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A PRESCRIPTION FOR DISLOCATION AT THE TIME OF GLOBALIZATION: A STUDY OF  
CARYL PHILLIPS'S *CROSSING THE RIVER*

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ABSTRACT

The main concern of the study is to investigate the post-colonial problem of belonging and search for home through the analysis of *Crossing the River* (1993) by Caryl Phillips, an Anglo Caribbean writer whose protagonists are crossroads characters inhabiting two or more cultural spaces. This problem is actually one of the characteristics of our modern world. Through the themes of displacement, uprooting, homelessness, exile, and alienation, the novel reflects the strategy developed by the writer in dealing with home problem which is a direct consequence of colonial history. Phillips's exiled condition allows him the freedom to recreate his homeland in fiction and establish a new sense of home. His characters' experiences of displacement suggest a multicultural or cross-cultural vision of home. Home is no more a fixed and genetically pre-given place that is determined by blood and birth. It does not have to be related to only one geographical space. Phillips prescribes a transnational and a plural concept of home that may be more suitable to our changing world. It is a re-homing process; a view of home that is cosmic rather than compartmentalized. The study applies the post-colonial theory of the liminal space as the theoretical approach anatomizing and refuting the Western ideology. It helps indicate to what extent West Indian literature stages a revolution against the Western line of thought destabilizing the imperial assumptions that allow the West to inferiorize, dominate, and exploit others.

**Keywords:** Africans; Atlantic world; displacement; homelessness; liminality; plurality.

Introduction

Africa was once a home for all Africans then came the late 18<sup>th</sup> century slave trade that initiated the dispersal of blacks and the creation of the African diaspora. The transfer of peoples to England, America and Canada generates transnational and translocal communities where people wander without a fixed home: strangers from elsewhere who, without a sense of belonging, never feel at home in a new country yet are unable to return to their homeland. Diaspora disrupts the familiar concept of home based on one particular

place. Home has constantly been dislocated and it is not only a spatial dislocation but also a temporal one, a dislocation in space and time. This means that the diasporans' present is not an extension of the cultural life of their ancestors. The past has been associated with a home impossible to be inhabited. Hence, they have crossed the borders of time and space and home has become increasingly unhomely. Maroula Joannou argues that "a sense of a continuous stable homogeneous identity is displaced and replaced with a history of fragmentation, discontinuity and exclusions"(198). Throughout the novel, Phillips sees that it is not possible to come back to the so called homeland, like Africa, and feel naturally and instinctively at home and freed from this feeling of uprootedness. Clarence Major indicates that the uprooted can't go back. And even if they could, who would know them, who would honor their return?. He adds that a growing number of black people in Europe and America, visiting Africa, have found their own Western identities reinforced(172). This means that an extra dimension of estrangement and foreignness have been added to home identity. If the diasporan comes back to his original homeland, people regard him as a foreigner and home appears strange in his eyes as well. Clarence indicates that Phillips's prescription for those displaced people is to stay and assert themselves. If one stays and stays positive long enough, conditions will gradually change for the better(174). There is no return home because one cannot erase the racial intermingling experiences caused by displacement or deny the fact that different nations have permeated into each other's homes making it impossible to regain the original homeland experiences in all its aspects particularly in the alien Western atmosphere to where diasporans migrate. This is what Benedicte Ledent emphasizes saying, "It is not feasible to subtract a culture, a history, a language, an identity from the wider, transforming currents of the increasingly metropolitan world. It is impossible to 'go home' again"(119).

Caryl Phillips was born in St. Kitts, West Indies, in 1958, and was brought up in Leeds, England. The writer confirms his rootlessness, listing four homes in four countries as his addresses: The Africa of his ancestry, the Caribbean of his birth, the Britain of his upbringing and the United States where he now lives. Through these places, he examines the notions of home, identity and belonging in an increasingly international society. The themes of his novels to date are belonging, rootlessness, imposed migration or nostalgia for a homeland that does not exist exploring the meaning of cultural dislocation at the time of globalization.

What is home? Is a question that echoes throughout the writing of Phillips: the novelist, dramatist and essayist? He himself says, "I don't think you need to be a rocket scientist to spot that I am interested in the notion of home". All his characters, either black or white, are torn by a double sense of belonging and unbelonging, unable to find a place they can definitely call "home". It is worth mentioning here that Phillips as well lives this sense of homelessness and unbelonging as a Caribbean who grew up as a part of the black minority in England, so his personal experience has its impact on his way of considering the concept of home and his point of view on diaspora. In *A New World Order*, Phillips clarifies how he moves between a plurality of homes. He says,

I meet Africa, and the feeling is one of familiarity. I am thirty-two. I recognize the place, I feel at home here, but I don't belong. I am of, and not of, this place...

I'm in the new American world. I should be frightened and I disorientated. But I am not. I recognize the place, I feel at home here, but I don't belong. I am of, and not of, this place...

I left this land twenty- two years ago as a four- month -old infant. I look now at the island of my birth. I recognize the place, I feel at home here, but I don't belong. I am of, and not of, this place...

I am seven year old in the north of England; too late to be colored, but too soon to be British. I recognize the place, I feel at home here, but I don't belong. I am of, and not of this place. (1-4)

So Britain cannot problematically become his only home nor can Africa or America or the West Indies because history imposes a different choice which is the only way for the displaced person in order to achieve some kind of meaningful belonging; It is the liminal space, the in-between, the here and there. Phillips explains that he has chosen to stay as a British citizen, not because he felt entirely at home in Britain, but because he wants to challenge the Western ideology that "couples nationality with race"(305). He wants to affirm his right to live in

Britain as a black-British and break the barriers of race. His plural notion of home is also emphasized by his words: "I wish my ashes to be scattered in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean at a point equidistant between Britain, North America and the Caribbean, and the west coast of Africa"(304). This is why Phillips was described as "a citizen of the world". Furthermore, Phillips indicates that the idea of migration is not something new. He brings together 200 years of writing by "outsiders" to Britain to reveal that the English literature has been "shaped and influenced" by those beyond its shores for centuries. Thus, he wants to stress the idea that one's home must be the whole Atlantic world.

With colonialism, imperialism and the evolutions of the modern world, emerges the tendency to detach from the traditional notion of home; home is no longer as one knows it. Pratt claims that home, "the place where one lives within familiar, safe, protected boundaries", becomes "an illusion of coherence and safety based on the exclusion of specific histories of oppression and resistance"(15). Indeed, Pratt uncovers the colonial and imperial violence, terror and difference that have threatened the security of home. It becomes the place where one is in because others are kept out. To Pratt, home is established as the exclusive domain of a few and that it is not equally available to all.

Bell Hooks, as well, says, "At times home is nowhere. At times one only knows extreme estrangement and alienation. Then home is no longer just one place. It is locations"(15). This loss of the traditional concept of home is emphasized in Rosemary George's words. She says, "The association between an adequate self and a place to call home is held up to scrutiny and then let go. As postmodern and postcolonial subjects, we surprise ourselves with our detachment to the things we were taught to be attached to"(200). Detachment from the familiar notion of home is the post-colonial and postmodern attitude to geographical origins. This makes George insist on the importance of the motif of homelessness and exile in 20<sup>th</sup> fiction claiming that all fictions of this period are homesickness. She sees that "homesickness-the sentiment accompanying the absence of home- could be a yearning for the authentic home (situated in the past or in the future) or it could be the recognition of the inauthenticity of the created aura of all homes"(175). She means that homesickness implies either eagerness for home or an ultimate detachment from the notion of home realizing that it is mere illusion, unattainable or non-existent.

### **Brief Overview of Post-colonial Theory of the Liminal Space**

In fact, a major feature of postcolonial criticism is the concern with place and displacement. It is here that the special postcolonial crisis of identity comes into being. It is the concern with developing an effective relationship between self and place. Critics have made the issues of place, displacement and the concern with identity and authenticity as the defining model of post-coloniality. Post-colonial theorists see that a valid and active sense of self may have been destroyed by dislocation resulting from migration, the experience of enslavement, transportation, or voluntary removal to take people for indentured labor. It may also have been destroyed through staining, blackening and oppressing the native's personality and culture by a supposedly superior, racial or cultural model. Hence, critics see that the crisis in self image inevitably result from such oppressive forms of colonization. Post-colonial theory, indeed, has proceeded from the need to question these imperial practices and to tackle and address the new and different post-colonial one.

According to Homi Bhabha, the hybrid condition is necessary for occupying the "third space" which he refers to as the "liminal space" that he explains in his book, *The Location of Culture*. Homi Bhabha compares the space that ex-colonials occupy to the stairwell, i.e. the vertical passage or open space containing the stairs of a building and existing between the upper and the lower parts. This space between the upper and the lower is the liminal space, namely, the threshold or the entry to either the upper or the lower parts which, of course, refers to whites and blacks. Bhabha adds that "the hither and thither of the stairwell, the temporal movement and passage that it allows -which means the intermingling once with the whites, once with the blacks- prevents identities at either end of it from settling into "primordial polarities" that is in two separate fixed parts: pure whites as upper, pure blacks as lower, or rather the fixed old division. On the contrary, this space affords access to the two diverse worlds, the upper and lower of the stairwell. At the same time, this space allows them to be a part of neither of these worlds producing, then, hybrid or hyphenated identities. This in-

between space or in Bhabha's words, this "interstitial passages" - namely, this narrow space between fixed identifications- opens up the possibility of a "cultural hybridity that maintains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy". It can be "utilized as a space of negotiation between these two polarities allowing for empowerment and resistance. It is positive and empowering as it lends a new pair of lens to the ex-colonial and the migrant from which he/she can examine reality and enact strategies of resistance" (85-128). Bhabha means that far from being condemned, displaced or marginalized, natives occupy such a unique space called "liminal" where resistance emerges.

Furthermore, Spariosu supports Bhabha's interpretation of the liminal space as productive. For him and Bhabha, there is a great distinction between "marginality" and "liminality". In Spariosu's words: "liminality refers to a neutral relation between two or more structures, systems...worlds...,in a no-man's land between two or more state borders. Marginality cannot provide access to or initiate new worlds whereas liminality can do both"(28). Those who live on the borderline of two cultures as neutral, i.e., belonging neither to this nor that, create a separate independent space where they live a third culture, shape a third history and become no more marginalized. They can move here and there while maintaining their particularity and creating their own world.

Also, Michael Dash claims that the idea of liminality forms the basis for defining the Caribbean"(148). One may say here that in pushing the Caribbean and all the colonial world to the margins, imperialism pushes the idea of Western monocentrism beyond the point at which it could be accepted without question. The alienating and marginalizing process of colonialism in the Caribbean turned upon itself and acted to push the whole world into a position from which all experience could be viewed uncentred but pluralistic and multiple. Actually, Caribbean marginality and displacement have led to liminality and this liminality has become an unprecedented source of creative energy for all people of color. Bhabha insists saying,

the postcolonial space is now supplementary to the metropolitan centre: it stands in a subaltern, adjunct relation that does not aggrandize the presence of the West but redraws its frontiers in the menacing, antagonistic boundary of cultural difference... From this splitting of .... narrative emerges a strange empowering knowledge for the migrant that is at once schizoid and subversive (318-19).

Bhabha wants to say that the figure of the other, that was once silent, effaced and marginalized has now the right to speak and speak back. He sees that today the modern nation is written at its margins by those who occupy these spaces: the colonized, women, subalterns, minorities and migrants. The discourse produced at the margins by hyphenated identities, divided between two cultures, now supplements the dominant Western discourse. Those who live on the border zone- half westerners, half natives- are inevitably related to the West and have a sense of belonging there though denied and rejected. In this way, they have shifted the Western boundaries redrawing and pushing the Western borders toward the margins. So the post-colonial space is now supplementary to the West, standing side by side providing an additional part. The immigrants according to Bhabha are "the marks of [such] a shifting boundary" that supplement the centre since they express doubleness, splitting and ambivalence"(315).On account of this, they disprove, falsify and disrupt the imperial ideologies of purity and appropriation of power and knowledge.

### **The Concept of Home in *Crossing the River* by Caryl Phillips**

The novel is about the African diaspora, no scene takes place in the West Indies and no character is Caribbean. Nevertheless, it is indirectly linked to the Caribbean world. Phillips says, "If I write something that's not set in the Caribbean, as far as I'm concerned, it's Caribbean"(qtd. in Walters 5).In fact, Phillips seems to be inspired by the homeless displaced Caribbean identity. He sees a kind of unity in the different experiences caused by colonialism and slavery: all diasporans share a feeling of not being at home, of being alienated and uprooted. Major Clarence highlights the point saying that all black people in the Caribbean diaspora have the same common ancestral roots in Africa. This is because many of those taken to the New World where sold by their forefathers to European slave traders, something that stresses the exchange between Africa, Europe and the Americas over the issue of slavery (173). However, the novel is not so much about slavery as it is about

where slavery has taken people. It has uprooted them and has taken them to forced homelessness. Those uprooted people are Phillips's main preoccupation .

In one of his talks, Phillips reveals his motives behind writing *Crossing the River*. He says, "I wanted to make [an affirmative] connection between the African world which was left behind and the diasporan world which people had entered once they crossed the water.... not a connection based upon exploitation or suffering or misery, but a connection based upon a kind of survival"(qtd. in Ledent 126). Ledent highlights the point saying that dislocation and homelessness are the main themes of the novel that "weaves equally dispossessed existences into the broader canvas of the African diaspora"(108). Nevertheless, she contends that Phillips's voice rises with countless others like James Baldwin, Toni Morrison and Martin Luther King, to testify to their surviving the sufferings of exile and the hardships of displacement (107). Despite the dilemma they undergo and the homelessness they live, they endure and stay in the face of difficulties stressing their painful exhausting attempts to re-home and survive the great difficulties they face.

*Crossing the River* is a four part novel with a prologue and an epilogue. The prologue begins with a tone of remorse and a sense of guilt. It opens with an African father who looks 250 years back to when he sold his three children, two sons and one daughter, to a slave trader. Realism is apparently framed by fantasy and this voice speaks from a distance saying, "I soiled my hands with cold goods in exchange for their flesh...A shameful intercourse...A desperate foolishness. The crops failed. I sold my children...led them along weary paths [to] where the tributary stumbles and swims out in all directions to meet the sea...There are no paths in water. No signposts. There is no return (CR 1). The words refer to the initial ex-change between the African father and the slave trader in 1753. Helen Thomas claims that the familiar cultural bloodline is represented metaphorically by the absence of the river which, because of all father's actions, is allowed to disappear without trace into the ocean which suggests a sea of global transactions motivated by the slave trade(40). The African father made his sons' journey down "weary paths" and this indicates that slavery is the origin of the exiled communities. Maroula Joannou claims that Phillips touches upon a controversial aspect of slavery that many other black writers have been reluctant to tackle: it is the complicity of slaves in their own enslavement and the part played by black people in selling others, including members of their own family to slave traders(198). In fact, this practice was taken to justify the treatment of Africans as rough and less than human. Ever since this "shameful intercourse" between the father and the slave trader that initiated the African diaspora, this father has been obsessed by the "chorus of a common memory"(CR 1).Through the four narratives making up the novel, *Crossing the River* refers to the millions of Africans who crossed the water aboard slave ships and to whom the novel is dedicated and who are referred to in the novel as "the many tongued chorus". Crossing is associated with the fluidity of movement between cultures, physical and cultural "crossings" that lead to the construction of new selves and the destruction or erasure of others.

In the novel, the children that the African farmer has sold are not the actual ones encountered in the four stories; they are not even the direct descendents of those original slaves. Rather, the characters whose lives we follow are metaphors for them. Their stories take place in different times and places making it impossible for them to be brothers and sisters. They epitomize the survival of the black slave diaspora forming a chorus of voices, establishing a real and a necessary unity, and offer an alternative conception of belonging across and within racial lines.

Thus, one needs to put aside disbelief in order to see the connective threads that Phillips weaves across these vast stretches. All the characters share a physical or emotional distance from home, and most of their stories are stories of uprootedness and displacement. They are all crossing borders of some sort. Phillips puts these narratives in a context that is both local and global. It will be seen that out of the particular problem of the homeless Africans, Phillips demonstrates a broad vision of homelessness and develops a concept of home that seems to fit our globalized world.

The first part of the novel entitled "The Pagan Coast" tells the story of Nash who is sold to slave traders by his father. Nash is subjected to a deeply religious program of Christian education and is made to adopt Western culture which indicates how colonialists succeed in erasing people's cultural heritage and wiping out

their subjectivities. As a nineteenth century liberated slave, Nash is sent to Liberia on a mission by his master, a member of the American Colonization Society which is a group of wealthy white Americans who help in sending slaves back to Africa being sure that benefits would return to both nations: America would be removing a cause of increasing social stress and Africa would be civilized by the return of her descendents, who were now blessed with rational Christian minds(CR9). In fact, repatriation was part of a solution to the crisis of black labor after emancipation.

In his early letters to his former master, Nash described Liberia as "the beautiful land of his forefathers, a place of freedom and equality within which blacks can enjoy their liberty ... Liberia is the star in the East for the free colored man. It is truly our only home"(CR18-21). However, it must be made clear that this return home is not a return to his ancestral traditions, but an attempt to transform the country so that it matches Western Christian ideals. Thus, Nash's early letters reveal a Western mind. He soon recognizes an "unpleasant cultural estrangement". He sees Liberia as "a dark benighted country on heathen shores at the edge of civilization, a land of darkness" where he's exposed to malaria, smallpox, torrential rain and "native attacks being still considered as a white man"(CR 25,32). Nash feels alienated and his double allegiance to both America and Africa makes him look down upon his people as heathens and savages.

Nash begins to develop contradictory views of both America and Liberia. He says, "America is, according to my memory, a land of milk and honey where people are not easily satisfied"(CR 21). Also he resides in the land of the natives which is not his own. In fact, his awareness of this ambivalence highlights the psychological effects of crossing reflected in the sense of displacement that characterizes the condition of the black diaspora. In a detailed letter after letter, he keeps telling his master about the difficulties of living in such an underdeveloped country. While his health is deteriorating, he continues to plead for provisions. Nevertheless, Nash's various requests to his master for food and medicine have been left unanswered. After the death of his wife and child, Nash expresses his desire to return to America. He writes to his master, "I have been in Africa a long time and I wish to come home as soon as possible...Let me, know on what terms I can come back, and if I will be interrupted by white people"(CR35-6). Despite his yearning to return to America in addition to the fact that he still calls America home, Nash gets aware that he has no means to return to America, and is therefore bound to an African existence (CR 62).

It is a home coming without a home; Nash returns to an entirely alien region to be abandoned and forgotten rather than assisted in his new life. In fact, the idea that Africa is the true and only possible home for people of African descent opposes the reality of Nash's experience. This experience questions the association between roots and home, showing that even when living in the land of his ancestors, Nash cannot feel at home. This indicates that one's race or color may have nothing to do with the emotions one feels for home. Actually, Nash's homelessness at home emphasizes the dominance of whites over blacks, of the ruler over the ruled and stresses the cultural distance that characterizes the slave owning societies.

In the second part entitled "West", Martha, her husband and their daughter, Eliza Mae, are sold to different slave owners. This event is narrated in the present tense to demonstrate the painful influence of memory that dominates her consciousness. She says,

The auctioneer slaps his gavel against a block of wood. I fall to my knees and take Eliza Mae in my arms. I did not suckle this child at the breast, nor did I cradle her in my arms...To see her taken away from my...My Eliza Mae holds on to me, but it will be to no avail... 'Moma'. Eliza Mae whispers the word over and over again, as though this were the only word she possessed. This one word. This word only (CR 77).

Martha has been given to a "deeply religious old couple, who take her with them to Kansas. But, when they tell her, later, of their plans to take her back across the river in order to sell her, she runs away to find freedom hoping to be reunited with her lost daughter; she refuses to go back across the "river to hell" and thus becomes a fugitive slave(CR 77).Although alone, Martha remains connected with a shared memory and experience that resonates across all the black Diaspora. The narrator says, "That night, Martha packed her bundle and left the house ...don't care where, being concerned with only heading west ... Never again would

she stand on an auction block. Never again would she be renamed. Never again would she belong to anybody"(CR 80-1).

Martha who becomes by now an elderly woman, joins part of the "black exodus" that goes West, across desert, on their way to California seeking a new life there. What gives her the courage to run away are rumors she hears about the existence of communities of free slaves newly established in California hoping that her family maybe somewhere out West. Those colored people are "prospecting for a new life without having to pay heed to the white man and his ways"(CR73-4). Despite the mistreatment and the dangers they expect on the part of white people, they head west hoping to find "home" there.

Martha heads out to make the difficult journey from the slave territories to the free land with her lost child continually occupying her mind. Through her, one feels the desperate hope that leads so many blacks to follow the hard trails and the unsettled dangerous routes of the pioneers. The narrator says, "Martha is prospecting for a place where things were a little better than bad[...] Prospecting for a place where your name wasn't 'boy' or 'aunty', and where you could be a part of this country without feeling like you wasn't really a part"(CR 74).Unable to walk, with her body swollen, Martha cannot keep pace with her fellow pioneers. She is abandoned dying alone in such a strange place. She is rescued by a passer-by and sheltered in a deserted cabin. Close to dying, she remembers the various bonds of the past but the collapse of her family circle is, for her, a moment of everlasting pain. She remembers the fear of her daughter and her inability as a mother to save her. Yet, if Martha fails to protect the daughter from the auction gavel, her desire to do so and her pain for losing her forms a moment that connects her with her child across time and space: "She no longer possessed either a husband or a daughter but the memory of their loss was clear"(CR 78).

In this part, home is mainly described in relation to the notion of family. Martha's home is where her family is and more precisely where her daughter is:"she has a westward soul which had found its natural-born home in the bosom of her daughter"(CR 94).This system that sells people as if they were commodities, will never be able to destroy and extinguish her maternal feelings and family connections. The idea that home is West extends the idea developed in the first part: home for her is not Africa. Through the story of a painful separation of a slave family, Phillips emphasizes the connection between home and family. Martha's memory of her absent family, her reliving of past ties and her escape from bondage form a narrative of survival despite the tragic events of her life.

Gail Low emphasizes the idea saying that what emerges from Martha's story is "a diaspora of connectedness via the pain of original loss"(11). In fact, her memory of the loss of her family is such an everlasting presence in her life and death that she dies while dreaming of her daughter. Moreover, Low adds that Martha's account of her pain and loss is written in the present tense and this is to make the presence of the past as strong and powerful as the present(11). Actually, Martha makes home in the world of memory and recollections. Hence, throughout her life, she survives the difficulties, the dangers and the losses she encounters by living the past and rendering it as if it were present.

Part III entitled "Crossing the River" examines another character which, like that of Edward Williams in "The Pagan Coast", represents the master's side of slave history. This part is devoted to James Hamilton, the English captain who bought the three children of the ancient African farmer. He is a slave trader providing a Western perspective. This brief part of the novel records Hamilton's journey to Africa and the cost and difficulty of obtaining slaves at profitable prices. It includes his dispassionate logbook and two ardent letters addressed to his wife. His voice is the monologic voice of dominance that the other voices of slaves conflict with.

Hamilton's letters and logbook of the journey of his slave ship begins with a precise dating of the journey as taking place on 24 August 1752 which calls attention to real history. Maroula Joannou states that the sea voyage of John Newton whom Hamilton stands for took place from '30 June 1752' to '29 August 1753' on board a ship called "The African"(33). Helen Thomas clarifies that the novel interweaves with manuscripts of empire and slave practices, such as the travelogues and autobiographies published by English slave traders and adventurers (49).

Hamilton sets sail for the Windward Coast in order to return with a cargo of slaves and the word "cargo" here suggests how slaves are dealt with as goods carried by a ship. Hamilton records this incident saying, "Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> March ... An epidemical sickness ... is ravaging amongst the slaves... One.... Jumped overboard ( No. 97) ... 2 girl slaves ... died. Nos 117 and 127... Put overboard a boy, No. 29, being very bad with a violent body flux"(CR 115-6). Hamilton's account of his commercial transactions dehumanizes people as numbers on a list. He and other slave traders do not recognize that in their maneuvers to get the slaves at the price they desire and in their hard trials to provide financial security for their families, they "jeopardize the lives and hopes of thousands of others"(CR 101). The African existence is suppressed and Hamilton is indifferent to slaves sufferings.

Nevertheless, the African captives refuse to submit in silence; the diary's telling of unsuccessful slave rebellion on ship is a marker to the courage of those African slaves and their determination to survive the cruelty and the ruthlessness they face but Hamilton imprisons them commenting, "Surprised 4 attempting to get off their irons, and upon further search in their rooms found some knives, stones, shot, etc. Put 2 in irons and delicately in the thumbscrews to encourage them to a full confession of those principally concerned. In the evening put 5 more in neck yokes"(CR114). The words really denote their rejection, protest, strength and determination not to surrender. But they also depict to what extent Hamilton is a severe and ruthless person.

On the other side, Hamilton's letters to his wife show a different side to his character. He expresses his deep love for her and his longing to be in her presence. In one of his letters, he says, "My Dearest ... The lives of the people who dwell hereabouts ... are petty concerns when set against my 'love for you' ... My sole pleasure is to dream of our future children, and our family life together"(CR 108,10). What haunts him all the time is his own family's disintegration that makes him confess deep feelings of revulsion and disgust towards slaves and slave trade(CR 118). In spite of Hamilton's passionate love for his wife, he seems to suffer from emotional frigidity; hence, an inability to feel for others: "he had no idea of what it was like to be any one but himself"(CR 195). Moreover, the death of Hamilton's father strengthens his demand for the security of love and familial affection. Gail Low sees that Hamilton is a character in one long line of mothers, fathers, sons, daughters, and lovers in *Crossing the River* in search of kinship connections (12). However, the irony and the paradox lie in the fact that with his destruction and rupture of slave families, he denies them such connections he himself yearns for.

His logbook and his letters to his wife reveal his dual vision of home and the two sides of his personality. On board the ship, the home of his trade, he is cruel, cold and ruthless individual, inhumane in his relation with his crew and the slaves. In his private life, he is a passionate man; his wife is the home of his heart. Home is the domestic and female refuge on which he can rely, the shelter to which he can come back to rest after having dealt with the troubles of his trade. In one of his letters he says, "But, I submit, I travel abroad in the comfortable knowledge that my better, precious part is safely at home, and though she understands absence to be painful, she knows it is for her sake"(CR 109). Hamilton tells her that he leads a bitter hard life which suggests that no one involved in the business of bondage, has it easy. It's breaking him physically and spiritually. However, he hopes to make fortune for his family out of the profits made by this trade not taking the human cost into account at all.

Finally, the last experience of home is the one described in the part entitled *Somewhere in England*. It is a diary of a twentieth century English woman called Joyce whose story covers 27 years from 1936 and runs to 1963. The period 1936-1942 traces Britain's engagement in the second World War. Joyce grew up finding herself alone in a brutal environment. Her diary records the back street abortions, crimes, domestic and sexual violence and abusive aspects of white working-class life. In these lines, Joyce depicts the traumatic effects of war in Europe. She writes, " [December 1940] When I saw the town, I wanted to cry. Tram lines twisted like liquorice... And in the streets, men... and women ... scavenged at the ruins of their houses... trying to find bits of furniture photographs, anything that remained of their lives....Before us stood a dozen frightened children, the farmers eyeing the husky lads, the girls and scrawny boys close to tears"(CR 179).



War aggravates men's natural reluctance and refusal to come together. That is why war stricken villagers reject black soldiers and child evacuees. The villagers tell them "go back to where [you] come from. We're not a charity business"(CR179). Furthermore, war commodifies men and devalues the alien other. In the eyes of the English people, "one Englishman is worth two Germans, four French, twenty Arabs, forty Italians, and any number of Indians"(CR 164).

Joyce's experience proves that it is possible not to feel at home in one's own country and that belonging is a feeling that is not related in all cases to one's origins. Joyce has been enslaved by her husband Len who mistreats and beats her. After such a bad marriage with a brutal self-centered husband and after Len being in prison for black marketing, Joyce falls in love with an African-American soldier named Travis, stationed near her village during the Second World War. Travis is seen only through the perspective of the English Joyce. She is attracted by Travis's voice and "the way he stretched out words"(CR 202). One day, she shocks the rest of the village by asking Travis to dance at one of the army camp's dances. Consequently, Travis was violently beaten up by racist army colleagues who reported him as having been found drunk and disorderly and a white American officer says, "A lot of these boys are not used to us treating them as equals"(CR145). Ignorant of racial prejudice, Joyce does not understand the white officer's insistence on his black men's difference and inferiority in the army. Peter Fryer claims that their reception in Britain was a "strange mixture of genuine welcome and genuine discrimination-the latter indeed insisted on by white American troops"(359). At this point, Joyce begins to understand a little more about racial prejudice and segregation.

Showing how the histories of Europe and America converge, Phillips presents Travis, a black American soldier whose ancestors were slaves in the American South and who is sent to England, a country with which he has had no previous connection, at the historic moment when the United States entered the war to assist an endangered Europe. In fact, the role of black American soldiers as rescuers of Europe is made all the more ironical. People like Travis come to England to fight and give their lives to rescue Europe from Nazi barbarity; they come in the vain hope of being recognized as Americans back home. To the contrary, they find themselves alienated, rejected and treated as second class citizens.

However, the fact that Travis is black is of no importance to Joyce. She wishes she could explain to him that she was an outcast and homeless before he ever came into her life. Joyce, in her diary, registers the black soldiers' marginality as much as hers. She does not feel at home in her own county. The neighbors constantly underline her difference: "They look at [her] as though she [was] in the way"(CR 137). They feel as if she were a stranger and not an English woman. Joyce's indifference to conventionally acceptable behavior lead to her being viewed as an outsider to the village community who strengthen her estrangement and homelessness in her home. Despite the village community's disapproval, despite the class and color bar that comes in the way of human relationships, Joyce continues in her love-affair with African black Travis. Only an open-minded individual like Joyce can bridge the man made river of prejudice and make it to the other bank. Not only is she big-hearted, but she is also prejudice-free.

Joyce marries Travis during his seventy-two hours' leave and Greer is the outcome of their union whom his father is destined never to see as he is killed in action in Italy a month before the end of war. Alone in England and forced by social pressure inspired by racism, Joyce hands over their baby son for adoption and abandonment repeats itself. After eighteen years of separation, the "diary entries" narrate the return of her son. She recalls,"1963: I stared at Greer and longed for him to stay... A handsome man... No longer a baby... I wanted to hug him. I wanted him to know that I did have feelings for him. I knew that one day he would come looking. Come in ... Sit down. Please, sit down"(CR 223).

In fact, Joyce's trauma and her sense of loss echoes those in the preceding part. Nevertheless, her story emits a sense of hope as her black son returns to see her at his own will which symbolizes the continuation of the black-white relation. Greer's arrival at the door of his mother's house ends the cycle of pain and separation that echo through each of the four main narratives. As a matter of fact, the searches for familial ties characterize the whole parts of the novel and slavery, no doubt, has caused a disruption of family ties over the centuries. Gail Low claims that the son's return symbolizes the importance of kinship and the survival of the

child in the face of separation. Linked to Travis, he epitomizes the survival of all the descendants of slaves represented by "the many tongued chorus" that the original father hears (13).

*Crossing the River* ends with the fabular reunion of long-lost family members across space and time and the symbolic compensation for their suffering and the injustices done to them. They are no more broken by tragedy and loss but extended, strengthened and increased by a significant symbolic black white interaction. In fact, Phillips's novel engages in the anxieties and traumas experienced by all, both slaves and slave owners. However, if the novel depicts the dilemma of Diaspora, it offers at the same time an alternative narrative of freedom and belonging.

The end of Joyce's narrative takes one to the father who waits at the mouth of the river listening to his long-lost children whose voices are carried by the tide. The regretful father addresses his children saying, "You are beyond, Broken off, like limbs from a tree. But not lost, for you carry within your bodies the seeds of new trees sinking your hopeful roots into difficult soil"(CR 2).The word "hopeful", indeed, stresses the optimism of the novel's conclusion. In the epilogue, the novel concludes with a suggestion that, although "hurt", the children of the African Diaspora will survive the hardships of their crossings. There is an optimism that they will arrive safely on "the far bank of the river, loved" and try hard to grow new roots there(CR 237).The father says "I wait. And then listen as the many-tongued chorus of the common memory begins to swell, and insist that I acknowledge greetings from those who lever pints in the pubs in London...the barefoot boy in Sao Paulo...The child in Santo Domingo...Survivors all"(CR233-34).This conclusion balances the painful experiences of the different characters. The white woman Joyce is included in the father's speech, "To my Nash. My Martha: My Travis. *Joyce*". Although her name is italicized to mark her difference, she is treated as one of the children. Her name and that of her lover Travis stay unnamed during a great part of the section that is devoted to their story. This emphasizes the universal characteristic of their situation that embodies the black-white relationship supposed to continue and remain.

In *Crossing the River*, two of the four stories are from the points of view of white characters, two from black. Ledent contends that "by placing the oppressors and the oppressed in the same dilemma, Phillips not only undermines the binary logic that emphasizes cultural essentialism or absolutism but also challenges the centrality of race and nation in the construction of an identity"(118). In the novel, there are many instances of the metaphorical crossing of the borders of race which reveal that in each individual, black or white, there is a plurality of interacting selves. Black-Americans like Nash who "settle a small Christian empire" in Liberia are called white men by the local population(CR 34). They come to spread Christianity and indeed, they act in their eyes as colonizers. Similarly, the black pioneers in the American West are seen by Indians as "dark white men" and in their move to the West, they contribute to "the decimation of native Americans"(CR 91).Moreover, the slave ship captain, has his own contradictions: he is a slave trader but regarded by his peers as "a slave to a single woman"(CR 109). In fact, Phillips's work humanizes even the characters who seem most fully engaged in the slave trade. Also, the white woman, Joyce feels as if she were an outsider in the Yorkshire community where she lives as the black American soldiers sent there(CR 129). This turning of identities upside down proves race borders to be inadequate and failing.

Covering different times and places, the novel is disconnected and in fragments. This really emphasizes the African dispersal through continents and through different periods. Accordingly, narrative fragmentation is subversive, deconstructing the conventional Western novel and suggests the diasporans' lack of history and the incompleteness of their characters. Also the voices and stories invoked by the father, listening to the black diaspora for two 250 years, suggest a sort of performance that conveys a general message: suffering and survival offer new routes to the future. The more blacks resist and stay, the more they assert their identities.

The fragmentation of the novel really reproduces the specific characteristic of Caribbean society with its racial diversity and multiplicity. The particular history of each individual, connected to other stories, produces a more general message. Instead of a place of origin that is lost or inadequate, there is plurality of plausible homes for displaced people which widens the possibilities of belonging. Through the "many-tongued chorus" and the stories of the suffering African, Phillips succeeds in writing a novel on the complex situation of the

Caribbean where different races and cultures are intermingling, without even needing to refer to it once. The reunion of different individual voices and different individual experiences reflect his perception of the Caribbean problem. Phillips says, "I like the idea of different voices, because that's what I hear when I go to the Caribbean. That's what I feel about the Caribbean [that] is made up of so many different voices and experiences"(qtd. in Birbalsingh 195).

It is seen, then, that the character portraits in *Crossing the River* are individual and yet also representative; they are a part of diaspora. Though Phillips does not refuse the idea of rootedness, he widens this idea to a plural concept. He suggests a dynamic process in which different cultures are merged to produce new homes. One can be at home in several places at the same time. Phillips himself spends his life moving between the Caribbean, England and America. There is plurality of homelands, and the diasporas created by slavery should establish roots wherever they live. Fragmentation and rootlessness are transformed into positive notions such as openness, flexibility and movement which suggest a constructive and encouraging vision counterbalancing the pessimism of homelessness.

This transnational concept of home is revealed in the prologue and the epilogue of the novel connecting the characters -regardless of time and place- in their experience of survival: they are "sinking hopeful roots in difficult soil"(CR1). They attempt to grow new roots in America, England or elsewhere despite their alienation and suffering. Major indicates that the four stories do share two things: "each has something to do with black people but more important than race is that the characters, black and white, suffer brutally, they are tragic and sad, but mainly hopeful. They are often courageous, too. They persevere"(175).

In *A New World Order*, Phillips offers the possibility that America, Africa, and Europe are all possible homes for the people of the Caribbean as for the people of the African Diaspora in general; a home that Phillips names the "Atlantic World". He describes it saying,

I know my Atlantic "home" to be triangular in shape with Britain at one apex, the west coast of Africa at another, and the new world of North America (including the Caribbean) forming the third point of the triangle. If one draws a line between these three points, I regard the area of Atlantic Ocean that is described to be a much traveled pond. Across the centuries, countless millions have traversed this water, and unlike myself, these people have not always had the luxury of choice. They have felt alienated from, or abandoned by, the societies that they have hitherto known as "home. (305)

This description underlines his concept of home as a plural notion; all these places are available for the uprooted to live in. It is really a proposal that may put an end to the dilemma of the diasporans provided that the borders of racial prejudice and inferiorizing people are also crossed.

Furthermore, the Black British critic and theoretician, Paul Gilroy, provides the most similar theory to Phillips's vision presented in *Crossing the River* and *A New World Order*. Gilroy expresses a "desire to transcend both the structure of the nation-state and the restrictions of ethnicity and national particularity". He uses the term "the black Atlantic" to describe a continuous and everlasting process of travel and exchange across the Atlantic, a process that distorts the traditional distinctions between so-called black or white cultures (19). In fact, Gilroy questions the idea of a pure absolute identity determined by national and racial features. He proposes an unfixed changeable identity always "unfinished, always being remade". Here, one may say that the use of the gerund "crossing" in the title of Phillips's novel indicates that the discovery of the other and of oneself is always an unfinished process. Gilroy refuses the prevalence of "roots identities" over "routes identities" and sees the assumptions of automatic solidarity based on either blood or land as disabling. He means that the idea of deriving strength, safety and solidarity from entrenching oneself in a certain land firmly rooted and from one's belonging to a certain people, is a crippling idea that does not allow people to be opened to the world acting and interacting. Like Phillips, he recognizes the importance of roots but regrets that the idea of movement is not taken enough into account. He asks people to consider "what might be gained if the powerful claims of soil, roots, and territory could be set aside"(111). His words show how he moves away from the nationalist ethnic approaches towards transnational intercultural perspective.

To conclude, Caryl Phillips, like all those black British thinkers, is preoccupied with the diasporans suggesting, as a solution to their problem, a transnational and plural concept of home, that may be more suitable to our changing world and to the age in which we live for which the Caribbean is a microcosm providing the perfect model. In Phillips's opinion, home is a plural notion and is not restricted to only one geographical place. He rejects the idea that one has one home or else is homeless. One can have different possible homelands. He does not advocate any political or revolutionary solutions. However, he agrees as regard the importance of self-knowledge and awareness of the historical facts that have shaped one's past as the first step towards the renewal of one's identity.

### Conclusion

This study focuses on the idea of place and displacement and foregrounds the life and experiences of the Caribbean community and the other communities living on the border zones of two cultures. Phillips's vision of home is determined by his personal experience. The ambivalent sentence "I am of, and not of, this place" is the essence of his work which is concerned with the tensions between home and the unhomely, between migration and settlement. He is a writer who is only at home when he is away "journeying between places." He is "a child of diaspora" who confesses that his home which he wishes to be buried in is the Atlantic, at the crossroads between Britain, Africa and the Caribbean. Thus, his work, while starting in the Caribbean, includes in the end much of the world which he must in some way draw together in order to make his own identity whole. Phillips takes us on a transatlantic journey in search of what he might call home. He desires to suggest "a plural notion of home".

Actually, this new vision of home is not restricted to Phillips or other members of the African and Caribbean diasporas but is extended to the entire world. In *New World Order*, Phillips presents a vision of a world that is not hierarchical, with no fixed boundaries or barriers. He says, "The old static order...is dead. The colonial, or post colonial, model has collapsed. In its place we have a new world order in which there will soon be one global conversation with limited participation open to all, and full participation available to none"(5). In other words, a world in which the migrant's state is dislocated, never quite fully "at home". Phillips stresses the fluidity of identities and the movement between different homes which becomes inevitable due to the increasing globalization of our societies; it is a view of home that is cosmic rather than compartmentalized. The whole world is everybody's home. One should make home wherever he goes. The world is no more divided into particular homes and one should not be restricted to a specific place.

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