LIVES FRACTURED: RE/NAMING AND IDENTITY IN THE WRITING OF CARYL PHILLIPS

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Abstract: *The novels of Caryl Phillips often deal with the experiences and identities of those displaced and marginalized by society. Caryl Phillips is well known for employing different textual strategies such as spatiotemporal fragmentation, intertextuality, naming, and point of view shifts in order to portray the struggles and suffering of his characters. The aim of this article is to examine how Phillips uses naming of his characters to depict the effects exile, slavery and other forms of oppression may have on their lives and identities. In order to accomplish this, different characters from Phillips's novels Cambridge (1991), The Nature of Blood (1997), Crossing the River (1993) and Higher Ground (1989) will be discussed. The analysis of the characters will draw upon three concepts of naming first proposed by Bénédicte Ledent (2002): anonymity, (re)naming and name alteration.*

Keywords: *Caryl Phillips, identity, naming, slavery, alienation, liminality*

1. Introduction

The stories of Caryl Phillips represent an exploration of identities and lives of those exiled, marginalized and oppressed by the society. The protagonists of Phillips's novels are in an endless pursuit of a place to belong to and to call 'home.' The identity struggles that Phillips's characters experience seem to be projected from his own life. Caryl Phillips, born in the Caribbean, was only four months old when he and his parents migrated to England. In England's educational system, Phillips's identity struggles became even more challenging, due to the lack of black people's stories and stories written by black authors in his literature classes. Spending his formative years in mainly white-dominated middle-class schools did not prove beneficial for Phillips's sense of identity either. Only after enrolling at the university, Phillips started to "plug into black life" (Phillips 1992:5) by discovering the works of Ralph Ellison and Richard Wright. One of the most memorable moments Phillips recalls from his school years was during one of his literature classes. The teacher, while explaining the origins of students' surnames, remarked that Phillips must be from Wales, which caused the laughter of the entire class. Phillips, already torn between his two identities, Caribbean and English, felt like he could not "participate in a joke that made [his] identity a source of humour" (Phillips 1992:2).

Writing has enabled Phillips to retell the stories of those whose voices were nonexistent in the oppressive society, while also providing him with an outlet through which he could share his own experiences and dilemmas of being black and British. When writing about the torments of people who were persecuted solely on the basis of their skin color, name or religion, Phillips employs a variety of textual strategies. The textual strategy Phillips is best known for is his use of fragmentation, both in terms of space and time. The fracture and nonlinearity Phillips incorporates in his writing reflects the broken lives of those who are torn away from their homes and families. Furthermore, Phillips is known for the employment of intertextuality and point of view shifts, by using the first person and third person narrative interchangeably in some of his stories. Another textual strategy that is frequently employed in Phillips's narratives, although not as thoroughly

discussed as the others, involves his choices when it comes to the naming of his characters. This is can be seen through the examples of characters like Travis, Margot, and Rudy.

Travis, from *Crossing the River* (Phillips 2006), is one of the three siblings that are sold into slavery by their father in 1752, who somehow reemerges as a soldier in England during the twentieth century. It is not a coincidence that Phillips chose the name Travis for this character. His name is suggestive of the verb 'traverse,' which means "to travel across or through" ("Traverse" 2006). As pointed out by Labidi (2016:135), Travis "traverses not only unrelated historical periods (eighteenth-century slavery days versus the Second World War era), but also moves between disparate worlds such as Africa, the Atlantic, America, and Europe". Travis's journeying resembles the destinies of slaves who are marked with constant border crossings, never belonging to one place and transferring from one slave owner to the other.

Margot, the name Phillips uses for Eva's sister in *The Nature of Blood* (Phillips 1998), was the actual name of Anne Frank's sister. For Rudy's character, Phillips uses the name of one of Malcolm X's partners when he was a burglar (Ledent 2002:58) and in this way, portrays prejudices towards black men who were oftentimes perceived as criminals by white people.

According to Ledent (2002:57), who tackles the importance of naming in Phillips's *Higher Ground*, "(un) naming is a sign of primary displacement" and can be signified in three different ways as "absence, alteration and dualism". This paper will borrow some of the concepts presented by Ledent, although slightly altered, in order to categorize the naming of different characters from Phillips's novels *Higher Ground* (1989), *The Nature of Blood* (1997), *Crossing the River* (1993) and *Cambridge* (1991). The aim of this article is to examine how Phillips uses the naming of his marginalized characters in order to depict the way their struggles and traumatic experiences affect their identities and lives.

2. Anonymity in *Higher Ground* and *The Nature of Blood*

Among the many cruelties that black people were subjected to during slavery, the erasure of identities and a complete disregard for their genealogy was one of the most prominent features that marked the slave trade. In the 1850 and 1860 the United States Population Slave Censuses, only age, gender, color and owner's name were recorded for millions of slaves, meaning that the masses of slaves were left nameless in the historical records ("About the Race and Slavery Petitions Project" 2014). White people's indifference towards slave familial relationships was also one of the aspects involved in the slave trade. In the documents that slave owners kept, slave kin ties were rarely recorded, and the majority of slaves had been given a name different from that of their parents (Burnard 2001:332).

The anonymity that has marked countless lives of black people and hindered the efforts of many families in search of their ancestors is incorporated in Phillips's narratives. Phillips employs this anonymity with two of his marginalized characters, trying to tell the stories of people who were nominally removed from history and were deemed as unworthy of their existence being recorded. "Heartland," the first narrative in Phillips's *Higher Ground*, portrays the life of a captured African man who works as an interpreter for the white slave traders. The unnamed interpreter, "an ordinary man doing an extraordinary job in difficult times" (Phillips 1989:24), spends his time in utter isolation. Even though he works for white people, he is extremely distrustful of them and tries to spend as less time in their company as possible. In order to preserve his safe position at the Fort, he often feigns indifference towards things such as slave dungeons by referring to them as just the "place[s] of storage" (Phillips 1989:16). He suppresses any memories of his past that might evoke the feelings of guilt, claiming that it is "difficult to conceive of a life either before or after this place" (Phillips 1989:19). In order to survive, he willingly 'murders' his memory, severing all the ties to his own people and losing his identity in the process. In this story, Phillips uses the first-person narrative, which places the reader within the narrator's conscience

evoking the feelings of both sympathy and animosity towards the narrator. By portraying the horrors involved in the cruel system of slavery, the reader is provided with the sense of sympathy for the narrator, even though his acts cannot be approved.

This duality between sympathy and animosity makes for a very ambiguous character (Peere and Craps 2007:31-32). In fact, the narrator's ambiguity is further reinforced when the Governor refers to him as a "man of detachment and attachment" (Phillips 1989:13). This ambiguity comes as a result of the narrator's constant passivity and indifference, even in the instances of his own people's anguish. No matter how much the people around him suffer, he never does anything to stop it. Even when the girl is raped and her screams can be heard, he decides not to act and waits for someone else to help her: "I slump to the ground, my back propped up against the cold stone wall, and wait as though I was half-expecting my name to come singing out, a signal for me to charge into action. But I am not summoned" (Phillips 1989:32). Demaegd argues that the signal he waits for represents his conscience and that he is actually "waiting and hoping for his soul to revolt against the regime of the white man" (Demaegd 2008:44) but as always, he remains passive.

In addition to the use of the first-person narrative, Phillips employs the constant use of 'I' in the story to depict the narrator's desire to regain his lost identity, while the use of 'you' by the slave traders and his own people distances him both physically and psychologically (Varunny 2017:73). Despite his knowledge of the language and the trading methods that provide the narrator with a 'superior' status in the Fort, he continues to see himself as inferior to white slave traders. This is portrayed in the story when he refers to his love for the girl as another example of how he has "managed to raise [himself] up above the animal" (Phillips 1989:53).

The anonymity of the narrator can be interpreted in a number of ways. First, the absence of his name may symbolize his irrelevance to both his own people and the white traders. Even though he sees himself as a survivor and in that way justifies his actions, he is aware that his own people think of him as "filth" and "would happily go to the Gods with [his] death on their hands" (Phillips 1989:24). His existence is not significant to the white slave traders either, which he is well aware of, and by adopting a neutral position he tries to ensure his safety. Even the Governor, who tries to befriend him and help him "for all his concern, for all his caring, he has not even asked after [his] name" (Phillips 1989:53). His irrelevance to the white slave traders is further solidified when he is easily replaced with the new interpreter at the end.

Furthermore, the absence of the narrator's name may be due to his liminal state. Liminality is defined as "any 'betwixt and between' situation or object, any in-between place or moment, a state of suspense" (Thomassen 2014:7). As seen in this story, the narrator is in a perpetual state of being 'in-between.' He no longer has a place to belong to, he is alienated from his own people and even though he is physically situated among the white slave traders, he is not accepted or seen as equal in this environment. Liminal entities are typically characterized as ambiguous and therefore "elude or slip through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space" (Turner 1966:95). This argument may serve to explain the namelessness and the name changes that Phillips's marginal characters go through, since they are not easily defined by any social norms. In short, their liminal state defies any attempt of classification simply because "they are neither here nor there" (Turner 1966:95). The sense of isolation that the narrator experiences due to his liminal condition is described during his visit to the village:

He looks around at the nakedness of the villagers. They stare back at my clothes and Price's person with similar disdain. It is moments such as these that I loathe. Marooned between them, knowing that neither fully trusts me, that neither recognizes my smell or my posture, it is only in such situations that the magnitude of my fall strikes me. I want to run. (Phillips 1989:22)

The narrator is stuck at the threshold, constantly pondering whether he should act or not. To him, this 'in-between' position represents his comfort zone since his sole intention is his own survival. The liminal state of the narrator is also depicted in his position as an interpreter. During

their visit to the village, he is always portrayed as positioned between Price and the Head Man. If Price serves as an embodiment of evil in this story and the Head Man is represented as a peaceful figure, then the narrator's physical position can be seen as an indicator of his inner struggle to remain neutral. However, after passively witnessing the repeated abuse of the girl by Lewis, he decides to confront him. Although the narrator is well aware that this will lead to his demise, he decides to break free from his comfort zone and stand up to the oppressive system. Even if just for a moment, the narrator regains control over his own actions. In the end, the narrator manages to step out of this in-between position, by "repudiating his knowledge of the 'Master's language'—thus enabling him to join in solidarity with other captives, in their chant" (Okazaki 1994:93).

Similarly, in *The Nature of Blood*, a black African warrior that arrives in Venice is introduced, and even though the reader can conclude that this character is Othello, his name is never mentioned. After surviving slavery, Othello leaves his native country and travels to Venice to take the position of a general in the Venetian army. As a black man in predominantly white Venice, he is completely alienated by the Venetian society, which drives him to feelings of despair and loneliness. Throughout his entire narrative, Othello tries to fit in the Venetian society, in which he ultimately fails:

I had made no friends among these people, and my standing in society rested solely upon my reputation in the field. My reputation. It was to be hoped that this one small word might lay to rest any hostility that my natural appearance might provoke. My reputation. Some among these people, both high and low, were teaching me to think of myself as a man less worthy than the person I knew myself to be. (Phillips 1998:118)

No matter how hard he tries, Othello feels very much 'out of place' in Venice and is fully aware that the Venetians will always see him as different despite his reputation or his marriage to someone as important as a senator's daughter. The absence of his name may be interpreted in the same way as the namelessness of the "Heartland" narrator. His namelessness reflects the oppressive system's disinterest and disregard towards black people or what Ledent (2002:57) terms as "the white man's lack of interest in the African as a person". Just like the nameless narrator from "Heartland," Othello can be defined as a liminal character torn between the homeland he left behind and his struggle to belong in Venice. After marrying Desdemona, Othello feels like he has to accept Venice as his new home while facing the possibility of never seeing his native country again. He is aware that his own people will deem his marriage to a white woman unacceptable, the same way the Venetian society already does. Therefore, Othello remains 'in-between,' since he cannot consider Venice his city, nor can he refer to the country he has left behind as his own anymore.

There are other parallels to be drawn when it comes to Othello and "Heartland"'s protagonist. Another interpretation of their anonymity may be due to their 'purpose.' They are both 'tolerated' by white people because they serve a purpose. In "Heartland", the narrator's knowledge of both language and the customs of his own people represents a valuable tool to the slave traders. On the other hand, Othello who is a famous warrior serves the purpose of being a general, since Venetians cannot have one of their own in that position in order to "prevent the development of Venetian-born military dictatorships" (Phillips 1998:116). Despite his reputation of a respected and a well-known warrior, Othello, just like the "Heartland" narrator, possesses an internalized inferiority complex. This is evident in the instances where he refers to his native country and Venice. Upon his arrival to Venice, he refers to his homeland as the "edge of the world" and to Venice as "the centre" (Phillips 1998:107). He spends months trying to master the language and the customs of the Venetians. Othello is desperate to belong and to be a part of the Venetian society: "It was this desire to be accepted that was knotting my stomach and depriving me of sleep" (Phillips 1998:122). While trying to fit in into Venetian society, he even changes the way he dresses, hoping it "might convince some among these Venetians to look upon [him] with a kinder eye" (Phillips 1998:122).

Throughout their narratives, both Othello and the “Heartland” narrator try to regain their lost identities by making references to their names. However, these are not revealed nor are they ever addressed by their names by anyone in the story.

3. (Re)naming in *Crossing the River and Cambridge*

During the slave trade, it was a common practice among the white slave owners to rename their slaves. Naming slaves was “another masterful strategy for psychological control: for control of identity, for control beyond the simple control over life and death” (Alleyne 2005:90-91). By giving them new names, slaves were being cut off from their African heritage and identities. Apart from renaming, Christianity played an important role during slavery, serving as a form of control of an individual identity as a potent means of achieving the wider colonization of emotions, mind, and body (Mangan 2012:4).

“West”, the second narrative in *Crossing the River*, tells the story of Martha Randolph, an ex-slave making her way to California, where she is hoping to find her daughter. Too weak to endure the entire journey with the colored pioneers heading West, Martha is left behind in Denver. Given shelter for a night by an unknown woman in an unknown city, Martha is aware that “her journey had been a long one...her course was run” (Phillips 2006:54). In the final moments of her life, Martha’s mind is flooded with memories of loss and pain. Alone in the cold streets of Denver, Martha relives the painful moments with her lost family and dreams of a reunion with her daughter. Memories take her back to the moment when she was brutally separated from her husband Lucas and daughter Eliza Mae. After being sold, Martha leads a life of overwhelming pain with the memories of her lost family constantly flooding her mind. The unbearable pain of her loss leads to her mental instability, and she is haunted by the “voices from the past, some she recognized, some she did not” (Phillips 2006:58). After losing her daughter and husband, Martha is in the state of insurmountable sadness and seems almost lifeless. Her new owners try to help her by employing Christianity in order to “cast light in on Martha’s dark soul” (Phillips 2006:58). However, Martha finds no comfort in their religion, being “unable to sympathize with the sufferings of the son of God when set against her private misery” (Phillips 2006:59). While leading a life of loneliness and isolation, Martha is in the state of “barely recognizing herself” (Phillips 2006:55), which serves as an indicator of her “identity effacement as a result of the enforced alteration of spaces dictated upon her by the requirements of slavery” (Labidi 2016:134). When Martha realizes that she is to be sold again, she decides to run away. After freeing herself, Martha settles in Dodge where she works with Lucy a “woman who has been both friend and sister to [her]” (Phillips 2006:61) and finds a companion in Chester a “man [that] has made [her] happy...man [that] has made [her] forget” (Phillips 2006:62). These two characters provide Martha with some sort of stability, although very feeble and short-lived, that she may refer to as ‘home.’ However, after a series of unfortunate events Martha is forced to continue her journey alone.

Martha is prevented “from the possibility of having a fixed home, which represents an essential component for one’s identity construction” (Labidi 2016:135). In Martha’s case, the homelessness that comes as a result of her endless border crossings and journeying mark her as a liminal character. According to Turner, liminal beings are usually represented as having nothing, they have “no status, property, insignia, secular clothing indicating rank or role, position in a kinship system” (Turner 1966:95). Indeed, Martha lives in a state of perpetual homelessness, which is present in every aspect of her existence: mental, physical and spiritual. In the life filled with alienation and instability, the only things that remain consistent throughout Martha's story are her name and her memory. After being sold three times at least, it is very unlikely that her name remains the same, especially considering the fact that the white slave owners would exert their power over black slaves by renaming them. Phillips using her name throughout the entire story may serve as a symbol of her resilience in the face of the brutal system of slavery. After suffering

numerous losses (first her home and brothers, then her husband and daughter, and finally her companion Chester and friend Lucy), Martha stays determined to hold on to one piece of identity that she has left—her name. She constantly relives the painful memories of her loss in order to keep reminding herself of who she truly is. All of the pain and anguish that Martha is plagued by serves as a source of strength for her to hold on and continue to fight. In the end, Martha is left to the mercy of a white woman, which is evocative of the beginning of her story when her father places the fate and lives of her and her brothers in the hands of the white slave traders.

Ironically, after fighting hard to hold on to one piece of her identity she has left, her name, and promising herself that “never again would she be renamed” (Phillips 2006:59), her name is changed after her death. When Martha dies, the white woman, not knowing her name, decides to give her a new one so she could have a Christian burial. This ending may be interpreted as a depiction of white people’s disregard for black people’s identities, lives, and customs. It also signifies the powerlessness of slaves over their own bodies and identities. Martha’s journey seems to be in vain, ending with her dying alone which is reminiscent of fates of many slaves that have disappeared during the Middle Passage. There are numerous stories like Martha’s that were either not documented or were overwritten by the white people’s version of history.

By comparison, another narrative that depicts the uncertainty and powerlessness that marked the lives of slaves is told through the protagonist of *Cambridge*. The novel *Cambridge* tells the story of an African slave who, after being liberated, is captured and sold yet again. When he is captured at the age of fifteen and sold into slavery by his own people, Cambridge endures horrific abuse on the slave ship where he and the other slaves are “treated with less regard than one might bestow upon the basest of animals” (Phillips 1993:137). After being torn apart from his home and deprived of his native language, his original name Olumide remains the only link to his family and his homeland. However, during his journey as a slave, he is forcefully renamed by the slave traders. Refusing to accept “Thomas” as his new name, he is threatened with flogging and told that “little will be spared” (Phillips 1993:141) if he continues to disobey. This renaming is the first instance of identity alteration that Cambridge goes through. In England, ‘blessed’ with the newly acquired knowledge of the English language, he tries to adopt the manners of Christian men in order to become more civilized. After Cambridge embraces Christianity, he adopts a new and a ‘superior’ identity under the name of David Henderson. At this particular moment, Cambridge goes through complete identity transformation, by consciously rejecting his African identity and heritage. This instance of renaming is crucial in his entire process of becoming an Englishman, being the only voluntary name change Cambridge goes through in his narrative. Not only does Cambridge adopt the manners and religion of white people, but he also internalizes their prejudicial and superior attitudes towards black people. As a result, he tries to “liberate” others of his complexion “from [their] unlettered heathen misery” (Phillips 1993:145). Cambridge begins to see his black features as a hindering aspect and tries to eradicate them while emphasizing those that qualify him as British (Kuurola 2007:141). The belief that his newly acquired status as an Englishman will provide him with respect and equal treatment from the white people is shattered after the death of his wife and child:

The following day the minister arrived and informed me that my child could not be admitted to the parish soil because he had not been baptized. Furthermore, although I had often spoken fluently and publicly of God, the minister claimed he had no evidence of my own Christian status. (Phillips 1993:153)

No matter how educated and civilized he becomes, Cambridge is never to be treated as an equal, nor is he accepted in the English society. According to Ledent, Cambridge’s constant need for the approval and acceptance from the white society can be seen as “an inferiority complex induced by the very values he advocates” (Ledent 2002:98). Unaware of white people’s prejudices and true intentions, Cambridge is again captured and sold. In the end, he is renamed into Cambridge, after which he decides to present himself as “a strange figure, quiet and reserved”

(Phillips 1993:158), while still preserving the superior attitude towards other slaves. This superiority is depicted in the moments of his capture, when he feels offended for being treated like “a base African cargo” when, in fact, he is “a virtual Englishman” (Phillips 1993:156).

The numerous displacements and renaming that Cambridge goes through lead to an identity crisis, depicted through his adoption of Christian manners and identifying himself as an Englishman who on various occasions refers to his own people as “heathens” (Phillips 1993:145, 147, 163). As in Martha’s story, the multiple displacements Cambridge experiences disrupt his opportunity for a stable home and identity. Cambridge is torn away twice from his home: from his African home as a young boy, and from his English ‘home’ when he is captured for the second and the last time. It is important to note that, out of all his names, Cambridge closes his narrative with the name of David Henderson. This seems to be the only name he accepts as his true identity and the only one he is proud of, symbolizing the change in his attitude towards his own people as well as how he sees himself; he does not consider himself the same as them anymore. (Muukkonen 2010:66).

4. Name Alteration in *Higher Ground*

Besides depicting the oppression and struggles of his own people, Phillips’s narratives also deal with the stories of other marginalized groups. The plight of Jewish people holds a very important place in Phillips’s writing, who as a teenager related to their suffering and “channelled a part of [his] hurt through the Jewish experience” (Phillips 1992:54). Many studies on the victims of trauma caused by the Holocaust and totalitarian political regimes show various cases of self-discontinuity. These survivors feel “emotionally fragmented, torn away from the threads of continuity which give meaning and directionality to existence” (Wilson 2006:34).

“Higher Ground”, the third narrative in *Higher Ground*, tells the story of a Polish Jew Irina, who, in order to escape the Nazi regime, is forced to abandon her home country and start a new life in England. However, all that Irina encounters in England is loneliness and alienation. In a society that is close-minded and filled with prejudice towards everything foreign, Irina fails to create a genuine connection with these people. Her assimilation into the English society also fails due to her hesitation to possess anything, “for if you possessed...something you wanted, then somebody might come and take it from you and cause you hurt” (Phillips 1989:190). During her first job in England, Irina’s name is changed into “Irene,” an Anglicized and more ‘acceptable’ version of her name where English people did not have “to bend their mouths or twist their tongues into unfamiliar shapes” (Phillips 1989:183). This name alteration may be seen as a symbol of Irina’s personality alteration.

The journey Irina undertakes from Poland to England changes her completely and she suddenly feels like her violent uprooting “had obscured her many girlish years and replaced them with womanish hours” (Phillips 1989:209). After her traumatic separation from her family and everything that she knew, Irina is forced to grow up, constantly tormented by the memories of her past, which leads to her psychological disintegration. Although Irina manages to cross the borders physically, she remains psychologically incapable to move on from her life in Poland. Throughout her narrative, Irina is mentally torn between her past and her present.

Like many of the displaced characters Phillips writes about, Irina can be considered a liminal character. She is fully aware that she cannot go back to Poland, all while living the life of an outsider in England. Irina’s liminal condition is symbolized by two versions of her name used by Phillips. In the flashbacks from her past, she is referred to as Irina, and in present situations, she is referred to as Irene. This portrays her constant struggle of being pulled back and forth between her past and her present, unable to conceive any kind of future. Irina is stranded in between, unable to move on from her past – “I can’t forget Irina” (Phillips 1989:217) – and holding

onto the only existing reminder of her lost life and family. For her, "Irene" represent a cold and harsh reality of her existence, which is filled with loneliness and fear of abandonment.

Irina's liminal state is also pointed out by Okazaki: "Irene/Irina is caught, in her mental life, between two worlds, and two ages/stages of life: she has been unable, psychologically, to make the transition from the security of her childhood world to the isolated and alienating existence (in London) which she now leads" (Okazaki 1994:93). When her abusive marriage ends after Irina loses her child, Irina is shattered. Unable to cope with loss and abandonment yet again, she attempts to end her life. After spending ten years in a mental institution, Irina is given an opportunity to start her life anew. However, she remains hopeless and haunted by the hurtful memories of her past and spends her days isolated in her room. Even though she is released from the mental hospital, she still endures the metaphorical confinements of her own mind, where she "can't keep anything quiet" (Phillips 1989:217).

Indeed, Irina is a prisoner of her own mind, and even though she is not physically confined, the description of her room resembles a prison cell: "Irene's room was small. The frame of her bed was cold and metallic. No matter how warm it might be inside of the bed the frame was always cold" (Phillips 1989:175). Even the behavior of Mrs. Molloy, her landlady, is reminiscent of a jailer who observes and takes notes of Irina's actions and behavior. It is obvious that Irina's 'prison' is of her own making, judging by the lack of books in her room, which were once a great source of joy and comfort for her: "There were no books, despite the fact that a book can neither expel nor despise you. During the day Irene wallowed in surfeit, in the evenings she suffered through denial. She had ensured that there could be no comfort in books" (Phillips 1989:175-176).

By depriving herself of any form of solace, Irina is able to relive the memories of her lost life in Poland. She refuses to let go of these memories no matter how painful they seem to be since they are the only remaining link to her family and only by clinging to them can she make "her way back to the house which held the room she called 'home'" (Phillips 1989:216). Accepting "Irene" would mean forgetting "Irina," which is unthinkable for her. To Irina, not to remember who she was would feel almost like a betrayal. The description of her bed may be interpreted as how alienated she is from society, despite her attempts to connect with others, society is cold and judgmental, so she stays in the safety of her own room. In the end, Irina cannot reconcile with the fact that she will never see her family again. Her story ends with her waiting for the morning when she is going to be taken back to the mental hospital after deemed incapable of leading a normal life.

5. Conclusions

The goal of this article was to discuss how Caryl Phillips employs naming in his novels in regard to his stories of marginalized individuals. The names Phillips uses, and the very lack of names as well, serve as a deliberate depiction of the effects various forms of oppression have on the identity and lives of his characters. By using anonymity in the narratives of his black characters, Phillips provides the reader with a deeper understanding of their predicaments. This anonymity symbolizes their low position in society and slave owners' complete disregard for their identity. Phillips's decision to keep the black characters nameless represents a powerful portrayal of how degrading their very existence is under the oppressive system of slavery.

In order to illustrate the lack of control that his characters have over their own lives and identities Phillips uses renaming. That someone is perceived as nothing more than someone else's possession is demonstrated through the involuntary name changes the characters are submitted to multiple times in their stories. This act of renaming can be seen as a form of dehumanization: removing the slave's past identity (name) and imposing a new one selected by the slave owner. Also, naming is used by Phillips to illustrate the psychological disorientation that the characters who are trauma survivors often experience. By using two versions of the same name for a single

character, he perfectly captures their lingering inability to let go of the past and the 'old' self. Even though naming carries a lot of significance in the stories of marginalized individuals, this concept seems to be understudied in the articles that discuss Phillips's writing.

It is important to note how closely one's name is linked to the notion of identity, and how such a notion has affected the lives of many minority groups. As in Phillips's narratives, names often served as a tool against marginalized individuals, to control, discriminate, and even persecute them. Therefore, this article aimed to contribute to the further discussion of how important the role of naming is in the stories of oppressed individuals. Phillips's stories represent a realistic depiction of torment and struggles these people had to withstand and by telling their stories, Phillips attempts to provide a voice to those who were once silenced. The well-known historical implications one's name used to carry remain important when analyzing the literature and stories of those who endured any kind of discrimination. As Phillips (1992:99) himself puts it: "I had learnt that in a situation in which history is distorted, the literature of a people often becomes its history, its writers the keepers of the past, present, future".

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