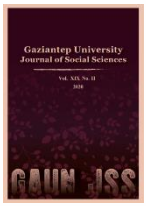

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Araştırma Makalesi ● Research Article

Transcultural Memory of the Black Atlantic in Caryl Phillips's Crossing the River[1]

Caryl Phillips'in Crossing the River Romanında Siyah Atlantik'in Transkültürel Belleği

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ÖZ

Bu çalışmada Caryl Phillips'in Crossing the River romanında siyahi toplulukların Atlantik'teki yolculukları aracılığıyla transkültürel belleğin oluşum süreci incelenmekte ve bu sayede romanın kimlik ve siyah Atlantik deneyimi gibi kavramların tek unsurlu yapılaşmasını sorunsallaştırdığı öne sürülmektedir. Bellek, romanda çeşitli zaman dilimleri, mekânlar ve halklar arasındaki sürekliliği ören bir zemin işlevi görmektedir. Belleğin sınırlar arasında hareketi farklı deneyimleri bir araya getiren ve siyah Atlantik bölgeleri arasındaki temel bağlantıyı gösteren bellek ağları oluşturmaktadır. Bu ağlar üzerindeki zamansal ve mekânsal kırılmalar, diaspora deneyiminin tek bir anlatıya sığdırılamayan kültürlerarası niteliğini ortaya koymaktadır. Romanda diaspora kimliğinin özcü kimlik anlayışlarına nasıl meydan okuduğunu gösteren parçalı bir yapı kullanılır. Romanın parçalı yapısı ve çok sesli anlatımı da siyah diasporanın Atlantik'teki yolculuğunu yansıtmaktadır. Bu bağlamda bu çalışmada önce romanın siyahi Atlantik deneyimini Paul Gilroy tarafından kavramsallaştırıldığı şekliyle nasıl yansıttığı incelenecektir. Bunu, romanda günümüz siyahi diasporasının olası kökenlerini oluşturan kültürler arası hareketlerin ve bağlantıların nasıl şekillendiğinin ve romanın belleğin hareketini taklit eden biçimsel özelliklerinin kapsamlı bir analizi izleyecektir.

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ABSTRACT

This paper argues that Caryl Phillips's Crossing the River illustrates how the transcultural memory of the black Atlantic is constituted by the movement of black populations across the Atlantic challenging the insular approaches to identity and the totalizing accounts of the black Atlantic history. Memory serves as a ground of identity formation, which weaves continuity between various time spans, locations, and peoples in the novel. The temporal and spatial ruptures on these networks reveal the transcultural nature of the diasporic experience that cannot be put into a single narrative. The fragmented structure and polyphonic narrative of the novel mirror the movement of the black diaspora across the Atlantic. First, the setting of the novel will be explored in the light of the roots and routes of the black peoples as conceptualized by Paul Gilroy. This will be followed by a thorough analysis of the mnemonic structure of the novel to discuss the ways in which the novel illustrates transcultural movements and connections that constitute the possible origins of the present black diaspora.

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Introduction

Shortlisted for the Booker Prize in 1993 and awarded the James Tait Black Memorial Prize for Fiction in 1994, *Crossing the River* is one of the most acclaimed and discussed novels by Phillips. The novel, spanning two hundred and fifty years of the African diaspora from the slave trade to the aftermath of World War II, opens with an African father lamenting the selling of his three children, Nash, Martha, and Travis, whose symbolic stories take place in the rest of the novel, to a slave trader, Captain James Hamilton. From then on, the guilt-ridden father, who embodies Africa, is haunted by "the chorus of a common memory" (Phillips, 2006, p.1). Framed by the voice of the African father in the prologue and the epilogue, the novel consists of four parts that focus on the fractured stories of the siblings from various historical settings, the US, Africa, and England, the three territories of the black Atlantic, alongside the section about Captain Hamilton on board a slave ship. Memory plays a crucial role in tying up these seemingly disparate parts of the novel. Intertwining the memories of the African descendants with the ones of slave traders and slave owners, the novel brings into dialogue multiple points of view from different time spans. Through individual characters who are representatives of the descendants of slaves, in the novel, the memory of the black Atlantic travels across the globe starting from eighteenth-century Africa through America and to Britain until the end of World War II. And this movement of memories across centuries and continents expands the historical interrogation of the novel to deal with the history of the Middle Passage and World War II as a significant part of the memory of the U.S, Britain, and Europe.

This paper argues that *Crossing the River*, through its fragmented structure and polyphonic narrative that mirrors the movement of the black diaspora across the Atlantic illustrates the transcultural connections beyond borders and contests the totalizing accounts of the black Atlantic history. The diversity of representations of black subjectivity in the novel can be considered a response to the essentialist and insular approaches to identity, which take identity as a homogeneous and fixed category alongside culture, race, and ethnicity. Furthermore, by introducing white English and American characters who are involved in the experience of the black Atlantic, the novel counters the notion that the legacy of slavery concerns only black people. Thus, as its dialogue with the past entails, the novel investigates the entangled memory of the black Atlantic to foreground the transcultural connections.

The term transcultural refers to the circulation of memory across borders and its resistance to any stable, essentialised frame of collective formation. The German philosopher Wolfgang Welsch (1999) developed his concept of "transculturality" in the 1990s, claiming that "contemporary cultures are characterized by cross-cutting elements – and in this sense are to be comprehended as transcultural rather than monocultural" (p.194). Drawing on Welsch's ideas, Astrid Erll (2011) considers "transcultural memory" as a "*research perspective*, a focus of attention, which is directed towards mnemonic processes unfolding *across* and *beyond* cultures" (p. 9). Transcultural perspectives on memory aim to shift the focus of memory studies from an emphasis on the limited confines of national remembrance to the circulation of memory across borders. The emphasis on cultural exchange through mnemonic trajectories in the concept of transcultural memory is exemplified in Gilroy's (1993) examination of the "transcultural reconceptualization" (p. 17) of "the black Atlantic" in his seminal work *The Black Atlantic: Double Consciousness and Modernity*. Migration brings along memories and offers a context of cultural encounter and hybridization; therefore, transcultural memory shares a common perspective with Gilroy's concept of the black Atlantic, which is a cultural formation based on the intersecting histories of Africa, Britain, and America, the three territorial entities of the triangular slave trade. In the introductory chapter to *The*

Transcultural Turn Lucy Bond and Jessica Rapson (2014) build upon Welsch's definition of transculturality and underline that the dynamics of transcultural memory are constituted by "the travelling of memory *within* and *between* national, ethnic and religious collectives" and "forums of remembrance that aim to move *beyond* the idea of political, ethnic, linguistic, or religious borders" (p.19). The understanding of memory embedded within the confines of a single culture ignores these cultural dynamics outside a specific geographical area. The concept of transcultural memory and the black Atlantic, then, meet on the common ground that migratory trajectories, or routes, play an essential role in the construction of identity.

The black Atlantic territories embody a contact zone of interweaving memories (Gilroy, 1993, p. 6). In this contact zone different cultures create a transcultural entanglement. The novel lays bare this interweaving of black Atlantic memories in various times as it spreads through centuries. Accordingly, it is the movement that enables the reinvention of identity and expands its definition, as reflected in the novel. Once the characters Phillips creates cross the water, they enter a diasporic world, which has been built for ages. Memories, according to Erll (2011), "do not hold still—on the contrary, they seem to be constituted first of all through movement" (p. 11). Mobility of memories across continents generates networks of remembrance that bring diverse cultures together and illustrate the fundamental connection among the black Atlantic territories. Given this, temporal and spatial fractures in the novel reveal the transcultural quality of diaspora experience that cannot be contained within a single narrative. Thus, Phillips employs a fragmented structure that lays bare how the transcultural movement of memory contests essentialist understandings of identity. Transcending not only national and cultural borders across centuries but also the constructed categories of identity, the novel locates the African diaspora within a broad framework through time and space and offers ways of considering overlapping histories and cultures. By dealing with the memory of slavery, it both foregrounds the absent voices from the traditional historical accounts of the colonial past and allows a reconsideration of the past across cross-cultural encounters and entanglements. As such, the novel retraces the routes of the African diaspora and transforms received images from the past to suggest that there is no essential black identity.

Coincidentally, the novel was published in the same year as Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic* and it has been studied by many scholars since then in the light of the black Atlantic concept (Bellamy, 2014; Bonnici, 2005; Ward, 2007). It both charts the possible origins of the history of the present black diaspora and portrays how diaspora identity is constructed upon the memory of the black Atlantic experience and new routes of diverse encounters. The narrative fragments of the novel complement each other representing the cartography of the black Atlantic in different historical periods. The movement of the characters across the Atlantic traces the connections between "roots and routes" (Gilroy, 1993, p. 133) and leads to the formation of diasporic identities in the novel. To exemplify this, each section of the novel is set in a representative space of the triangular trade. While "The Pagan Coast" takes place in Africa, "West" is set in the United States. The title of the section "Somewhere in England" also refers to the setting in that part of the novel, and the last chapter "Crossing the River" is set on a ship sailing across the Atlantic.

Crossing the River has attracted some contrasting critical responses since its publication. It has received critical praise for its representation of the African diaspora in various time spans and locations. Also, it is widely agreed that the novel deals with the complexity of colonialism and destabilizes the prescribed formulations of the black diaspora. According to Ledent (2002), the novel is "a patchwork understanding of the historical process behind oppression" (p. 112). Likewise, Ward (2007) thinks it is a challenging task to "resist conventional categorization along racial lines of black victim or white figure of blame" (p.

21). In contrast to such views, some other scholars criticize Phillips, claiming that he introduces a mythical Africa in the novel. Among the major points that attract negative reactions to the novel are its emphasis on the slave trader Hamilton, the former slave character Nash's mimicry of colonial discourse, and the narration of Travis's story from an Englishwoman's perspective. Most notably, Goyal (2003) claims that Phillips privileges the discourse of "the grand narrative of modern Western humanism" by providing "moral growth" and "agency" to the white characters in the narrative, and denying the black characters an opportunity to resist them (p.20). In a similar vein, according to Bewes (2006), Phillips "humanizes" those who are "implicated in the slave trade" (p.49). However, one could contrarily argue that Phillips foregrounds the white characters in order to show their agency and responsibility in the history of slavery and at the same time to illustrate what they might have experienced in their interaction with Africa. To this end, the movement and criss-crossing of memory should be analysed in the novel.

Crossing the Borders through Memory

Phillips (2006) employs a mnemonic strategy that codes the memory of the black Atlantic into the complex temporal structure of the narrative. He does not put the black characters in a position to enforce their version of the story, but, instead, he promotes "the chorus of the common memory" (p.1) that rises above the limitations and boundaries as extensively featured in the epilogue. As such, Phillips avoids portraying an unrealistic, or utopian, depiction of the past. Refusing all forms of nationalism, he avoids glorifying any discriminatory notion and dehumanizing the white characters. Furthermore, it is not a painful story of abandoned children. He acknowledges in an interview: "I wanted to make an affirmative connection, not a connection based upon exploitation or suffering or misery, but a connection based upon a kind of survival. This is an unusually optimistic book for me" (Phillips, 2009, p. 93). It is not a story of loss; it does not mediate the past to lament the suffering in the history of slavery. To be more precise, the novel does not offer an alternative history to counter the dominant narratives either; it rather attempts to revise the prescribed knowledge about the past by filling in the gaps, and thereby providing the voice of the overlooked characters that we do not encounter in the official narratives of history. Memory emerges in the novel as a subversive force against the totalizing accounts of history. Therefore, unsettling the supposed roles and relationships assigned to the black subjectivity throughout history, the novel shows there is no essence to identity. To this end, Phillips confronts the reader with the private and public selves of the traders and slave owners while also exposing the truth about the victims who are subjected to abuse, torture, and death. Thus, he urges the reader to think about the gaps in history by interrogating its partiality. More significantly, the novel completes the gaps in the portrayal of the slave history with its roots and routes that are foregrounded through transcultural memory.

Erll (2011) points out that through the mobility of peoples across borders memory also travels "through time and space, across social, linguistic and political borders" (p. 11). This is also the case with the black Atlantic experience wherein the continual journey of both slaves and slave traders enables a transcultural engagement with the formation of memory. Phillips not only portrays dispersion and dislocation but also connects the moment of dispersal to the moment his characters enter the diasporic world. Such fragmentation displays the movement of the memory of the black Atlantic, that is, of the experience of slavery, broken familial relations, and an interrupted cultural heritage. The criss-crossing of the plotline, which coincides with the spaces of the black Atlantic, is in line with the workings of memory. In the prologue, the African father's and captain Hamilton's thoughts are individualized typographically: "*Bought 2 strong man-boys, and a proud girl.* I soiled my hands with cold

goods in exchange for their warm flesh. A shameful intercourse" (Phillips, 2006, p. 1). The lines in italics belong to Hamilton and reflect his business mindset while the father's lines show his despair and sorrow. The novel's first section, "The Pagan Coast," is about Nash Williams, an emancipated slave, who is now a missionary sent to Liberia by the American Colonization Society[2] in the 1830s, and his former master, Edward Williams. It is narrated by an extradiegetic narrator who focuses on Edward's journey to Liberia, which is occasionally interrupted by Nash's letters to him. The second part, "West," which is set in pre- and post-civil war eras in America, is devoted to Martha Randolph who used to work on a plantation in Virginia and, now, as a frontierswoman, heads towards the west, away from the Missouri River. It starts with Martha's recalling the past in the form of a stream of consciousness that is blended with the voice of an extradiegetic narrator. The third section of the novel, "Crossing the River", turns back to 1752 to focus on Hamilton's logbook chronologically recording his journey to Africa and his two letters to his wife. And the last section "Somewhere in England" is set during World War II, focusing on the relationship between Travis, a black American GI stationed in the north of England, and Joyce, a white Englishwoman, whose journal entries reveal their story. The epilogue quotes some parts of the prologue and juxtaposes the memory of the father's selling his children with the current story of survival of the African diaspora, thematically uniting all sections of the novel.

Through the movement of the siblings across the Atlantic, a common memory, as articulated by the African father, comes out and transcultural connections emerge. The history of slavery is shown to overlap with different stories in different historical moments, involving white people as well as the black diaspora throughout history. As Gilroy (1993) explains, the history of the Middle Passage is not only "somehow assigned to blacks," but also is a part of Western modernity since modernity is mostly built upon slavery (p. 49). In line with Gilroy's conception, to form an intertextual relation with the past, Phillips employs the log of a slave captain, which is a piece of narrative of the empire written from a colonialist perspective, letters of a slave owner, and the diary of a white Englishwoman alongside the story of the three African siblings and thereby emphasizes the inseparable historical connections. These intermingled relations reconfigure the black Atlantic experience and link the chapters to one another and to the experience of the future generations which is reflected in the epilogue of the novel.

The epilogue, which has not received much critical response, is the part where the novel ties up these seemingly disparate stories from different time spans and places through transcultural memory. The African father celebrates his children's survival in spite of loss because once they cross the water, new routes provide new possibilities for them. Throughout the novel, the reworking of the roots goes beyond a mere narration of the former lives of the characters; by retracing the consequences of colonialism, the novel revives the lost moments in the past. As such, memory becomes a site of identity formulation as it is weaving new social and cultural ties across borders (Bond and Rapson, 2014, p. 17). In the novel, this transcultural vein of diaspora memory is emphasized by the African father's portrayal of the future. He hears "the many-tongued chorus of the common memory" (Phillips, 2006, p.235) once again and refers to the "survivors," (p. 236) of the African diaspora, who spread its culture across the borders:

[2] The Society for the Colonization of Free People of Color of America, known as the American Colonization Society (ACS), was founded in 1816 in order to promote a homogeneous white nation by sending black people to Africa, particularly Liberia, where ACS established a colony for black settlement.

> In Brooklyn a helplessly addicted mother … A barefoot boy in São Paulo is rooted to his piece of the earth… To reggae rhythms of rebellion and revolution dipping through the hills and valleys of the Caribbean… To the saxophone player on a wintry night in Stockholm. … Samba. Calypso. Jazz. Jazz Sketches of Spain in Harlem. I have listened to the voice that cried: I have a dream[3] that one day on the red hills of Georgia, the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave-owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood. (p. 236-37)

The father's incomplete sentences and the transcultural connections he refers to are evocative of Gilroy's pluralistic notion of culture, which is not inherited but socially constructed. In line with Gilroy's delineation of the relation of black diaspora to modern cultural forms to recover black agency, Phillips draws attention to the movement of black cultural productions across the globe. The cultural products of Africa such as music, dance, stories, and rituals, operate within western cultural formations and even transform them. The diversity of black agency and its recovery through the intertwined cultures are mostly observed when the epilogue and prologue of the novel are juxtaposed; in the former we see a lamenting father suffering a guilty conscience, but in the latter, his tone is celebratory because his descendants manage to survive. This can be seen as a transformative effect of the act of transcending the established borders, which fosters the notion of rootedness.

These fractured lives mirror the fractured memory of the survivors of the Middle Passage. Symbolically, cultural memory is produced and transmitted by the children of the African father. The emergence of culture in various locations of the world can be read in terms of Erll's idea that memory is not a static phenomenon; it "travels through dimensions of culture — the movement of people, but also of materials and media, of forms and practices, and of the contents they carry" (Erll, 2017, p. 6). More significantly, this entanglement of cultures depicts how transcultural memory transcends "political, ethnic, linguistic, or religious borders" of the collective memory of communities (Bond and Rapson, 2014, p. 19). It is through the mobility of memory that boundaries are negotiated in various locations. And new routes that diaspora takes "bring into view heterogeneous memory cultures that were there all along but never entered into dominant understandings of the past" (Rothberg, 2016, p. 358). As such, transcultural memory of the black Atlantic transgresses both the nation-states and the discourses of fixed origins. The African father seems to embody the rootedness of diaspora at first, but as the epilogue suggests, his voice echoes the unlimited routes of his descendants. The new routes refer to a heterogeneous world. The experience of dislocation and the "shameful intercourse" (Phillips, 2006, p.1) link the diaspora's fate symbolically resonating not only the collective memory of Africa but also the transculturality of memory because the black Atlantic experience involves the peoples across "water" who resist the enslavement of identities and express hope for the future. Therefore, the experience of the African diaspora is not merely shaped by collective memory; it is transculturally shaped and constructed beyond the confines of a single collectivity.

The novel takes the reader beyond allegedly "fixed" boundaries of race and illustrates the characters' diverse life experiences and encounters with the west. In the first section, Edward, an American slave master, sails to Liberia to find out about his former slave Nash, who is already dead. It is revealed later that Edward's letter to Nash "was uncovered by Edwards' wife Amelia, and not conveyed" (Phillips, 2006, p. 11) and she also "destroy[ed] the colored man's letter" (p. 56) as well. Since Edward does not receive Nash's recent letters,

[3] Phillips connects the African father's speech to an important figure in history by referring to Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I have a dream" speech. Just as King, the father dreams about a world free from discriminatory categories.

he thinks Nash is missing or does not want to communicate with him anymore. This section, therefore, introduces Nash's voice interrupted by Edward's perspective on the events. Nash's story is interrupted and fractured just like the voice of the black people in the official historical records. Brought up as a Christian by his master, Nash's mission in Liberia is to form a Christian colony to cope with the black labour shortage after emancipation and to civilize the natives by converting them to Christianity. As such, the novel offers a fictional rendering of the ambivalences of cultural process and the in-betweenness of black subjectivity. In Edward and Nash's story, such binarisms are unsettled on account of "the interactive and dialectical effects of the colonial encounter. … the dynamic of change is not all in one direction; it is in fact transcultural, with a significant circulation of effects back and forth between the two" (Ashcroft et al., 2010, p.27). In his first days in Liberia Nash reproduces binaries mimicking the mindset of his master. As a colonized subject, he both assumes the colonizer's perspective and "disrupts its authority" (Ashcroft et al., 2010, 88). At first, thinking that he is "fortunate enough to be born in a Christian country" (Phillips, 2006, p. 21), Nash is alien to the culture in Liberia; he is one of those children of Africa who becomes a son to a slave owner. As Bonicci (2005) contends,

> [t]he absence of Nash's (hi)story in his account characterizes the classical diaspora of modern slavery ranging from the mid-15th century to the late 19th century…Memory, built and cultured by the European slave master, limits itself to a time and space-bound alien … The African memory with all its underlying culture is not only blurred but seen as something to combat and eradicate from the memory of other. (p. 71).

In this sense, memory is not only important in the formation of cultural affiliation in a new setting, but it is also crucial to developing a sense of belonging. Nash has an imagined community that he firmly believes in at the beginning, but as his memories are mediated through the new culture he lives in Liberia, his perspective begins to change.

Nash's transcultural movement provides him with another perspective that is his own. At first, he finds it difficult to believe that "these people of Africa are called [his] ancestors" (Phillips, 2006, p.32) because he mimics Edward's ideological attitude. The way Nash describes Liberian life, its poor inhabitants, dirtiness, and their laziness are all evocative of a Eurocentric point of view. He evaluates what he sees as a missionary abandoned by his master because as a former slave who crosses the borders, he does not have an unmediated memory of Liberia. Although his hometown is a part of his heritage, he does not define himself as African; the "imagined community" he carries in his mind is more related to his allegiance to his master and Christianity than his racial or ethnic identity, which he is taught to consider inferior. But his experience of transculturality helps him form new connections and reconstruct his identity. When he loses his familial ties with Edward assuming that he is abandoned, Nash feels he is in exile. Renouncing Western ideology, he gets accustomed to Liberian culture over time. As he gets to know about the everyday practices of the local people, his sense of self and relation to Africa undergo a transformation. More significantly, his experience as a missionary servant to a white man brings him to a cultural and moral awareness of his identity as a black man. He witnesses "Americans, many of whom privately mock African civilisation" (Phillips, 2006, p. 41) and begins to think that "this American protectionism is a disgrace to our dignity, and a stain on the name of our country" (Phillips, 2006, p. 41) as he witnesses that the slave trade has been going on although Liberia is an independent country. As he becomes accustomed to the "native style of living" he begins to regard the west as a "so-called civilised world" (Phillips, 2006, p. 31) and believes Edward uses him for his own purposes.

Nash's crossing of both cultural and geographical borders can be viewed in line with "the multitude of varying ways of life and lifestyles" that promote transculturality (Welsch, 1999, p.196). His identity is embedded in transcultural networks of relationships that demonstrate how fluid identity constructions are. While he refers to America as home, he clearly makes a home in Liberia, as well. He studies the African language, enjoys tribal gatherings, and practices polygamy, getting married to native women. He knows that his lifestyle there causes "some offence to those who would hold on to America as a beacon of civilization" (Phillips, 2006, p. 40) and he is ostracized by the American settlers. In his last attempt to reach out to Edward, he writes: "We, the colored man, have been oppressed long enough" (Phillips, 2006, p. 61). He becomes aware of the racial tension and abusive politics of ACS and his faith is weakened by the conditions. Just like the slave trade empties the resources and ruins the lives of the native populations there, Nash is exploited by Edward and now abandoned. His past and present are merged now in his struggle to figure out his relationship with his master. Thus, having crossed the boundaries he develops a political consciousness in Liberia, and reconfigures his self in a transcultural connection.

Edward's journey across the borders discloses the responsibility and hypocrisy of the West in colonial practices. He thinks he is a benevolent man in his engagement with slavery as he allows his slaves to learn reading and writing, and he "inherited from his father an aversion to the system which had allowed his fortunes to multiply" (Phillips, 2006, p.13). However, it is gradually laid bare that his actions are not disinterested acts of benevolence. Hiding behind his alleged benevolence through the mission of the ACS, Edward only seeks words of gratitude in Nash's lines to prove the worth of his own efforts. He seems to be wishing the best for Nash and the native people but all he does is exploit them. At first, Edward feels unwell during his journey to Africa; he gets "fever, the sleepless nights, the complex welter of emotions" (Phillips, 2006, p. 52). Yet, Nash's well-being would be Edward's victory as he has so much invested in him. Also, his relationship with his wife implies his feelings for Nash are not solely parental. Upon his finding out that it was Amelia who destroyed Nash's letters and now she is dead, he regrets his indifference towards her: "Tears misted his eyes, for indeed his love for Amelia had festered and become stamped with self-pity that was near-cousin to self-loathing. He simply craved to be offered the unconditional love of a child, could she not understand this?" (Phillips, 2006, p. 55). Amelia's dislike of Nash reveals Edward's homosexual desires for Nash. Phillips complicates the traditional relationship between slave and master by implying sexual abuse of young boys by slave owners. He highlights this as another "form of colonial exploitation" (Phillips, 1994, p. 28). Edward's abuse of Nash under the pretense of benevolence and paternal bond discloses the hypocrisy of colonialism. Thus, Nash is both abused by his master and the colonial mission to which he dedicates himself.

Before switching to Travis's story, the section "Crossing the River", which focuses on the slave-ship of Captain Hamilton, interrupts the narrative of the three siblings to offer another perspective on the history of the slave trade. Considering that the chapter has the same title as the novel and is situated in the middle of the novel, it can be held that Phillips draws attention to the agency of the white men in the history of slavery and suggests that they also cross the river. It also implies that this narrative is not a one-sided account of the past. Connecting all the stories of the siblings in the experience of the Middle Passage, the position and title of this section suggest that Hamilton's story is one of those stories that belong to the continuing legacy of slavery and colonialism. This section is set in the 1750s on board the slave vessel *The Duke of York* on the west coast of Africa and mainly deals with Hamilton's logbook, which is based on John Newton's *Journal of a Slave Trader: 1750-1754.* The

novel's dialogue with Newton's travel notes allows it to bring together official history and memory as the logbook is a product of the cultural memory of slavery. Phillips engages with an authentic eighteenth-century text to draw attention to the "constructedness of any discourse" in the past which can be borrowed and reused in different contexts (Guignery, 2018, p. 120). It is his strategy to emphasize the inconsistencies of the historical accounts. Hamilton's logbook covers the time period between August 1752 and May 1753 in a chronological order. However, there are ellipses between the entries of the journal skipping several days implying the fragmentedness of his account. The incomplete structure of the journal can be interpreted as a means of foregrounding the missing parts of official history, the ignored voices and stories, which the novel seeks to uncover. As such, the novel both hints at the textuality and unreliability of historical accounts and keeps the memory of the Middle Passage alive by urging the reader to think about what might also be missing in the archives of slavery.

Phillips's use of Newton's records has also been considered a contested choice. While Guignery (2018) deals with the hypertextuality of the novel through which, as she argues, Phillips demands an interrogation of the historical archive (p. 144), to Ward (2010), it is risky to rely on the narratives of traders or plantation owners "because of the possibility of transforming these documents into monuments" (p. 247). However, Boutros (2012) argues that the novel unsettles "stereotypical views of victims and perpetrators" by making use of actual documents (p. 184). In this sense, it can be said that by making use of historical records and distorting some parts of them, Phillips draws a more striking portrait of slavery beyond the stereotypes that already pervade the perceived history. The novel does not only fill in the blanks left by the official accounts; through the memory of the siblings, it also interrogates the ignored connections across borders. Therefore, by employing Newton's texts, Phillips makes his fiction more evidential and striking because Newton's, or Hamilton's, the logbook is in fact the embodiment of the Western perspective on the history of slavery.

The logbook records Hamilton's activities of buying and selling slaves with numerical data. It includes a list of crew members and names of those who die on the journey. As his records convey, Hamilton's logic only shows the technical problems he faces in his routine economic pursuit: "11 slaves, of whom I picked 5, viz., 4 men, 1 woman" are listed in his book (Phillips, 2006, p. 105). He reduces the slaves into numbers and calculates his profit regardless of the loss caused by diseases. In this sense, his trade records are a part of Western documents that demonstrate the official history recorded by the colonial ideology. As Nora (1989) suggests, "historical memories are analytic and critical, precise and distinctive. They have to do with reason - which instructs without convincing. Historical memories filter, accumulate, capitalize and transmit" (p. 10). There is no place for an account of "lived experience" in history (Halbwachs, 1980, p. 57). The mechanical interaction conveyed to the reader through the logbook can also be explained on the basis of the "epistemological constraints" Ledent (2002) mentions (p. 114). As she argues, "chronology, imposed by the West on the world at large" is reflected in the pursuit of unity and accuracy of his list (2002, p. 114). On the contrary, the enslaved subject's experience cannot be contained in a single linear narrative as it is disrupted and fragmented by the rupture caused by slavery. Nash, Martha, Travis and Joyce's stories are those that are either undocumented or dominated by the white people's version of history. Thus, the novel focuses on the missing parts of official histories, namely, the memories of the oppressed people that cannot be accurately contained by Western historiography. Their story involves their feelings of loss and displacement as well as the process of identity negotiation as they cross the borders. Rather than the numerical information provided by the log, the ellipses and gaps between dates, draw attention to the

deliberately ignored aspects of what might have happened in the past. In other words, the novel not only gives a fictional account of the underrecorded events through the story of the siblings but also allows the interrogation of the accounts of the past through the use of the logbook.

Phillips revises Newton's journal by creating a version of it and particularly foregrounds the love letters written by Newton to his wife in Hamilton's fictional account. This can be viewed as an attempt to illustrate an unfamiliar and unexpected aspect of the life of the slave trader figure. Unlike traditional associations of a slave trader, Hamilton sounds passionate and caring in his letters to his wife: "I confess that, … the recollection of my past with you overpowers me with a tender concern … I have written myself into tears" (Phillips, 2006, p. 110). These words written by such a man who engages in a cruel business complicate the possible judgements on the character. He is not a dehumanized figure; rather, he is an ordinary man who is capable of love. It is notable that Newton is known to be "a dedicated abolitionist" (Guignery, 2018, p. 122). In this sense, the parallels Phillips forms between Newton and Hamilton is in line with how, in almost all of his novels, Phillips creates such characters who are never depicted as completely monstrous. In so doing, Phillips weaves connections between Hamilton's vocational and private life. Hamilton is rather a lonely figure sharing the fate of his crew and the slaves on board as he also contracts a disease. He remembers those days he spent with his wife as a "valuable and precious time" (Phillips, 2006, p. 108) and depicts his present conditions as "fatigue and difficulty" (Phillips, 2006, p. 108). Other sea captains think Hamilton is "a slave" to his wife (Phillips, 2006, p. 109), which destabilizes his position as an authority figure. In this sense, just like Edward's in the first part of the novel, Hamilton's wife in the domestic sphere reveals another aspect of him. Phillips's portrayal of the slave captain as not only an opportunist and greedy person but also as a man who is capable of showing affection as indicated in his letters to his wife forms a contrast to the conventional representations of slave traders. Phillips deliberately attributes tenderness and compassion to Hamilton, that is, qualities that an ordinary person can have. It is especially striking to see that an ordinary man like him is capable of being involved in such atrocious acts as the slave trade, torturing others, destroying families, and leaving people to death for the sake of money. While slave traders like Hamilton seek to profit at the expense of others' lives, victims like the siblings reveal the traumatic experience of enslaved people.

The position of this section between Martha's memories, which she deems more real than her current dismay, and Travis's story of marginalization as a black soldier, is a mnemonic strategy Phillips uses in order to lay bare the contrast between memories of human loss and the commodification of people by the colonial mindset that considers slaves as numbers on a list. To highlight the difference in the two perspectives, Phillips adds another dimension to Hamilton's personality. It is revealed to the reader that the colonial system brings Hamilton's downfall, which places this character in a more complicated position than stereotypical representations of slave traders. Hamilton writes to his wife about his father's "belief that the teachings of the Lord were incompatible with his chosen occupation" (Phillips, 2006, p. 110), which suggests the corruption he feels in his soul and that this is the fate of the slave trader. He thinks it is his duty to follow in his father's footsteps in business who "cultivated a passionate hatred" (Phillips, 2006, p. 118) for slaves. His father, who is also a captain, dies on the western coast of Africa, which suggests that the business of the slave trade has been a part of their life for generations. Also, Hamilton is rejected by one of the officers, who worked with his late father, when he wants to be taken to visit his father's grave because he is considered to be a "*gentleman-passenger*" (Phillips, 2006, p. 109). In this sense, the logbook also functions as a reminder that it is not only black people but also the white

people who experience the disruption of families and crisscross the borders. The novel, then, offers a nuanced understanding of both sides' plight. In other words, through his explorations of Western colonial history, Phillips exposes the effects of the Middle Passage on both victims and persecutors.

Contrary to the colonial travel log in the previous section, the novel offers a different discursive construction in the last part, which follows the effects of war and the cultural intolerance in mid-twentieth-century Yorkshire, England. Joyce's journal entries, written in a nonlinear form covering twenty-five years from 1936 to 1963, are interrupted by her comments on the current events that have shaped her present perspectives. Even though this section is expected to focus on Travis's dislocation, the narrative focuses on Joyce's sense of isolation and detachment from the community she lives in and conveys to us a white woman's sense of dislocation and marginalization as a consequence of her relationship with a black man. She is a marginalized figure who contests the colonial ideology; therefore, in the epilogue, she is embraced by the African father as one of his children. Like the African siblings, Joyce comes from a broken family, too. She has no memory of her father, who was killed in World War I, and she mentions her mother as someone whose "sole occupation in life seems to be to make me feel guilty" (Phillips, 2006, p. 150). England is depicted as a land where trauma and suffering are caused by the so-called civilized Europeans who kill one another in the war. The despair and alienation Joyce feels resonates with the idea of "no return" dating back to the African father's epilogue. Joyce's sense of loss and her memories do not echo that of a single community or nation with a sense of unity; her feelings emanate from a common experience that may have appeared at another place and time throughout history. In this sense, the novel draws parallels between the suffering caused by the slave trade and World War II. Joyce and the siblings share the experience of dislocation and homelessness that unite them through memories of "collective images and narratives of the past" (Erll, 2011, p.12). Memory has a "multidirectional" (Rothberg, 2016) aspect in establishing a cross-cultural engagement and bringing together the memory of war and the memory of slavery, two significant frameworks of British history. The traumatic displacement of soldiers and Joyce's estrangement from the society are juxtaposed with the narratives of the black diaspora given in the other sections of the novel. Consequently, the novel underscores how memory functions to construct a sense of community for both white and black people who have been victimized in history. When Joyce describes the arrival of the American soldiers in the village, she gives a raceless depiction of the sound of the engines. But she also mentions the villagers' attitude towards them. They are expecting the American soldiers to be all white. When they see that there are black soldiers as well, as Joyce narrates, "[s]ome of the villagers couldn't contain themselves. I suppose we were all shocked, for we had nothing to prepare us for this" (Phillips, 2006, p. 129). Since this is the segregated American army, one of the white American officers comes to Joyce's shop and says: "[a] lot of these boys are not used to us treating them as equals" (Phillips, 2006, p. 145) implying the black soldiers in the group who are still defined by colonial ideology. In this sense, this chapter of the novel reconnects the British past during the war with its history of the slave trade. Just like in the slave trade, during the time of war, when nationalism increases, black people encounter racism. As a white Englishwoman, Joyce's narrative offers an alternative to the racist attitude underlying the townspeople's hostility. Her journal entries do not draw attention to the soldiers' race; she is more interested in their shared experience of displacement.

The narrative shifts back and forth in time to bring forth the effects of memory and its role in challenging the racist ideology by demonstrating that the horrors of the past continue to affect both white and black populations in different forms in the present society. Phillips

introduces strict social and racial barriers creating divisions that need to be crossed. The burden of the past is not only influential on the black diaspora; it is also a part of the lives of people like Joyce and persecutors like Captain Hamilton. Joyce does not mention that Travis is black in the first entries of her diary. She voices the speech of others without assimilating or appropriating them. As her free direct discourse also reveals, she is not one of those local people who believe in racial divides and stereotypes; she is like an "uninvited outsider" (Phillips, 2006, p. 129) among them. She remembers being ostracized by these people when she first moved to the village. Just like the black soldiers, she, too, was gazed upon by the townspeople because of her abusive husband Len who was sent to prison for his business in the black market. Her status as an outsider makes her feel close to the soldiers.

Joyce is also denounced by the townspeople for her relationship with Travis, which is considered miscegenation. It was a time when

> [w]hite women were counselled by families, friends and authorities alike, against marriage with black men; black American soldiers who wished to marry British women were refused permission to do so by their Commanding Officers and quickly transferred. … The result was disastrous for their offspring. (Carby, 2009, p. 172).

Relationships between white and black people are also seen as a "threat to the nation's future" (Phillips, 2006, p. 172). And mixed-race children are considered the outcome of this threat. Therefore, Joyce's husband Len condemns her too by blaming her for being a "traitor to [her] own kind" (Phillips, 2006, p. 217), implying her crossing the racial boundaries and breaking social norms. After Joyce gets divorced from Len, Travis gets permission to marry her from his commanding officer on the condition that they will not live in the United States because of the segregation laws. They get married during Travis's leave but when he is stationed in Italy, he is shot and dies "[i]n a strange country. Among people he hardly knew" (Phillips, 2006, p. 229). It is later revealed that she gives birth to Travis's child, Greer, but has to give him away for adoption. Familial bonds are disrupted again, but, this time, unlike the previous instances, a white woman is also involved, thereby revealing unexpected connections and the bond made possible by the black Atlantic experience. Joyce's sense of loss, alienation, and being forced to give up her son for adoption connect her to the African father and Martha who are also separated from their children. Therefore, in the last pages of the novel, the African father counts Joyce as one of his children. This becomes the story of Joyce more than Travis's because his voice is unheard throughout the narrative as a reflection of the absence of the black voice in Western history. When Phillips is asked about Travis's invisibility in an interview, he states:

> I tried to find a voice for Travis. I travelled down south during the research, drove round Georgia and Alabama for days in search of Travis. I couldn't find him anywhere, but I wasn't prepared to invent a voice. … One thing I know is that Joyce was speaking to me forcefully, powerfully, in the dialect I grew up speaking, which is Yorkshire. I understood that intuitively. (1994, p. 27)

Including a white woman among the African father's children is again a very significant and a highly contested decision on the part of Phillips. To Goyal (2003), "Joyce's inclusion situates white characters at the heart of the African diaspora, as victims of history rather than its agents" (p. 21). However, the African father's embracing attitude can be viewed as another instance where the novel traces alternative routes by privileging Joyce as a narrator. Phillips (2004) points out that the reason he wrote this novel is "so all of us can open our minds" and he rejects "racially narrow readings" of his work (p. 134). Racially essentialist categories of identification are unacceptable to Phillips. Thus, he clearly avoids investing in racial solidarity and rejects racial binaries by including Joyce as a child of the African father. Joyce's inclusion challenges the notion that the black Atlantic experience involves only black

people by illustrating its memory transcending racial, cultural, and national boundaries comprising both black and white.

Despite the hatred and racism they encounter, their shared experience unites the members of the black diaspora and white people in transcultural connections. Rather than judging Joyce for giving up her son, the narrative reveals the racial ideologies on both sides of the Atlantic, which neither allow her to be a single mother with a mixed-race child in England nor leave her a chance to live with her son in the US, although her husband dies in war fighting for the US. Greer is another child taken from his mother like the children sold into slavery. Evidently, more than a century later nothing has changed much; still, the legacy of slavery continues to disrupt families. Joyce's separation from her child echoes the familial disruptions in the other chapters of the novel, but this time Phillips ends the story with a glimmer of hope since Greer and Joyce have a chance to see each other. Yet, the novel does not reveal romantic or unrealistic hopefulness; rather, it suggests that it is not possible to offer an unproblematic resolution to these issues. As a mixed-race child in a hostile society, Greer suffers the trauma of being abandoned and obviously, Joyce is still not able to reclaim him. Her hesitation is revealed in her words: "I was ashamed. I wasn't ready. … I almost said make yourself at home, but I didn't. at least I avoided that" (Phillips, 2006, p. 231-32). Greer remains a dislocated child just as the siblings and Martha's daughter, whose fate is unknown, but the novel gives voice to the plight of the African children by recounting the stories of broken families and demanding a responsible reconsideration of the denied or ignored aspects of history.

The memory of the other side of the "river" crosses the boundaries in diverse ways. One of them is revealed through the products that are traded in return for slaves in the past. The GI soldiers bring the townspeople some presents: "[a]n orange, a pack of cigarettes, and some candy, as they call it. Chocolate is what we call it, and for most of us it was like being given lumps of gold" (Phillips, 2006, p. 166) notes Joyce in her diary. As Ledent (2002) contends, it is ironical that "the black GIs … brought with them the very products that triggered off slavery" (p.123). These products are reminiscent of the manufactured goods that were made of raw materials, such as sugar, rice, and tobacco, obtained in colonial lands for which the merchants traded slaves. Thus, in a way, they are markers of slave labour and material exploitation during colonialism. "Plundered from other continents," such products "radically changed the Western way of life, which could no longer claim cultural homogeneity" (Ledent, 2002, p. 123). Also, they are indicators of how western modernity has achieved its economic hegemony through the slave trade. As such, Travis's story urges the reader to question the dialogue between western history and Africa as memory of the slave trade appears in the present revealing the persistency of discrimination and exploitation. It also indicates the double marginalization of the black soldiers who are not even considered American. Just like his ancestors were exploited in the slave trade, Travis, who is already marginalized in the army by the white soldiers, is brought to England, another corner of the triangle of the slave trade, to fight for the survival of the English and to die in a battle in Italy for the wellbeing of Europe.

The novel is dedicated to "those who crossed the river" which refers to all people who cross the established boundaries. It is also notable that Phillips uses the word "river" for the Atlantic Ocean as if it is just a flowing watercourse which is not that difficult to crossover. This is in line with the celebratory tone and his acknowledgement that it is not a pessimistic novel. In his essay entitled "Water", identifying himself with them, Phillips (2011) discusses the heritage of the Middle Passage connecting histories:

> My life has been determined by a journey across water. Across the Atlantic Ocean. It was the people of the west coast of Africa who, looking out at the vastness of the ocean, first thought of it as a mighty river. Their journey - my journey - our journey, for if some were below, then others were on deck - our journey, back then in seventeen hundred and something, has changed for ever the nature of both British and American society. (p. 165-66)

His interpretation of water as connecting diaspora is also in line with Gilroy's understanding of "routes" and being on the move. In a similar vein, emphasizing water as a zone of interconnectedness, Gilroy (1993) points out that the black Atlantic, which has been "continually crisscrossed by the movements of African communities … provides a means to re-examine the problems of nationality, location, identity, and historical memory" (p.16). To him, the ocean should not be considered only in relation to slavery and suffering; it also connotes diverse memories and convergences. The act of "crossing" comes with a rupture in each case with regard to the reconstruction of the self. Similarly, Phillips (2004) comments on the function of his reference to water in the title of the novel: "water, to me, is a pathway along which we continue to meet and encounter each other" (p. 117). In this sense, it posits a dual position. It is water that divides the world of the so-called civilized people from that of the allegedly uncivilized one, but also it connects them. It is associated with transcending the allegedly impermeable borders between different cultures that actually help in constructing new identifications. In this sense, the shared experience of the Atlantic is echoed in the image of water.

Crossing borders has become a literary theme in Phillips's work as it allows the exploration of travel as an essential process for the formation of memories and diaspora. Each instance of river-crossing symbolically reveals the porousness of borders and plurality inherent in identity. It also suggests displacement as a part of the diasporic experience. In Martha's story, on one bank of the Missouri, black people can be enslaved, but, on the other side of the river, they are free. It is the "symbol of arbitrariness of all human societal system" (Ledent, 2002, p.110). Martha crosses the river in search of her daughter; Nash is an alienated man who sees his Liberian people as savages; Edward crosses the Atlantic in search of Nash; Hamilton crosses the river for trade; and, Travis crosses the border to fight for the white people's cause. The border crossing always ends with a transformation; each section of the novel is marked by a symbolic river-crossing that implies transcending racial, national, and cultural boundaries. But the novel's tone is ambivalent since Phillips neither celebrates the act of crossing and transformation nor promotes the discourses of fixed origins. As the African father says, "[t]here are no paths in water. No signposts. There is no return…. You are beyond. Broken-off, like limbs from a tree. But not lost, for you carry within your bodies the seeds of new trees" (Phillips, 2006, p. 1-2), so the novel just illustrates how the act of transcending borders discloses their artificiality and fluidity. Addressing the myth of return, the novel refutes the idea of a mythical homeland, which depends on ethnic purity and cultural essentialism. What is historically lost is always there in the memories but cannot be taken back because of the transformation of the subject. Thus, the future is shaped by the routes.

Conclusion

The ending of the novel suggests that diaspora does not come from an essence or an idealised origin; just as in Gilroy's (1993) definition of diaspora, the connection among the members of the black diaspora is not bound to familial origins, or "essential blackness" (p. 99). It rather derives from the routes the characters take through their crossing of the river. This journey is traumatic as it is forced upon the individual and causes loss, but it is

regenerative at the same time. In an interview, Phillips (2009) explains his aim in emphasizing such connections as follows:

> I wanted to make a connection between the African world which was left behind and the diasporan world which people had entered once they crossed the water. I wanted to make an affirmative connection, not a connection based upon exploitation or suffering or misery, but a connection based upon a kind of survival. (p. 93)

While a family member might betray, a stranger might be a real family member as exemplified in the relationship between the father and the children and Joyce's joining the family. The father's words also suggest a hopeful future, as he says, they all "arrive on the far bank …loved" (Phillips, 2006, p. 237). The past causes pain and suffering, but it also connects diverse cultures and experiences through migratory trajectories, so the novel does not only deal with the past; it also looks to the future, new routes. Shared experiences are more efficient than familial ties and bloodline. The African father believes he can "rediscover his children" in the chorus of common memory. He hears them again in the black music as he reveals in the epilogue. Even though all the four sections share sad endings, the epilogue still refers, in a hopeful manner, to the voices of the African father's children scattered around the world: "their voices hurt but determined, they will survive the hardships of the far bank" (Phillips, 2006, p. 235). Through the dialogue initiated by the chorus of the common memory of Africa, the intertwined histories of the black Atlantic are revealed by transcultural memory and thereby enable the reader to reconsider the ignored aspects of history.

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