influenced by her father's story and it was the reason why she took up writing in the first place. In an interview with Susan Alice Fischer, Levy recalls starting a writing class and says "I think I just wanted to make him visible, record something of his life, and also the experience that we'd gone through with it" (Fischer 2005, 362). Levy's critics recognized the reflections of Levy's own life in *Every Light in the House Burnin'*, *Never Far From Nowhere* and *Fruit of the Lemon* as they all provide a Caribbean diasporic perspective to identity formation and belonging in British society. Since these novels deal with similar themes, Knepper notes "These works are sometimes read as a trilogy, reflecting Levy's experience from the 1960s through to the 1980s" (2012, 5). While Levy's first three novels are similar in many aspects, *Fruit of the Lemon* has a prominent place among them as it marks the beginning of Levy's active engagement in her own family history as well as Jamaican-British history at large. She later reveals this in the same interview with Fischer, when she says: "The first three [novels] I see as a baton race, passing the baton on to the next person. I suppose it was about exploring aspects of my life, although in fiction" (2005, 362). She also reflects on how *Fruit of the Lemon* differs from her previous novels by saying "with *Fruit of the Lemon*, I started that backward look, when Faith goes into her family, once I had actually asked my mum about our family and gone to history books and had a look" (*ibid.*).

Apart from Levy's personal connections to and her interest in the Windrush era, there is a number of textual evidence that brings the narrative closer to the time when the children of the Windrush generation come of age. Although there is no explicit indication of the year when the novel takes place, Levy playfully drops subtle time references, be it a movie or a brief mention of a public figure, that suggest the setting is 1980s London. Elena Machado Sáez identifies these references and concludes "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" (2006, 1). For Sáez, this is emblematic of Levy's conscious "engage[ment] and disenga[gement] from the narrative of this history" (*ibid.*). In a way, Levy creates a room for herself in which she is not entirely bound by the time frame but she still operates in it.

Along with the subtle references that Sáez points out, there is one additional and more solid time reference regarding the arrival of Faith's parents, which helps put the novel in context and connect it to the Windrush era. In the Kingston airport episode when Faith is looking for her relatives, she thinks to herself "This is Faith Columbine Jackson, from England. Parents left in 1948. Come to visit relations. Please step up if she's yours" (Levy 1999, 175). 1948 is the year when the *Empire Windrush* sailed from Jamaica to London so the chosen year positions her parents as the Windrush era migrants, though with a different story. Consequently, it opens up possibilities to re-evaluate the Windrush myth as one and only story that accounts for Caribbean settlement in Britain.

Now that the textual links between *Fruit of the Lemon* and the Windrush history are established, we can turn to the ways Levy offers an alternative story to the Windrush narratives. Levy introduces a ship different from the *Empire Windrush*. In doing so, she draws attention to colonial ties between the Caribbean and Britain in terms of production and migration. The novel starts with Faith remembering a taunting remark of her classmates: "Your mum and dad came on a banana boat" (Levy 1999, 3). The image of the banana boat makes up the majority of Faith's knowledge of her family history as her parents are reluctant to talk about their lives prior to their arrival to London and Faith is reluctant to ask more about her family history. In her mind, the banana boat becomes a horrifying image that she should avoid and suppress. This is why Faith finds it shocking when her mother, Mildred, actually confirms the story of the banana boat by saying "We came on a banana boat to England, your dad and me. The Jamaica Producer's banana boat" (*ibid.*). Later on, Faith gets to learn more about the boat when Mildred elaborates on it: "It was a proper boat with cabins and everything. Even had a dance every evening and we took it in turns to sit at the captain's table. What, you think we sit among the bananas?" (*ibid.*).

Judging by Mildred's description, "the banana boat" sounds more sophisticated than just a simple boat. Though the vehicle Faith's parents travelled on is mostly referred to as a "boat", the words "boat" and "ship" are used interchangeably throughout the novel. For instance, the vehicle is initially introduced as a "boat" in the following quote: "Then Mr. and Mrs. Wade and Mildred Jackson set sail for England on the Jamaica Producer's banana boat" (*ibid.*, 8) while a few lines later the same vehicle is referred to as "the ship" in the following sentence: "The ship finally docked at West India Dock on Guy Fawkes' night" (*ibid.*). Alongside the differences in the word choice, the tone of these sentences is worth noting. Although the narrator is still Faith in this episode, she adopts a detached tone when she talks about her parents' arrival. This might be a playful narrative technique to indicate an engagement with the distant past, perhaps it also reveals her emotional distance to that part of the family history due to her unwillingness to be associated with the banana boat herself. Faith opts for narrating the story of her parents' arrival by referring to them as "Mr. and Mrs. Wade and Mildred" instead of "mum and dad" (*ibid.*). A few lines later, though, she changes her tone and starts her sentence with "Mum explained (...)" (*ibid.*). Hence, it can be concluded that Levy's use of language reflects Faith's emotional stance.

The choice of a banana boat is also significant for drawing attention to the colonial ties between the two islands. Throughout the novel, Jamaica is described as a land of lush orchards with an abundance of different fruits, specifically bananas. For instance, Mildred's family have a piece of land where they grow "oranges, bananas, paw paw, soursop and coconuts" (*ibid.*, 5). Similarly, Faith sees Jamaica as a place from where "strange fruits" come (*ibid.*, 45) and Faith's cousin Constance/Afria begs for bananas from Jamaica when bananas were on rationing in England (*ibid.*, 314). Jamaica, then, is positioned as a supplier while the imperial centre is positioned as a consumer. As well as providing fruits, the colony provides an additional labour force, therefore migrants travelling with these ships which bring fruits to the imperial centre establish a connection between food distribution and migration. Njeri Githire, too, notices this connection and argues "In Levy's third novel, the foreign produce that has become an integral part of Britain's domestic consumption and the immigrant labour force that supports domestic economy are amalgamated in a single cohesive whole" (2010, 867). Considering the historical and political climate of the era, Githire's understanding is plausible because the Windrush era migration was an immediate response to the 1948 British Nationality Act, which gave the people from the colonies the right to work and live in Britain. The act was motivated by the post-war shortage of labour but the government was largely unprepared to accommodate those migrants for a long time and incorporate them into British society as Guy Hewitt writes "Unfamiliar with the resolve of the people who came, British officialdom never considered that the children of the tropics would be long stayers"

(2020, 115). Unlike the assumed scenario, those migrants stayed and contributed to the changes in the fabric of British society.

Thinking about the connections between fruits and migrants, Githeri comes up with a metaphor of seeds to epitomize the migrant experience: “For former colonial subjects, the reality of their incorporation into the British crown has sprung from bitter seeds (Levy's title says it all), but seeds that are buried deep in the British soil” (2010, 868). Similarly, Levy adopts the metaphors of seeds and fruits as she uses lemons and bananas as tropes in her novel. Given the title, the epigraph<sup>2</sup> and its role in several episodes, lemon is a significant motif in the novel. Banana on the other hand, is a useful trope that stands for the colonial trade and suggests an analogy between the banana peel and human skin, gesturing towards the politics of race, one of the key issues in the novel. Faith was initially disturbed by the idea of a banana boat carrying her parents along with other migrants because she associated this image with that of a slave ship. In Faith's imagination, her parents and bananas were commodities alike. Over the course of the novel Faith and readers come to an understanding that fruits and seeds open up a new realm of thinking about contemporary British society due to the colonial relations between food production, circulation and migration.

Having suggested new ways of thinking about empire, migration and contemporary society, *Fruit of the Lemon* challenges the Windrush myth in terms of the profile of migrants by introducing a female focused migration story. While the equation of the Windrush era migrations to “492 male passengers from Jamaica” is etched in cultural memory, historical accounts show that the number of passengers was much higher, their ethnicity was not limited to Jamaican and not every migrant was male. Taking her cue from the historical facts, Levy challenges the presentation of the Windrush era migration as a male exclusive experience by introducing Mildred's story as the main story of migration. This can be interpreted as an extension of Levy's project of giving voice to the female experience since the Anglo-Caribbean literary tradition preceding her is mainly male focused. As Kim Evelyn argues, Levy depicted women as “more than sexual conquests, matrons, or victims of domestic abuse as they often figure in the novels of the Windrush generations” (2013, 131). Instead, Levy's women are characters with agency and aspirations. In a similar vein, Mildred is portrayed as a woman who had a dream of living in England and someone who is determined to achieve this dream. However, there was one obstacle on her way: “she could not afford the full fare to England and at that time, she could not get an assisted passage on a ship unless she was married” (Levy 1999, 6). During their courting, Wade was impressed by Mildred's “determination to leave Jamaica and go to England” (*ibid.*, 287) according to

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<sup>2</sup> Lemon tree very pretty/And the lemon flower is sweet/But the fruit of the poor lemon/Is impossible to eat.  
(by Will Holt, from *Lemon Tree*)

Violet's story. Besides that "spark about him" (*ibid.*,7) Mildred liked the fact that Wade's brother was already living in England at the time. Being the perfect match they were, it was still mainly due to Mildred's aspirations that the young couple decided to save up for their travel to London after their marriage. In Mildred's story, Levy follows a typical plot in which a colonial subject settles down in the imperial centre. She gives this common storyline a twist by focusing on the female experience. Likewise, the novel follows a female protagonist, Mildred and Wade's daughter Faith, again focusing on the female experience, which is not common in the works of the previous generation of Anglo-Caribbean writers such as Sam Selvon or V.S. Naipaul.

As a result of their colonial education and colonial discourse of Britain as the Mother country, people living in colonies considered themselves to be the children of the British Empire. Faith's aunt Coral reflects on their colonial education by saying "I used to be so proud that we were part of the British Empire. England was our Mother Country. (...) and we are all the Mother Country's children" (*ibid.* 326). Coral's account reveals a sentiment shared by many others, including but not limited to Mildred and Wade. Like many other migrants, Mildred and Wade imagined that they would be hosted well by their Mother Country. Having seen fireworks upon their arrival, Wade thinks it might be a festive welcome from their Mother country, Mildred recalls that night when she says "At first we didn't know what it was for. (...) Your dad thought it might have been a welcome for us, having come so far and England needing us. But I didn't think he could be right. And he wasn't" (*ibid.*, 8). It turns out that Mildred was right and they were not welcomed with open arms. Levy juxtaposes two perspectives here: Wade's perspective represents hope and excitement in the face of a new beginning, he has no doubt about the affection of the Mother country and assumes that she must be happy to welcome her children. Mildred, on the other hand, is more realistic. She has no doubts about Mother country's affection, yet she is able to set her excitement aside and evaluate the situation better. Still, she gets disappointed by her initial experience in London. Even years later, Mildred remembers those days with bitterness and she repeats "I never thought England would be like that" several times (*ibid.*, 8-9). Unlike the Windrush myth that portrays a welcoming atmosphere towards migrants, many suffered from hostility; Mildred and Wade's story represents their experience.

Later in the novel, Faith learns more about her parents' struggles when Vincent remembers his talk with Mildred: "Everyone called them 'Wog' and 'Darkie'. Everyone told them they were from the jungle. Nobody wanted them to live in their house, or even in their street" (*ibid.*, 331). While the Windrush myth is a polished version of the story, Mildred and Wade's experience stands for the struggle faced by many migrants of the time. Despite the struggle, Mildred and Wade, like many others, did not regret coming to London as Faith recounts: "They had no regrets. Oh, they had given



me a better life in England, better than I could have had in Jamaica” (*ibid.*). Although it was difficult to cope with racism, the prospects of having a better life for themselves and their children motivated them to stay. Most of the time in real life as in fiction, possibilities of a better life outweigh the hardships to be endured. The situation Mildred and Wade find themselves in, exemplifies the dilemma most migrants face and the impossibility of return Sharpe points out when she asks “What does it mean to return? Is return possible? Is it desired? And if it is, under what conditions and for whom?” (2016, 48). In that regard, Mildred and Wade’s story is also an example of *routes* in Gilroy’s terms. Together as a couple, they set out on a journey to start a new life away from their homeland. They carry on regardless of the hardships they endure and find a way to settle down. “They just got on with it. They learned how to get along with people. They learned to smile and laugh and all the while just quietly make the life they wanted” (Levy 1999, 331) as Faith says.

To sum up, *Fruit of the Lemon* can be read as a literary revision to public Windrush narratives that are repeated in the collective memory, since the time frame of the novel is approximated to the Windrush and post-Windrush era, it engages with the history of Jamaican settlement and offers a critical perspective to many aspects of the Windrush myth. Levy invites her readers to remember the colonial ties between the two islands, she challenges the idea of migration as a male-centred experience and questions the extent of British hospitality.

### 3.2. Race, Empire and The Legacy of Slavery

Despite the promise of a welcoming society and celebration of diversity, *Fruit of the Lemon* shows racism was deeply felt in every circle of social life, be it at school, at work, during interactions with strangers, and even within one's own social circle. Racism can take the form of an attitude, a remark, an institutional practice or it may be expressed through violence. Whatever form it may take, silence is the most common response to it. As a child, Faith was bullied by her classmates because of her skin colour. She recalls those times when she says:

*'Your mum and dad came on a banana boat' that was what the bully boys at my primary school used to say. The boys with unruly hair, short trousers and dimpled knees that went bright red in the cold.*

*'Faith is a darkie and her mum and dad came on a banana boat' (Levy 1999, 3).*

As well as introducing the banana boat as a key image regarding family history, this quote shows Faith's hesitation to use racial markers. Faith pays attention to physical attributes and instead of naming their race. She describes the way the boys' skin goes red to refer to their whiteness, which is in contrast with her own dark skin. She also notes that the boys would carry on with their taunting "until [she] began to cry" (*ibid.*) The memory of this bullying continues to haunt Faith when she learns about slavery and slave ships in history classes as she says "I hated those lessons. 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 are slaves' " (*ibid.*, 4). Since little Faith doesn't know how to deal with these remarks, she either tries to avoid them or starts crying. According to Elena Machado Sáez, these episodes signal towards the public understanding of Black British history, or rather the lack of it. Sáez notes "the children in the playground access the image of the banana boat as a symbol of Caribbean migration, but have no sense of its context or the socio-economic forces motivating such migrations" (2006, 2). As she shows, the image of a ship associated with migration is accessible to everyone to put a spin on it and use it as a slur.

Faith's work environment is not different from her school in terms of racism and Faith is still not sure how to react to any comment about her race regardless of them being positive or negative. When Faith is offered her first job, her future boss Olivia says "Your work has an ethnicity which shines through" (Levy 1999, 31). Given that she has spent all her life in a predominantly white environment, Faith is not convinced how her ethnicity can have an imprint on her work, so she comments "As I was born and bred in Haringey I could only suppose that I had some sort of collective unconscious that was coming through from my slave ancestry" (*ibid.*). After partially refuting Olivia's observation, Faith focuses on the fact that she was offered a job rather than the reason behind it, but this episode exemplifies prevalent assumptions about race based on how people look rather than who they are. As a

consequence, it reveals more about Olivia than about Faith. Elena Machado Sáez is sceptical of Olivia's approach towards Faith. With her rufas and kimonos, Sáez sees Olivia as "a consumer of Other cultures" (2006, 5). According to Sáez, Olivia's clothing choices might as well be read as "liberal open-mindedness and nonconformity" (*ibid.*) yet, judging by the "sweatshop-like environment" (*ibid.*), Sáez leans towards adaptation and exploitation while evaluating Olivia's engagement with the Other. Similarly, Thomas Bonnici points out that Faith is excluded from breaks and there were no credits given for Faith's work (2009, 198-9). While this was far from the ideal work environment, Faith gets fired soon and she finds a job in the costume department of BBC Television.

After spending some time labelling costumes in Henry's department, Faith considers applying for a higher position as a dresser, just when she was caught up in imagining herself in the studio with actors, camera and lights her colleague Lorraine interrupts Faith by saying "But they don't have black dressers" (Levy 1999, 70) and she adds "I don't mean to be horrible but it's just what happens here. Haven't you noticed there aren't any coloured people dressing?" (*ibid.*, 71). While Lorraine and Henry were discussing the possibility of this being true, Faith notes "My hands began to shake" (*ibid.*). Although she does not express her frustration verbally, her body starts reacting to it.

Back at home, Mildred reacts to the news with a powerful emotion: "It's foolishness, Faith, it's just foolishness" (*ibid.*, 72) she says and draws a parallel between her own experience of racism and what Faith faces: "There are laws now, you know. When me and your dad first came to this country..." (*ibid.*, 73). The ellipsis at the end is reminiscent of silences surrounding the issues of racism. Mildred is as reluctant as Faith to talk about these issues, so it is possible to interpret Mildred's reluctance to engage with her past experiences of racism accounts for Faith's lack of knowledge about the past and the clumsy way she handles her own experiences of racism. Surprisingly, after her disappointment, Faith confronts the manager about racial discrimination. This confrontation is a bold move for Faith and she understandably becomes extremely self-conscious. Levy describes how Faith reflects on her own body language in detail. "My lips began to quiver as if I was about to cry" (*ibid.*, 108) Faith says before starting the conversation and she gets anxious about losing control of her voice when she adds "And I was frightened that my voice would come out as a tremulous whisper as I said 'Someone told me that you don't like to have black people dressing. Is that right?'" (*ibid.*)

During his conversation with Faith, the manager denies the discrimination and accounts for the lack of diversity by the lack of competent candidates as he says: "We don't have coloured people in this department because, up until you, we have not had a suitable candidate" (*ibid.*, 109). After this conversation, Faith is happy to get the job but her brother Carl's girlfriend, Ruth is sceptical about why

Faith got the job. She says “It’s just to shut you up. (...) How many other black people are working there? None, I bet. So they just employ you and then they can say, yes, we have a black person” (*ibid.*, 140). As she talks with Ruth, Faith is still excited about landing the job so she continues to underline the fact that she is hired despite the rumours of discrimination but Ruth finds her naive and talks about European oppression and why black people should unite and resist it, so she concludes: “It’s racism, you were a victim of racism, Faith” (*ibid.*, 141). It turns out that the reality is closer to what Ruth thinks. Faith soon finds out her job is not in the studio as she imagined. Instead, she realizes that she will be dressing up puppets for a children's show as she says: “I was then introduced to my actors. One was a big teddy bear called Alfred and the other a gangly rag doll called Molly” (*ibid.*, 149). Although Levy relies on humour in this episode, Faith’s situation is similar to what Sharpe discusses in relation to racism and how it prevents her family members from reaching their goals when she says “The overriding engine of US racism cut through my family’s ambitions and desires” (2016, 11). Faith, an aspiring dresser with necessary competencies, ends up dressing the puppets, possibly because the managers and actors prefer interacting with white dressers than with blacks. Even though they deny allegations of racism, this episode proves otherwise. It is also worth noting that Faith works in the BBC, an essentially British institution, with its share of racism.

Racism is not only institutional, but it is also prevalent in everyday life and it manifests itself in every aspect of social life, from interactions with strangers to closer social circles. For instance, in the episode where Faith and her brother Carl arrange a meeting with a car owner to see Faith’s future car and negotiate prices, a neighbour sees them around the car and asks “Excuse me, what are you doing around that car? (Levy 1999, 57). While Faith explains “We’ve just come to look at it-it’s for sale” (*ibid.*), Carl gets annoyed at the nosiness of the man but the neighbour does not stop there and continues his interrogation “Does the person who owns the car know what you are doing” (*ibid.*, 58) then he goes “Excuse me, I don’t want to have to call the authorities but if...” (*ibid.*), assuming they are there to steal or damage the car. Faith repeats “We’re just going to see the owner now. We’ve got an appointment” (*ibid.*). The neighbour does not believe Faith and he is only convinced after observing them for a while and making sure he has warned them firmly. A similar reaction occurs when they meet the owner, before she gets the car keys, she makes sure that she shut the door. Faith observes Carl commenting on this: “She thinks we’ve come to mug her, he sighed” (*ibid.*, 59). Both the neighbour’s reaction and the owner’s carefulness with the door result from the assumption that blacks are more prone to crime and violence. Carl’s sighing shows his uneasiness about this assumption and despite not commenting on this episode, Faith is aware of this social dynamic, too. She tries to present herself at her best by highlighting her education to defeat any prejudice the car owner might have. Faith reflects

on this effort when she greets the owner: “Miss Charlesworth, I said in my best ‘I’ve-got-a-degree accent” (*ibid.*, 58). The car episode exemplifies how blacks are affected by racial prejudices and how they might feel the constant need to prove that they should not be reduced to those prejudices.

Levy addresses unresolved issues of colonial history and slavery along with racism and she shows how they unite in silences. Levy takes a step beyond Faith’s circle of friends toward their parents and throws her characters in different settings to watch their interactions with older generations. Faith’s visits to both Marion’s and Simon’s parents help create more conservative and traditional settings and enable encounters with potentially different opinions about racial others. For instance, Marion and Faith have been friends for years but Marion’s family from “white working class origins” and “who had all lived in the same street for generations” (*ibid.*, 93) do not share Marion’s outlook on life. When Marion takes Faith to her parent’s house, her father tells Marion about her sister’s problem with a black girl. While recounting the event, he calls that girl “some darkie” (*ibid.*, 84) “a bloody gorilla” (*ibid.*) and only after some time he remembers Faith is with them, listening to the whole conversation. Noticing her silence, he asks “You all right, Faith, you’re ever so quiet” (*ibid.*, 85). At that moment, he may or may not have noticed that he indirectly insults Faith with his remarks about that black girl who had a fight with his daughter. Although Faith does not comment on this episode immediately, her silence in the face of racist comments directed at another black girl is in parallel with how she acted earlier when she experienced racism herself. After another instance of her father’s racist comment, Marion steps in to talk with him and complains about her father to Faith when she says “I mean he’s so insensitive. He just said, as usual ‘Oh, Faith’s different.’ And I said, No, she isn’t. Faith is my best friend and she is black. But you see it’s a cultural thing...” (*ibid.*, 93). While Faith is annoyed at Marion for reducing this into the culture and apparently repeating it many times as she replies “A cultural thing- I know. Can we change the subject now, please?” (*ibid.*), her remark also shows that she is not willing to discuss this issue. Yet, she reflects on the attitude of Marion’s family by asking herself “when they looked at me (...) I always wondered who they saw” (*ibid.*). Faith’s contemplation here is one of the key moments of her questioning who she is and how she is perceived by others.

Similarly, there is no apparent motivation in the plot regarding the reason why Simon decides to take Faith to his parents’ house, so it is fair to say their trip to this “quintessentially English” (*ibid.*, 115) place helps Levy take her characters out of their young, urban and cosmopolitan setting and bring them into a more traditional one. Decorated with “old furniture passed down from generation to generation” (*ibid.*, 121), “the stained-glass windows” (*ibid.*), “portraits of his relations” (*ibid.*) and royal family on the wall (*ibid.*, 122), Simon’s parents’ house reflect their cultural heritage and Simon’s parents complete this picture with his father “look[ing] like he’d stepped out of the plains of Africa after a

hunting trip” (*ibid.*,120) and his mother with her paintings “on ivory” (*ibid.*, 121) which “you can’t [use] nowadays” (*ibid.*). Simon does not provide any context for how they acquired ivory back then or why they can not use it anymore but all these details imply that they have inherited a life of luxury and leisure built on the riches of the colonies in the past. Moreover, Levy alludes to the way English landscape is conventionally described by having Faith say “[T]he land was indeed green and pleasant” (*ibid.*, 125) but in fact, she does not fit in this traditional picture as Simon’s mother comments “Doesn’t she look exotic?” (*ibid.*) after putting a flower in Faith’s hat. The word “exotic” suggests not only Faith looks different but she looks unusual and out of place in this traditional and otherwise harmonious setting.

From the green fields that Faith essentially does not belong to, they go to another traditional place, to a pub that “goes back to Tudor times” (*ibid.*, 129). In this pub, they ran into an acquaintance of Simon’s father, Andrew Bunyan. After discovering Faith’s Jamaican origins, Bunyan recalls the time when he met his brother's namesake in Jamaica, an incident especially surprising for him since he believes that his surname has a unique spelling. When he asks Faith about this coincidence she says “that would have been his slave name (...) your family probably owned his family once” (*ibid.*, 131). Although this connection does not come across as a surprise to readers, Bunyan gets annoyed and denies being connected to slavery by saying “ No! My family never had connections like that in Jamaica. My family were not in that sort of business” (*ibid.*). Again, Faith remains silent about his denial of colonial ties and only says “And I took a long gulp of my shandy” (*ibid.*). This episode exemplifies how the colonial past becomes problematic and causes uncomfortable silences when it comes to the exploitation of resources in colonies and slavery.

While these continuous silences, denials and racist remarks render Faith’s sense of belonging precarious, a racist attack she witnesses leads to her identity crisis. Seeing Yemi, the black owner of a bookshop getting injured by nationalist groups makes Faith realize terror is a part of everyday life for the black community and she can be the next victim of an assault. She describes how the bookshop is vandalized by saying “The shop had been sprayed with angry red paint. And all over it said NF, NF, NF” (*ibid.*, 151) while Faith tries to understand what is happening around her, a policeman explains the situation when he says “All these leftie bookshops are getting done (...) they say they’re National Front but they’re not, they’re just a bunch of thugs” (*ibid.*, 154). Yet, Faith pays more attention to how people around her trivialize this issue, especially when the policeman says “One woman like that on her own. I mean they’re just asking for trouble” (*ibid.*) and when Simon seems to refer to her as “the woman who worked there” (*ibid.*, 156) disregarding the motivation of the assault. Observing this indifference and knowing that she could have been in her place, Faith sympathizes with Yemi to the

extent that she physically feels her pain. “My head was hurting like it had come out in sympathy with Yemi” (*ibid.*, 154) says Faith understanding the threat of violence in everyday life for the black people, which is similar to what Sharpe suggests in her understanding of *the hold*. Sharpe talks about “the language of violence” (2016, 54) that characterizes *the hold*, starting from the times when slaves were kept in the hold of the ship. As can be seen in Yemi's situation, violence still continues to define the anti-black atmosphere.

When Simon tells what happened to their roommates, Faith interrupts him twice and adds “She was a black woman” (Levy 1999, 156) correcting Simon and underlining the reason for the attack. In a way, she shows solidarity with Yemi by breaking her usual silence in the face of racism and making Yemi's story visible, which can be associated with Sharpe's *Black annotation*. Sharpe defines *Black redaction* and *annotation* as practices “toward seeing and reading otherwise; toward reading and seeing something in excess of what is caught in the frame” (2016, 83). In this episode, Faith annotates Simon's version of the story, when he simply defines Yemi as “the woman who worked there” (Levy 1999, 156). By underlining Yemi's race, Faith goes beyond the surface of the story and reveals the motivation for the assault, which might have gone unnoticed otherwise in Simon's account.

The constant negation of her belonging in British society starting from her childhood experiences becomes unbearable with the sight of racist violence and Faith descends into a nervous breakdown to the point that she wants to erase her own presence. She covers the mirrors in her bedroom and says “*Voilà!* I was no longer black” (Levy 1999, 160) and reflects on this when she says “I didn't want to be black any more. I just wanted to live” (*ibid.*). As a person who went through a similar type of rejection from society upon their arrival to London, Mildred understands Faith and she insists on a trip to Jamaica as she says “Child, everyone should know where they come from” (*ibid.*, 162) so that Faith can restore her sense of belonging by seeing where she stands in the entangled history of the two islands.

#### 4. *Routes to the Wake*

When thinking about *routes* in Gilroy's terms, Mildred's and Wade's journey to London and their experiences there, have a great significance for the journey Faith embarks on. Despite the fact that they saw themselves as the children of the Mother country, their identity was constantly challenged as Faith recounts "[W]hen they first came to England they had had trouble. (...) Everyone called them 'Wog' and 'Darkie'. Everyone told them they were from the jungle" (Levy 1999, 331). However, they were able to cope with hostility because they had a clear sense of who they are. While Mildred compares Faith to a "headless chicken" (*ibid.*, 329) running around without a sense of direction, they were able to navigate better in life back then because "They knew where they came from and they knew where they wanted to go. They just got on with it" (*ibid.*, 331). This is precisely why they want Faith to travel to Jamaica and gain full access to her own map of belonging.

However, for Faith learning about her ethnic roots does not mean rejecting her Englishness altogether unlike her cousin Constance/Afria<sup>3</sup>. With her fair skin, blue eyes and her English upbringing, Constance/Afria finds it difficult to adapt into Jamaica when everyone starts mistreating white-looking people. She, too, lacks a sense of direction and seeks refuge in the black side of her identity. In fact, Constance/Afria's re-discovery of her ethnic roots and her obsession with "letting her black side out" (*ibid.*, 317) can be an example of what Gilroy criticizes about preoccupation with *roots* in black diaspora. Instead of understanding the Jamaican part of her identity, Constance/Afria develops a relentless obsession with it. While people around her think "Poor Constance-she searching for something" (*ibid.*, 318) as Coral observes, Constance/Afria tries to connect with her ethnic roots by performing rather than understanding. The way she dresses up in ethnic clothes, sits under the sun to keep her skin dark and tries to cast spells is often mocked by those around her. Unlike her, Faith mostly listens and observes and the narrative seems to favour Faith's engagement with her ethnic roots. As the stories of her relatives span across different countries, from Scotland and England to Panama and the United States, she learns not only about her slave ancestry but also about the transatlantic *routes* that define her belonging. Like Gilroy, Levy is eager to define belonging in more fluid terms. The way Faith develops an awareness of the intertwined relations between Britain and the Caribbean can be modelled on Sharpe's understanding of *the wake*.

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<sup>3</sup> Constance wants to be called Afria: "I am no longer Constance. I am Afria. I am Afria. They must call me Afria" (Levy 1999, 304)



Sharpe defines *the wake* as “the keeping watch with the dead, the path of a ship, a consequence of something, in the line of flight and/or sight, awakening, and consciousness” (2016, 20). Faith’s awakening into her family history and Black British identity reflects all these definitions. Faith does not sail to Jamaica per se, but she learns about stories to make sense of her parents’ journey to London, so her trip to Jamaica can be associated with tracing *the wake* of the banana boat that once hosted her parents. Although she initially resents this image, after being immersed in family history, she embraces the banana boat when she exclaims “I was coming home. I was coming home to tell everyone (...) My mum and dad came to England on a banana boat” (Levy 1999, 339). While the circularity of the narration highlights the change in Faith’s perspective, the verb “tell” indicates she now has a story to tell about her parents’ migration to England, which will break her silence in terms of racist remarks. She is now better equipped to deal with the racism she witnesses or experiences because she has her own version of the story, so she says “Let those bully boys walk behind me in the playground. Let them tell me ‘You are a darkie. Faith is a darkie’ ”(*ibid.*, 327). She then adds “Let them say what they like. Because I am the bastard child of the Empire and I will have my day” (*ibid.*). The word “bastard” may denote denials and erasures regarding racism, as something that is not acknowledged but still exists. Given that the child belongs to the Empire, Faith might be underlining how Britain rejects caring for her colonial subjects although they see her as their mother. It is also worth noting that Faith uses future tense and says “I will have my day” (*ibid.*), suggesting she has experienced an awakening she is yet to make use of, which corresponds to another meaning of *wake*, that is awareness.

As well as awareness, *wake* also means the consequence of something. Learning about journeys across the Atlantic that shape her family history shows Faith that the presence of the black diaspora in Britain is a consequence of a long colonial history shared by the two islands, which helps her establish a stronger sense of belonging and overcome her identity crisis. Reconnecting with her Jamaican identity, Faith affirms her ancestry from her great-great-grandmother Katherine, whose mother was a slave, to her cousin Constance/Afria who still struggles to find her place. Faith’s affirmation of her black ancestry can also be connected to another meaning of *wake* as a ritual for the deceased, if we extend the meaning to include remembering and cherishing the lives of ancestors. After listening to several stories about her family members, Faith wants to connect with their memories by listening to the trunk of a lemon tree on their land and she wishes to “press [her] ear to the ground” (*ibid.*, 256) when she visits her grandparents’ grave. These two instances exemplify Faith’s ritual of remembering the dead.

All in all, her trip to Jamaica helps Faith learn about her family history as well as the colonial history that intricately connects the shores of the Atlantic. While she understands what belonging actually amounts to by learning about those intertwined stories, she gains the power to embrace and then assert her Black British identity. In the short chapter named “England”, the image of the banana boat is revisited after Faith’s awakening into Black British history, and this time she is willing to tell the story of the banana boat. However, there is no further elaboration on Faith’s life upon her return to London, which gives the novel an open ending and suggests that Faith’s journey has not come to an end yet, as reflected in her choice of the future tense when she owns her Black British identity. While the open ending of the novel suggests this is just the beginning for Faith, it is possible to conclude that it is a promising one.

## 5. Conclusion

Aside from *Small Island*, Andrea Levy's works remain largely unknown to many. Although the critical appraisal of *Small Island* overshadows Levy's other works, her previous novels showcase how Levy's narrative style evolved, how her critical eye and wit sharpened over time. Levy's third novel *Fruit of the Lemon* is a milestone in her oeuvre since it marks the time when Levy turned her attention to her family history and started uncovering the Windrush narratives. The previous research on *Fruit of the Lemon* mostly focused on the concepts of home, displacement, memory and trauma but none of them focused on the image of a ship which became a shorthand for the Black British settlement in England, especially after the arrival of the *Empire Windrush*. This thesis aims to explore Black British identity in connection with the Windrush history with the help of Paul Gilroy's and Christina Sharpe's theories. While Gilroy's concept of *routes* is instrumental in bringing ships into focus in the Anglo-Caribbean context, Sharpe's metaphor of *the wake* provides a conceptual model for Faith's engagement with her family history to create a map of belonging for herself and assert her identity.

*Fruit of the Lemon* can be read as a revision to the public narratives of Caribbean settlement in London. The novel looks back to the Windrush history, makes use of the same tropes but presents an alternative story. The image of a ship that is in the centre of Windrush narratives is translated as a banana boat in the novel as it draws attention to colonial trade. In contrast to public narratives and the existing literary tradition, *Fruit of the Lemon* challenges the idea of migration from the Caribbean as a male-only experience by rewriting women into the story.

*Fruit of the Lemon* shows how deeply racism is embedded in British society and exemplifies this in different social settings ranging from interactions with strangers to outings with friends. While any ties with colonial past and slavery go unacknowledged, race politics of the era and terror lingers. In the face of racism and the atmosphere of terror, Black British identity is left precarious. Faith starts questioning her own identity and experiences a nervous breakdown. As shown in the novel, engaging with the past and trying to understand it could provide a refuge and help maintain the integrity of one's identity. There are more than one ways to engage with the past, but Levy turns her attention to the multiplicity of *routes* that gives way to a multiplicity of stories. After seeing herself as part of a broader web, Faith feels empowered to challenge those who question her belonging in British society.

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## 7. Summary in Lithuanian

Šio magistro darbo tikslas yra ištirti juodaodžių britų identitetą ir priklausymo suvokimą Andrea Levy *Fruit of the Lemon* romane, atkreipiant dėmesį į Jamaiką ir Didžiąją Britaniją siejančias istorijas. Įprastai manoma, kad migracija iš Jamaikos į Londoną prasidėjo 1948 m., atplaukus laivui *Empire Windrush*. Visgi, Windrush pasirodymas neturėtų būti laikomas svarbesniu už kitas istorijas. Remiantis Paulo Gilroy *The Black Atlantic šaknų ir maršrutų* sampratomis bei Christina Sharpe metafora apie *pabudimą* knygoje *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*, šiame darbe plėtojama mintis, jog *Fruit of the Lemon* galima skaityti kaip Windrush istorijos alternatyvą paplitusiam naratyvui. Analizėje nagrinėjamas tylėjimas, susijęs su rasizmu, taip pat kolonijine istorija, bei parodoma, kaip šie nutylėjimai sukuria įtampą tarp britiškumo ir juodumo. Tiriant, kaip romano protagonistė Faith įsitvirtina britų visuomenėje, šiame darbe nagrinėjamas Faith įsitraukimas į savo šeimos istoriją gali būti suprojektuotas pagal Sharpe *pabudimo* metaforą. Analizėje taip pat parodoma, kad Faith sugeba priimti savo juodąją britų tapatybę tik sužinojusi apie susipynusias istorijas ir *maršrutus*, kurie jungia Jamaiką ir Didžiąją Britaniją. Ateities tyrimuose kiti Levy darbai gali būti analizuojami atsižvelgiant į Windrush istoriją.

(Vertimą iš anglų į lietuvių k. atliko Lukas Ragauskas ir Miglė Stasiulionytė)