

Negotiating Boundaries: Transnational Identity in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* and Andrea Levy's *Fruit of the Lemon*

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Abstract

In an era marked by globalization and the interconnectedness of societies, the negotiation of boundaries has become a defining aspect of contemporary human experience. This paper examines the theme of transnational identity in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* and Andrea Levy's *Fruit of the Lemon*. These novels provide rich narratives that explore the intricate journey of individuals navigating the complex interplay between their cultural, geographical, and personal identities. Drawing from border theory, this study highlights how the protagonists' transnational identities evolve as they navigate the challenges and opportunities posed by these borders. This study, therefore, foregrounds the challenges and opportunities that transnational individuals encounter, emphasizing the pivotal role of race, culture, and belonging in shaping their identity as they grapple with the issues of cultural dislocation, adaptation, and reconnection, in that way, illuminating the ways in which these characters/identities evolve in response to the forces of globalization and migration. Adichie and Levy's narratives serve as powerful windows into the intricate process of identity formation in a globalized world, highlighting the profound impact of literature in capturing the diverse and fluid experiences of individuals who transcend borders. This comparative exploration underscores the significance of storytelling in revealing the nuanced complexities associated with transnational identity and the dynamic interplay between personal narratives and broader socio-cultural contexts.

Keywords: *Belonging, Border, Hybridity, Identity, Negotiation, Race, Transnationality.*

INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary globalized world, the concept of transnational identity has become increasingly relevant. Individuals often find themselves navigating multiple cultural, national, or ethnic identities, leading to a complex negotiation of boundaries. This paper aims to explore the theme of transnational identity in two renowned novels: Adichie's (2013) *Americanah* and Levy's (1999) *Fruit of the Lemon*.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, a celebrated Nigerian author, is known for her thought-provoking exploration of themes such as race, identity, and culture. *Americanah*, one of her notable works, delves into the experiences of its main characters as they navigate the complexities of transnational identity. Adichie's (2013) *Americanah* is a novel that comments greatly on the impact Western Countries have on the cultural identity of African immigrants in the Diasporas. In the text, Adichie portrays how these immigrants are psychologically and socially challenged through their experiences in the West, and how these challenges affect their formation and representation of cultural identity, as blacks. The African immigrants in the text are caught between their desires to be accepted into the dominant western culture and the

African identity they must maintain. The cultural identity of these immigrants is analysed based on their nationality, racial identity, hairstyle and language in the text, *Americanah*.

On the other hand, Andrea Levy, a British author of Jamaican descent, writes often about issues of race and identity. *Fruit of the Lemon*, Levy's compelling novel, also delves into the exploration of transnational identity through the lens of its protagonist. Levy's (1999) *Fruit of the Lemon* deals with the Black immigrants' disillusionment and their experience of racism, especially in the first part of the novel. Toplu (2005) asserts that the West Indian immigrants considered England as a kind of home, a "Mother country" whose history, culture and literature were familiar to them from their school textbooks. He says: "For migrant Jamaicans like Faith's parents, Jamaica is their homeland and where they truly belong; their arrival in England is explained by their desire to earn money for a better living. The idea of England as a motherland is maintained by the fact that the British population is shaped by imperial history" (p. 38). This study seeks to examine how Adichie and Levy depict the negotiation of boundaries in relation to transnational identity. It investigates the characters' experiences of migration, cultural assimilation, and the challenges they face in reconciling their multiple identities.

The selection of the texts under study from different cultural backgrounds ensures a broader representation and investigation of the transnational experience. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Nigerian background and Andrea Levy's Jamaican-British heritage provide unique lenses through which to explore the complexities of transnational identity. This diversity allows for a more comprehensive examination of the theme, encompassing varied cultural perspectives and experiences. The use of novels by black female authors also allows for an intersectional analysis of transnational identity. Both Adichie and Levy navigate themes of race, gender, and cultural identity in their works, offering a multi-dimensional exploration of the protagonist's experiences. This intersectional approach enables a deeper understanding of how different aspects of identity intersect and influence one another within the context of transnationalism. Comparing the experiences of the protagonists in both novels allows for a richer exploration of common themes and experiences. Despite coming from different cultural backgrounds, the protagonists in *Americanah* and *Fruit of the Lemon* share similarities in their struggles with identity, belonging, and cultural adaptation. This comparative analysis enables us to identify universal aspects of the transnational experience while also acknowledging the unique challenges and nuances shaped by individual cultural contexts. By examining these novels, we gain a deeper understanding of the complexities and nuances of transnational identity in today's interconnected world. Various themes and motifs will be explored, shedding light on how Adichie and Levy represent the struggles, triumphs, and personal growth of their characters.

BORDER THEORY AND LITERARY LANDSCAPES

Within the framework of border theoretical thought and practices, borders are regarded as domains characterized by instability, serving as arenas for the negotiation of ethical, political, cultural, and national inquiries. Border theory, also known as border studies or borderlands theory, is a multidisciplinary field that examines the role of borders, both physical and metaphorical, in shaping human experiences, identities and interactions. This perspective has been extended to literary analysis by Johan Schimanski and Stephen Wolfe who adapted the concept of border theory in the examination of literary texts.

Schimanski and Wolfe's (2019) approach addresses the imperative to formulate pragmatic methodologies for scrutinizing narratives that revolve around borders – narratives that encompass both singular instances of individual border crossings and comprehensive narratives encompassing the shaping and erasure of borders on a grand scale (p. 55). The scope of border narratives is diverse, encompassing genres such as travel writing, exploration accounts, captivity narratives, autobiographical literature, and migration-themed texts. These narratives can all be perceived as performative acts that renegotiate the discourse surrounding nations, their narration, and the concept of borders themselves (Schimanski & Wolfe, 2019, p. 56). Schimanski and Wolfe introduce the concept of “border poetics,” a collection of strategies that offer a lens for dissecting the crossings of both physical and symbolic boundaries undertaken by individuals or collective groups. This encompasses instances of both successful and unsuccessful crossings though the criteria for success extend beyond the mere traversal of the border (p. 57). Border poetics is particularly well-suited for analysing narratives that encapsulate the experiences of immigrants, migrants, and travellers of varied backgrounds.

Crucially, border poetics does not solely concentrate on triumphant passages and prosperous crossings; it also encompasses accounts of obstructed passages and unfruitful attempts, where the aspirant border crosser is forced to turn back. Through border poetics, Schimanski and Wolfe create a framework that encapsulates the complexities of border experiences, drawing attention to the dynamic interplay between borders, individuals, narratives, and the transformative potential of border crossings. Amid the array of challenges faced by transnational migrants, a central issue is the pervasive problem of racial discrimination, which complicates the formation of identities tied to specific geographical boundaries. By delving into the diversity and fluidity of borders across the globe, it becomes evident that the issue revolves around identity crises. This process involves the development of adaptive and versatile transnational and trans-cultural African identities. These identities, born out of the necessity to navigate an intricate web of cultural contexts, signify an attempt to transcend borders and to overcome the limitations placed upon them. Through their experiences, the intricate nature of identity formation for African transnational migrants comes to light, demonstrating the complexities of visibility, belonging, and the continuous negotiation of boundaries.

According to Schimanski, border reading within literature is organized around a model of five border planes that each conceptualizes the different corner-stones within border theory. The use of border planes is one way into border theory that can help explain different borders in literature. These planes are; topographic, symbolic, temporal, epistemological and textual planes (Schimanski, 2018a). The topographic border pertains to the physical realm and involves observing a border within this topographic plane. This border can define spaces or places, spanning across different nations, geographical divisions, personal domains, or even the human body itself. When a topographic border symbolically signifies a particular space, the symbolic representation of that space becomes pivotal. Symbolic spaces are distinct in that they don't adhere to specific geographical locations; instead, they operate within the realm of mental or metaphorical landscapes (Schimanski, 2018d). Symbolic borders encompass intangible aspects such as metaphors, thoughts, and ideas. These symbolic borders are often presented as binary oppositions, such as those between rich and poor, male and female, black and white, or good and evil.

The temporal border corresponds to the plane of time, delineating various time periods within literary works. This type of border segregates distinct life events, such as birth, marriage, or imprisonment. Additionally, it can introduce oppositions, like those between married and unmarried, child and adult, or before and after. The epistemological border operates within the domain of knowledge and stands as a border between the known and the unknown. This involves binary oppositions concerning the mental and metaphorical landscape of knowledge. Schimanski's framework provides an avenue to systematically dissect and interpret different types of borders encountered in literature, ultimately enhancing our comprehension of the intricate interplay between these borders and narrative elements. The Textual border functions as the border plane of the text itself. The textual border plane "typically divides sections of the text into chapters, paragraphs, lines and sentences (Schimanski, 2018e). The various border planes play distinct roles within the text and the literary genre, each contributing in a unique manner. When approaching a text with an awareness of these planes, the identification of borders within the text becomes more straightforward.

Ifemelu's Transnational Experience

Transnationality refers to the interconnectedness and fluidity of social, economic, and cultural activities across national borders (Schimanski & Wolfe, 2019, p. 89). It recognizes that migrants often maintain strong ties to their home countries while simultaneously engaging in activities and relationships in their host countries. Transnationality also refers to the process or state of extending beyond or transcending national boundaries. It typically involves the ways in which people, ideas, and goods move across national borders, leading to the creation of new forms of identity and social structures that are not confined to a single nation-state.

In *Americanah*, Adichie introduces Ifemelu, a young Nigerian woman, who migrates to the United States. The novel is a profound examination of race, identity, and the immigrant experience in America, seen through Ifemelu's eyes. We witness her negotiation of identity in the face of racial and cultural differences. In *Americanah*, Ifemelu's experiences in the U.S. highlight the fluidity of identity. She grapples with what it means to be African in America and the nuances of racial identity. Ifemelu, the protagonist, is a Nigerian. Her identification as a Nigerian is not only by birth but also because of the Nigerian family values she believes in. Born in a family that isn't wealthy, Ifemelu has never being to the United States. As a matter of fact, her migration to the United States, to further her education, is the first time she has to leave the shores of her country. Like most Nigerian children, Ifemelu and her friends dream of someday studying in the United States (Adichie, 2013, p. 65). However, Ifemelu, at first does not take part in her friends' dreams, due to her economic background. Later on, as she migrates to the United States, Ifemelu's experiences challenge her nationhood, such as the proper vocabularies to employ, the kind of hairstyle that will be regarded as professional and how to speak with an American accent. However, despite Ifemelu obtaining her American passport, she chooses to return to Nigeria because that is the place where she feels at home the most (Adichie, 2013, p. 6). Therefore, it can be concluded that Ifemelu's Nigerian identity is significant to her cultural identity formation because in the end, she identifies with her Nigerian heritage.

Like other immigrants in the text, Aunt Uju and Dike struggle with their Nigerian identity. Aunt Uju's earlier struggles to fit into the American society forces her to integrate certain American values which affect her cultural identity as a Nigerian. In the summer Ifemelu moves to America, while staying with her aunt and Dike in her apartment in New York, she begins to notice the differences in her aunt's personality, which no longer reflect that of the

person she once knew back in Nigeria. On getting to aunty Uju's apartment from the airport, aunty Uju purposely mispronounces her name when she takes a call. She pronounces it *you-joo* instead of *oo-joo*. When Ifemelu asks her if this is how she pronounces her name in America, she replies that, "it's what they call me" (Adichie, 2013, p. 140). Names play an important role in a person's sense of self. A person's name points towards his/her cultural background, thereby reflecting his/her national identity. In aunty Uju's case, her Nigerian identity is undermined. Therefore, aunty Uju's experiences as an African immigrant in the United States has caused her to sacrifice her Nigerian identity for that of the American.

Physical and Symbolic Border Crossings in *Americanah*

In Adichie's (2013) *Americanah*, instances of physical and symbolic border crossing serve as profound moments that resonate with the theoretical framework of border theory, illuminating the complexities of migration, identity negotiation, and belonging. Firstly, Ifemelu's initial journey from Nigeria to the United States marks a significant border crossing that sets the stage for her transnational experience. This physical move reflects the crossing of not just geographical borders but also cultural and societal boundaries.

As Ifemelu navigates the new environment in America, she is confronted with the challenge of reconciling her Nigerian identity with the cultural expectations and norms of her adopted country. This border crossing initiates her exploration of identity and belonging in a complex, interconnected world. Furthermore, Ifemelu's decision to return to Nigeria represents a reconfiguration of borders, both physical and metaphorical. By crossing back into her homeland, Ifemelu seeks to reclaim a sense of belonging and reconnect with her roots. This move reflects the fluidity of borders and the dynamic nature of identity, as Ifemelu deals with the shifting contours of her sense of self about her cultural heritage and experiences abroad.

Obinze's attempted illegal entry into England also underscores the harsh realities faced by migrants seeking to cross physical borders in search of better opportunities. His experience highlights the often-perilous journey undertaken by individuals navigating restrictive immigration policies and border controls. In line with border theory, Obinze's failed attempt exposes the arbitrary nature of borders and the systemic inequalities that shape access to mobility and opportunity in the global landscape.

Symbolic border crossings serve as powerful moments that convey deeper themes of identity, belonging, and cultural navigation. These instances, while not necessarily involving physical movement across geographical borders, represent pivotal shifts in the characters' understanding of themselves and their place in the world. One significant example of symbolic border crossing in the novel is Ifemelu's decision to start her blog, "The Non-American Black." Through this virtual platform, Ifemelu transcends societal boundaries and challenges prevailing narratives about race and identity in America. By creating a space for dialogue and reflection, Ifemelu effectively crosses the borders of traditional discourse, offering alternative perspectives on race and cultural identity. This symbolic act reflects her agency in shaping her narrative and asserting her identity in a society marked by racial hierarchies and stereotypes.

Another instance of symbolic border crossing is Ifemelu's romantic relationships, particularly her affair with Curt, a wealthy white American. Through her involvement with Curt, Ifemelu navigates complex racial dynamics and societal expectations, crossing boundaries of race, class, and culture. Their relationship prompts Ifemelu to confront her own internalized prejudices and reevaluate her notions of love, intimacy, and identity. This symbolic crossing of relational borders challenges traditional notions of racial and cultural boundaries,

highlighting the fluidity and complexity of human connections in a multicultural society. Additionally, Ifemelu's decision to return to Nigeria also represents a symbolic border crossing, as she confronts the challenges of reintegration and renegotiates her sense of belonging. By returning to her homeland, Ifemelu crosses the borders of distance and estrangement, seeking to reconnect with her roots and reclaim her identity. Her journey back to Nigeria signifies a symbolic homecoming, as she grapples with the questions of authenticity and cultural identity in a changing world.

Alienation of Immigrants across Borders

Alienation refers to the feeling of being disconnected or isolated from one's surroundings or society. In the context of migrants, alienation can be a common experience due to various factors such as cultural differences and discrimination. Cultural differences can also contribute to alienation as migrants may find it challenging to adapt to the customs, traditions, and social norms of their new environment. This can result in a sense of not belonging and feeling like an outsider.

Adichie's (2013) *Americanah* also portrays the impact western countries have on the cultural identity of African immigrants in the Diaspora. In the text, Adichie represents how these immigrants are psychologically and socially challenged through their experiences in the West, and how these challenges affect their formation and representation of cultural identity, as blacks. The African immigrants in the text are caught between their desires to be accepted into the dominant western culture and the African identity they must maintain. The cultural identity of these immigrants is analysed based on their nationality, racial identity, hairstyle and language in the text, *Americanah*. African immigrants in the Diaspora are regarded as cultural kin. In her conversation with Curt, her ex-boyfriend, Ifemelu observes that, "I feel like I got off the plane in Lagos and stopped being black" (p. 476). As an African immigrant from Nigeria, Ifemelu, like other African immigrants, never felt as blacks until their arrival in the United States. While in Nigeria, she never had to think of herself as being black. No one even brings up a discussion on the colour of her skin in a conversation.

Hall (1990) asserts that, "the western regime of representation based on power differences not only construct people of colour's experiences as the other but they also have the power to make them experience themselves as such (p. 662). As immigrant from a country once colonised by the Western world, Ifemelu, due to her experience in the United States, realizes that she is an "Other"; something that was not an issue while in Nigeria. Her experiences in the United States of America makes her aware of her stigmatized cultural identity as a member of the Black race in America. In the United States, she is primarily identified based on the colour of her skin. One significant issue, Adichie explores in the text is the issue of a person's race which only becomes important while in the West. As Ifemelu writes in one of her blog entries:

Dear Non-American Black, when you make the choice to come to America, you become black. Stop arguing. Stop saying I'm Jamaican or Ghanaian. America doesn't care. So, what if you weren't 'black' in your country? You're in America now (Adichie, 2013, p. 220)

This excerpt from Ifemelu's blog shows that "blackness" is a form of social identity that relegates nationality to the background. She implies that in the United States, race becomes the primary factor to establish one's cultural identity. Therefore, a person's ethnicity or nationality is of no relevance as long as he/she is black and resides in America. In the novel, Ifemelu discusses her experiences of racism and writes about racial prejudice on her blog. Thus, the

blog serves as her point of identification with the black race, by relaying her feelings about race and racism in the United States.

Discrimination is another significant factor that can contribute to alienation among migrants. They face prejudice, stereotypes, and unequal treatment based on their migrant status, which brings about feelings of marginalization and exclusion. This notion of discrimination can simply be seen as racism. Wilson in Clair and Dennis (2015) states that the term “racism” is applied in situations where a dominant group – in this case, Whites – uses biological and cultural features to diminish others – Blacks” (p. 14). There are, certainly, many other types of racist deeds directed to Asians, Indians, among others. As Fredrickson points out, the label itself started to be spread only in the 1930s due to the Second World War and Nazis’ discourse and actions towards Jews, but the oppressive facet of the so-called superior race dates way before (p. 25).

Race is a significant factor in America. Reilly et al. (2003) note that, “race is intended as a category to be used in distinguishing different human groups on the basis of physical appearance” (p. 15). It adds that skin colour as well as other facial features like hair, eyes and nose determine race. For Ifemelu, the idea of being seen as white is normal while black in most cases is shunned and likely to result in exclusion. In *Americanah*, African characters are faced with negative stereotypes as a result of their colour. Kleg (1993), says that, “stereotypes are prejudicial because they involve generalizations” and goes on to add that “when tied to prejudicial attitudes, stereotypes create a number of behaviours ranging from avoidance to violence” (p. 155). The white characters stereotype Africans as reflected through Cristina Tomas, a receptionist at the International Students Office, who serves foreign students in Ifemelu’s university. When giving them directions she pauses after every word. Tomas is conformed to the stereotype that foreign students do not understand English because she has heard them speak with a foreign accent. This is illustrated when she tells Ifemelu, “I. Need. You. To. Fill. Out. A. Couple. Of. Forms. Do. You. Understand. How. To. Fill. These. Out?” (Adichie, 2013, p. 133). This attitude from Tomas demoralizes Ifemelu, “... and she felt for a moment like a small child, lazy-limbed and drooling” (p. 133). Much as this incident is humorous, its ironical nature is presented through the fact that Ifemelu is extremely fluent in English. Even when Ifemelu tries to make her see that she speaks good English, she replies, “I bet you do, ...I just don’t know how well” (p. 133). Generally, American mentality of Africa and Africans is stereotyped in *Americanah*.

Emenike, Obinze’s former secondary school mate, who also lives in London is not left out of the experience of trauma by African (Nigerian) immigrants. Although, he is married to an Englishwoman, who is a solicitor in London, his skin colour does not stop him from being racially discriminated against. Emenike recounts one of his experiences, “He told the story of the taxi that he had hailed one night, on Upper Street, from afar the cab light was on but as the cab approached him, the light went off, and he assumed the driver was not on duty. After the cab passed him by, he looked back idly and saw that the cab light was back on and that, a little way up the street, it stopped for two white women” (Adichie, 2013, p. 275). Thus, the taxi driver is comfortable with picking white clients rather than black clients. The behaviour of the taxi driver further enhances the notion of racism in the British community. To the driver, he feels he is racially superior to a black man and so he will not subject himself to driving the man.

Physical and Metaphorical Border Crossings in *Fruit of the Lemon*

Fruit of the Lemon by Andrea Levy follows Faith Jackson, a second-generation British Jamaican, who struggles with her cultural heritage and identity in the face of family secrets and societal expectations. Faith's journey to Jamaica to explore her family history is a powerful narrative about understanding one's heritage and the complexities of a dual identity. Levy's novel introduces us to Faith's journey of self-discovery as she travels to Jamaica, the land of her parents, seeking a connection to her roots. She explores the impact of colonial history, generational identity, and the complexities of being "in between" cultures.

Fruit of the Lemon focuses on the experience of a black woman coming into conflict with British society. The first part of novel features many instances of racism. Faith, whose childhood had been relatively protected, moves away from her parents' house, starts working and begins to have a more direct contact with society. She meets with hostility and racism, and realizes that her position in society is not as automatic as she presumed. While in the beginning, Faith believes herself as genuinely belonging to British mainstream society and thinks that other people recognize her as such, as the story proceeds, she gradually loses her idealism. Having spent the four previous years in the relatively egalitarian academic environment of Art College, Faith is not prepared for the much more prejudiced world around her and is forced to "renegotiate" her identity. When first meeting with distrust, she seems to be genuinely surprised and does not understand the reason for it. Gradually she starts to take the insults more and more personally as they get more frequent – in the street, at work, even at her new home. When she is looking at a car because she is interested in buying it, she seems suspicious to a neighbour, who thinks she wants to steal it. At work she is pushed aside to dress dolls instead of actors, who might not "like a coloured person putting their clothes on them."

Venturing outside multicultural London, Faith goes into a quintessential English country pub, but feels she is a stranger there: "I felt eyes looking at me but I could not see them. And I thought the place hushed" (Levy, 1999, p. 123). Faith moves into a house with her friend Marion and two men, all of them white English. Marion's large, white, working-class family are welcoming and friendly towards Faith, but they treat her as if she was not black. When she comes to see them, they utter racist remarks in front of her and act as if that could not offend her. Marion's sister Trina tells them about a fight she had: "I had a fight with some wog at school. Stupid coon spat on me and pulled me hair. So I hit her." Trina's parents do not appear to be troubled by the fact that Trina "clocked some darkie", her father is only angry because he has to face the attacked girl's parents:

...then they start shouting in my face that I don't know how to bring up my kids properly. I thought that's bloody rich comin' from a coon.' Marion's gran butted in, 'What they bloody talking about? You know how to bring up your kids – you don't need no bloody help from no nig-nog (Levy, 1999, p. 54).

When Faith goes with Marion, her father and sister to a comedy night, the father reacts spitefully to a black performer. On being reproached by Marion he claims that "Oh, Faith's different". Here, Marion's father speech contains numerous racial references in about Trina's dark-skinned friend at school. Degrading words and phrases are used to describe her by him. Not only does he belittle her, but he also dehumanizes her ethnicity. One can assume that Faith is once again keeping her mouth shut about racism because she makes no remark about it. To make matters worse, the family seemed unconcerned about offending Faith by speaking in this

manner. They probably know her well enough to not offend her. Faith does not use any adjectives to describe herself in this story that indicate that she is hurt by it.

One other serious incident Faith witnesses is an attack on a bookshop where a black woman works. Three men from the National Front damage the shop and injure the woman. What appears to trouble Faith most is the fact that no one considers the attack racist. In recounting the incident – to a policeman, to her housemates – she has to stress that the woman is black but it does not seem to matter to them. It is when she is talking about the incident with her housemates, who trivialize and ridicule it, that Faith experiences an acute sense of being different; which leads to her identity crisis.

In Levy's (1999) *Fruit of the Lemon*, both physical and symbolic border crossings play significant roles in shaping the protagonist, Faith Jackson's journey of self-discovery identity negotiation. One instance of physical border crossing occurs when Faith travels from England to Jamaica, the land of her parents' birth. This physical journey represents a return to her cultural roots and an attempt to reconnect with her heritage. As Faith navigates the unfamiliar landscapes of Jamaica, she struggles with feelings of displacement and estrangement, highlighting the complexities of transnational identity. Her physical border crossing symbolizes a quest for understanding and belonging, as she seeks to reconcile her British upbringing with her Jamaican ancestry.

Symbolic border crossings also abound in *Fruit of the Lemon*, manifesting in Faith's interactions with her family and community. One significant example is Faith's exploration of her family history and heritage through storytelling and reminiscence. As she delves into her parents' past and uncovers family secrets, Faith crosses the borders of generational silence and cultural taboo, reclaiming lost narratives and identities. Through these symbolic journeys of remembrance, Faith seeks to bridge the divide between past and present, forging connections that transcend geographical boundaries. Furthermore, Faith's experiences with cultural assimilation and identity negotiation in England represent symbolic border crossings that shape her understanding of self and belonging. As a British Jamaican navigating the complexities of race and identity in a predominantly white society, Faith confronts the challenges of straddling multiple cultural worlds. Her interactions with peers, colleagues, and romantic interests serve as symbolic crossings of social and cultural boundaries, highlighting the tension between assimilation and cultural authenticity.

Finally, Faith's eventual return to Jamaica signifies a symbolic homecoming and a reconciliation of her dual identities. Through this symbolic border crossing, Faith confronts the complexities of belonging and cultural identity, embracing the richness of her Jamaican heritage while acknowledging the influence of her British upbringing. Her journey of self-discovery and acceptance culminates in a newfound sense of wholeness and belonging, as she navigates the fluid borders of identity with courage and resilience.

Identity Crisis in Levy's *Fruit of the Lemon*

Fruit of the Lemon is a book about the search for identity. Faith goes a long way in this search and at the end of the book she is a considerably different person. At the beginning of the book Faith is relatively unaware of any inequality in British society. Throughout childhood she had been protected by her parents from any sense of inferiority, and at college she mixes with white people and does not understand her parents' concerns about it.

When Faith moves out to a house with other young people, Faith begins to live through the difficult experience of someone not wholly accepted by society. She meets with suspicion,

hostility and other forms of racial discrimination. Simultaneously her self-consciousness of being black awakens as she is pressured by Ruth, a black political activist. While at the beginning she interpreted her father's question whether any of her friends were her own kind as meaning "from college," later she seems to identify more with all black people, for example when she is anxious about the performance of a black poet:

I became nervous waiting for the poet to start. I was thinking, 'Please be good, please.' The poet became my dad, my brother, he was the unknown black faces in our photo album, he was the old man on the bus who called me sister, the man in the bank with the strong Trinidadian accent who could not make himself understood. He was every black man – ever (Levy, 1999, p. 173).

This solidarity with another person on the grounds of racial origin is a totally new concept for Faith; she feels the poet's performance affects the reputation of all black people. This new sense of solidarity, together with a strong disillusionment, induces Faith to turn away from England in her search for an identity.

The most important incident that affects Faith is the attack on another black woman. The seriousness of physical violence shakes Faith considerably and triggers an identity crisis. She feels she is not 'right' for this society and imputes the blame on her ethnic origin. Suddenly she does not want to be black, feeling it is an obstacle to achieving almost anything:

I could see my reflection in the wardrobe mirror. A black girl lying in a bed. I covered the mirror with a bath towel. I didn't want to be black anymore. I just wanted to live the other mirror in the room I covered with a tee-shirt. Voilà! I was no longer black (Levy, 1999, p. 198).

Faith accepts her parents' suggestion of a trip to Jamaica. At first, she does not really believe it could help her in any way, since Jamaica is an unfamiliar land for her. However, when she gets there, she finds that "everything was a little familiar but not quite. Like a dream." When meeting her aunt Coral, Faith is reminded of her own mother: "she had the aura of kin." Gradually Faith begins to feel at home in Jamaica and starts to uncover the Jamaican side of her personality. She realises that what made her different and conspicuous in Britain, is perfectly ordinary in Jamaica: "And no one watched me... And no one stared at me or whispered, 'Who is she?'" (Levy, 1999, p. 293). Faith's search for a new identity is successful, she finds Jamaican roots. The deep and complex history she uncovers seems to justify her difference; she is no longer ashamed of her origin and at the end of the novel she proudly declares:

Let those bully boys walk behind me in the playground. Let them call me, 'You're a darkie. Faith's a darkie.' I am the granddaughter of Grace and William Campbell. I am the great-grandchild of Cecilia Hilton. I am descended from Katherine whose mother was a slave. I am the cousin of Africa. I am the niece of Coral Thompson and the daughter of Wade and Mildred Jackson. Let them say what they like. Because I am the bastard child of Empire and I will have my day (Levy, 1999, p. 178).

The importance of Faith's trip to Jamaica is the realization of her own self-worth. While as a child, Faith used to suffer when other children were laughing at her because her parents had come on a banana boat, after visiting Jamaica. Faith realizes there is nothing to be ashamed of. She learns her family history and becomes proud of it. The novel is concluded by Faith returning to Britain, saying: "I was coming home to tell everyone... My mum and dad came to England on a banana boat." This development is stressed by the sentence being both the beginning and the conclusion of the book, but each time having a different meaning. Faith's

referring to herself as ‘the bastard child of Empire’ is a metaphorical portrait of British colonialism. Faith’s parents came to Britain thinking they were going ‘home’ as Britain was their ‘Mother country’. Faith, herself feeling British but not being recognised by others, is the illegitimate child, the child rejected by her own mother.

For Levy, national identity is more about feeling than ethnicity. Faith is English because she was born in Britain, and, as Levy reflects, “it is born and bred and not born-and-bred-with-a-very-longline-of-whiteancestors-directly-descended-from-Anglo-Saxons” (p. 180) that constitutes a British person. Similar to *Americanah*, *Fruit of the Lemon* reflects on how transnational experiences shape one’s sense of self. Levy’s portrayal of Faith’s struggles and triumphs adds depth to the exploration of negotiating boundaries and identity. Faith’s trip to Jamaica in *Fruit of the Lemon* is a voyage of self-discovery. Levy uses this journey to explore the fragmented nature of diasporic identity. Faith learns that understanding her family’s past is key to comprehending her own identity.

While both Adichie and Levy explore transnational identity, they do so in distinct ways. In *Americanah*, the focus is on the immigrant experience and the negotiation of racial and cultural identity in a foreign land. On the other hand, *Fruit of the Lemon* emphasizes the complexities of second-generation identity and the quest for belonging in a multicultural society. Despite these differences, both novels share common threads as the characters in both works navigate the blurred lines between cultures, challenging societal expectations and questioning preconceived notions of identity. The narratives, therefore, highlights the universal themes of belonging and self-discovery that transcend cultural and geographical boundaries.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the examination of transnational identity in Adichie’s *Americanah* and Levy’s *Fruit of the Lemon* offers profound insights into the complexities of contemporary human experiences in a globalized world. Through the lens of border theory, this paper has illuminated the challenges and opportunities inherent in the negotiation of cultural, geographical, and personal boundaries. The protagonists in these novels navigate a web of issues related to cultural dislocation, adaptation, and reconnection, emphasizing the pivotal role of race, culture, and belonging in shaping transnational identity.

Both Ifemelu from Adichie’s *Americanah* and Faith in Levy’s *Fruit of the Lemon* embark on journeys marked by migration and cultural displacement. Ifemelu, a Nigerian woman, and Faith, a British Jamaican, navigate the complexities of adapting to new environments while contending with the sense of alienation and yearning for their homelands. Their experiences highlight the challenges of navigating cultural borders and the emotional toll of uprooting oneself from familiar surroundings. In the face of societal expectations and cultural pressures, both protagonists undergo a profound negotiation of identity. Ifemelu and Faith must reconcile their cultural heritage with their experiences in new cultural contexts, leading to internal conflicts and journeys of self-discovery. Their struggles reflect the universal human quest for understanding and asserting one’s identity amidst shifting cultural landscapes. The protagonists encounter significant challenges related to assimilation and acceptance within their respective societies. In their efforts to integrate, Ifemelu and Faith navigate racial dynamics, stereotypes, and prejudice, all while striving to authentically assert their identities. These challenges highlight the complexities of belonging in multicultural environments and the persistent barriers faced by individuals navigating intersecting identities.

Central to their narratives is the search for belonging and connection. Both Ifemelu and Faith yearn for a sense of rootedness, whether it be to their cultural roots, their families, or their communities. Their journeys involve questions of identity, belonging, and home, underscoring the universal human desire for connection and a place to call one's own. In summary, the experiences of Ifemelu and Faith in *Americanah* and *Fruit of the Lemon* respectively illuminate the multifaceted nature of migration, identity negotiation, assimilation challenges, and the search for belonging. Their narratives offer insights into the complexities of transnational identity and the enduring quest for understanding and acceptance in a rapidly changing world. As the characters evolve in response to the forces of globalization and migration, the narratives also underscore the significance of storytelling as a powerful tool in capturing the diverse and fluid experiences of individuals who transcend borders. The comparative exploration of Adichie and Levy's works highlights the dynamic interplay between personal narratives and broader socio-cultural contexts, emphasizing the profound impact of literature in portraying the nuanced complexities of transnational identity.

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