



# Psychic Fragmentation and Racial Identity in Andrea Levy's *Fruit of the Lemon*: A Psychoanalytic Study

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## Abstract

*This paper explores the theme of psychic fragmentation and the intricate formation of racial identity in Andrea Levy's *Fruit of the Lemon* through a psychoanalytic lens. Using key psychoanalytic concepts such as repression, the unconscious, and identity formation, the study examines how the protagonist, Faith Jackson, experiences an internal divide between her Jamaican heritage and her British upbringing. Faith's divided self-identity stems from inherited silences within her family and history, embodying the enduring mental and emotional imprint of colonialism and displacement. This research specifically draws on Freudian ideas of repression and the unconscious, Lacanian theories of the Mirror Stage and the Other, and Jungian notions of individuation to analyze Faith's psychological journey. The paper discusses how racial identity, shaped by unconscious desires and internalized societal perceptions, becomes central to Faith's search for self-understanding. Additionally, it investigates how the absence of a cohesive cultural narrative within Faith's family leads to an ongoing struggle with her identity, ultimately reflected in her emotional and psychological fragmentation. Faith's journey to Jamaica serves as both a literal and symbolic process of reconciliation, where the protagonist confronts the fragmented parts of her psyche and reclaims her cultural heritage. Using a psychoanalytic framework, this study highlights how identity, trauma, and healing intertwine in postcolonial settings, underscoring how buried family histories and unconscious processes influence racial and cultural attachment.*

**Keywords:** *psychic fragmentation, racial identity, psychoanalysis, repression, diaspora, self-discovery*

*Fruit of the Lemon* by Andrea Levy traces the deeply personal journey of Faith Jackson, a young woman born in Britain to Jamaican parents, as she tries to make sense of who she is. Faith grows up in an environment that prizes British norms, yet she carries within her the cultural memory of a homeland she has never truly known. This push and pull leaves her caught between two worlds, producing a kind of inner fracture that touches every part of her life. Her struggle is not simply about heritage—it is about how race, history, and community shape the way a person sees themselves. Psychoanalytic theory offers a useful

lens here; ideas from Freud, Lacan, and Jung shed light on how repression, buried desires, the Mirror Stage, and the process of individuation play out in her story. Alongside these theoretical threads is the shadow of family secrets and the unspoken pain of the Caribbean diaspora, both of which quietly shape Faith's understanding of herself.

## Psychic Fragmentation and Repression in Faith's Identity Formation

Psychoanalytic theory offers valuable ways to understand how identities take shape. Freud suggests



that much of who we are is formed by desires and memories we have pushed out of conscious awareness (Freud, 1914). For Faith Jackson, this dynamic is at the heart of her struggle. She finds herself caught between the values of the British culture in which she was raised and the Jamaican roots that remain an inseparable part of her. Freud's theory of repression suggests that certain aspects of identity, especially those that evoke discomfort or conflict, are pushed out of consciousness. For Faith, her Jamaican heritage—often associated with cultural differences and past trauma—is something she subconsciously represses. Levy presents this conflict in Faith's internal dialogue, where she says: "I had been ashamed of it. Of being Jamaican. Of not being British enough" (Levy 58).

Faith's shame reflects Freud's idea that repressed elements of the self often manifest as anxiety or emotional conflict. Her internalized rejection of her heritage is an unconscious defense mechanism that shields her from the discomfort of acknowledging the complexities of her racial identity.

Freud's concept of repression can be linked to the historical trauma of colonialism, which creates a collective unconscious within marginalized communities. This unconscious trauma impacts individual identity, particularly in postcolonial settings. Faith's avoidance of her Jamaican roots is not merely personal but is influenced by the broader societal marginalization of Black people in Britain. Her inner fragmentation can therefore be understood as an echo of the colonial past that still exerts influence over her.

### **Lacan's Mirror Stage and the Struggle for Identity**

Lacan's theory of the *Mirror Stage* is central to understanding the psychic fragmentation experienced by Faith. According to Lacan, the *Mirror Stage* occurs when a child first recognizes their image in a mirror, forming a sense of self. However, this self-awareness is not unified; it is fragmented and tied to the image of the "Other" (Lacan 1). In Faith's case, the *Mirror Stage* is marked by her struggle to reconcile the images of herself presented in both British and Jamaican contexts. Faith's confusion about her identity is evident when she reflects: "I was not British

enough, not Jamaican enough, never enough" (Levy 120).

Lacan's concept of the *Other* plays an essential role in this struggle. The *Other* is the external reflection that shapes the individual's self-perception. Faith's self-image is continually shaped by the perceptions of those around her, whether British or Jamaican. The racialized perception of Faith as "Black" in Britain and as "not truly Jamaican" in Jamaica creates a profound sense of alienation. She is constantly confronted with a fragmented self-image, caught between two conflicting identities.

Lacan's *Mirror Stage* theory is also crucial for understanding the disintegration of Faith's self-identity. Lacan argues that the ideal "I" is never fully realized and is always a fractured reflection of external influences. In Faith's case, her fragmented sense of self reflects this broken identity, continually changing according to the cultural lens through which others perceive her.

### **The Unconscious Desire for Cultural Belonging**

One of the central aspects of Faith's psychic fragmentation is her unconscious desire for belonging. Freud's concept of *desire* (1905) plays a vital role in understanding Faith's internal conflict. Desire is not always consciously recognized; instead, it is often preset in the unconscious and is shaped by early experiences and societal expectations. Faith's desire for cultural belonging is evident throughout the novel, but it is not a straightforward, conscious longing. It is an unconscious desire shaped by her racial and cultural identity.

Faith's unconscious desire for cultural belonging is revealed when she attempts to connect with her Jamaican heritage by traveling to Jamaica. This journey represents an attempt to reclaim the "lost object" of her identity, as theorized by Lacan. The "lost object" refers to that part of the self that is separated or repressed, and Faith's trip to Jamaica is symbolic of her attempt to reconnect with this part of herself. "I was going to a place that felt like my past... like a place I was supposed to know" (Levy 196).

In this moment, Faith's unconscious desire to understand her cultural roots is symbolized by her



search for home. However, as Lacan's theory suggests, the reunion with the *lost object* is never complete. Faith's trip to Jamaica allows her to confront the fragmented pieces of her identity, but it does not offer total resolution. Instead, it opens the way for integration, allowing her to gradually bring the different strands of her identity into harmony.

### **Family Secrets and the Unconscious Memory**

Family secrets are central to the inner fractures Faith experiences. Freud (1913) observed that unspoken histories and repressed memories within a family can profoundly influence a person's sense of self. In Faith's case, the silence that surrounds her parents' past becomes a persistent source of unease. Their unwillingness to speak about their migration or to share stories of their Jamaican heritage leaves her with only fragments of connection to her roots. This absence of dialogue functions, in Freudian terms, as a form of repression—one that extends beyond the individual to shape the psychic life of the entire family. As Faith reflects, "They never spoke of it. Never about the past... It was as if it never happened" (Levy 72). Suppressing family history significantly shapes Faith's understanding of herself. Her inability to access the narrative of her parents' past prevents her from fully understanding her own identity. The novel portrays how these repressed family secrets shape Faith's unconscious desires and identity. The more her parents conceal their past, the more Faith becomes entangled in an unconscious drive to uncover the truth. From a psychoanalytic perspective, this reflects the process of working through repressed material, in which an individual faces the hidden aspects of their history to weave them into a coherent sense of self.

### **Jung's Individuation and the Journey to Self-Discovery**

Another perspective for examining Faith's journey can be found in Jung's concept of *Individuation* (1953). Individuation is the process through which an individual unites the unconscious aspects of themselves with the conscious mind, forming a cohesive and integrated whole. This process requires facing the divided elements of one's identity and

bringing them into harmony. Faith's trip to Jamaica can be seen as a symbolic representation of this process. Facing her heritage, uncovering her family history, and engaging with her cultural identity mark a pivotal stage in Faith's psychological growth. As she admits, "I wanted to be someone who knew where I came from. Someone who understood the family, the roots, the soil beneath my feet" (Levy 202).

In Jamaica, Faith comes to realize that self-knowledge and cultural identity are dynamic processes, demanding ongoing integration and continual self-discovery. Individuation enables Faith to integrate her divided identity by acknowledging her heritage in its entirety, embracing both its painful and its cherished aspects. However, as Jung suggests, individuation is a lifelong process. Faith's journey to Jamaica provides an opportunity for growth, but her identity remains an ongoing negotiation between her British and Jamaican selves.

### **Conclusion**

Through a psychoanalytic reading of *Fruit of the Lemon*, it becomes clear that Faith Jackson's psychic fragmentation is deeply intertwined with her racial and cultural identity. Using the psychoanalytic theories of Freud, Lacan, and Jung, this paper has analysed how repression, unconscious desire, and the struggle for belonging contribute to Faith's fragmented sense of self. Her journey towards self-discovery, particularly her trip to Jamaica, represents a psychological process of individuation and integration, where she confronts the repressed aspects of her identity and works to reconcile them. The novel, through its portrayal of Faith's internal conflict, offers a poignant exploration of the complexities of racial identity and the psychological impact of postcolonial experiences. Ultimately, *Fruit of the Lemon* offers a profound reflection on how history, culture, and unconscious desires influence the journey toward self-understanding and healing.

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