

ABSTRACT

The current success of Black British writers' novels is perhaps their emphasis on the construction of the Negro in a supposedly democratic and multicultural, albeit hostile society. Their double purpose is to present ethnic voices in the context of a monolithic stance and to denounce the imperial historical past, which, in the case of Britain, is full of diasporic ex-colonial subjects whose presence disrupts the ideology of a white nation. The Negro, therefore, as a subject, processes his own identity by threatening the Eurocentric hegemony still predominant. Current essay is an analysis of Negro characters in Phillips's novels *A State of Independence*, *Crossing the River* and *A Distant Shore*, and investigates the construction of subjectivity through identity, relationship and place.

KEY WORDS: subject, Negro, Caryl Phillips, identity, Black British Literature.

CARYL PHILLIPS'S POST-COLONIAL NEGRO SUBJECT IN PROCESS

Thomas Bonnici*

RESUMO

O atual sucesso dos romances de autores britânicos negros provavelmente deve-se à ênfase dada à construção do negro numa sociedade alegadamente democrática e multicultural, mas hostil. A sua finalidade é dupla: apresentar as vozes étnicas num contexto de condições monolíticas e denunciar o passado histórico imperial. No caso britânico, este último encontra-se repleto de sujeitos ex-coloniais e diaspóricos cuja presença subverte a ideologia de uma nação branca. O negro, portanto, como sujeito, processa sua identidade pela ameaça à ainda predominante hegemonia eurocêntrica. Este ensaio, uma análise de personagens de *A State of Independence*, *Crossing the River* e *A Distant Shore*, três romances de Caryl Phillips, investiga a construção da subjetividade através da identidade, relacionamento e lugar.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: sujeito, negro, Caryl Phillips, identidade, literatura britânica de autoria negra.

* Professor at Universidade Estadual de Maringá, PR, Brazil.
E-mail: bonnici@wnet.com.br

The heritage of slavery and of the various diasporas worldwide has produced, perhaps only evidently, a shifting sense of home and a variegated meaning of homelessness, and within this context, the Negro subject. This is chiefly true in literature and, more especially, when representations of transnational and transcultural forces are produced by Black British writers. The claim of a British "identity" has actually been disrupted by "first generation" ex-colonial writers and their contemporary successors affected by decolonization, transnational capitalism, migration and worldwide mass communication. The function of the inclusion of the Negro subject and his/her subjectivity represented in current British novels is not merely to install the margin within the centre thus, supposedly, inverting ingrained discrimination. In Bhabha's terms, "the analytic of cultural difference intervenes to transform the scenario of articulation" (1998, p. 162). The assimilation of the story of the Other into the dominant narrative is less important than the disruption of narratives that were fabricated to define the dominant culture, or the hybridization of discourse, or the configuration of the heterogeneity of cultural identities. The task of Black British writers therefore has been to challenge the changelessness of culture, to relocate the dominance-resistance relationship and to posit the dominant and the marginalized within the discourse of culture. This boils down to the difficult burden of "destroy[ing] the constant principles of the [figment of the true] national culture" (BHABHA, 1998, p. 152) and "open[ing] up the possibility of other narratives of people and their difference" (BHABHA, 1998, p. 149).

The representation of the subject in process in the novels of Black British writers has therefore the double purpose of introducing other ethnic voices within the supposedly monolithic stance and of acting as a "reminder and a remainder of its historical past" (MERCER, 1994, p. 7). This is especially more poignant since the diaspora in Britain is not composed of "foreigners" but of ex-colonial subjects whose very physical presence disrupts the "nation" with their continual reminder "We are here because you were there" (MERCER, 1994, p. 7). The Negro subject threatens the identity and the culture of the homogeneous white colonizers within their own boundaries

THE STATUTE OF THE SUBJECT

Subject and subjectivity have always been the focus of several areas of knowledge due to their importance in literatures that deal with agency and the voice of the subaltern. In Post-colonial literatures the agency of the subject is highlighted because the aim of this aesthetic stance lies in the exposure

and evaluation of the havoc wrought by Eurocentric domination in the colonial subject and the space the latter had or has in the ensuing subjection. From studies by Aristotle through Descartes and up to the limited subject in Althusser's development of Marx's agent, in Lacan's and Foucault's development of Freud's formation of the subject, and in Derrida's abolition of subjectivity, the closure of the circle has occurred and the power of choice and resistance brought to nil (SMITH, 1988). This is especially dramatic when post-colonialism is taken into consideration since it does not merely deal with the historical archive but with the entire "culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day" (ASHCROFT et al., 1989, p. 2). Similar to the concept that the subject is constructed by and produced through language, a logical argument may be deduced in which the post-colonial subject is so deeply constituted by the dominant imperial ideology that an other and different "agency" is rendered impossible. Even in chronologically post-colonial times the Euro-American ideological web is so deeply inherent to the "colonial" subject that even awareness of and, *a fortiori*, resistance to the condition are a chimera.

However, texts by post-colonial authors shun the above conclusion and insist on the agency of the colonial subjects, giving particular attention to their awareness and resistance to the condition. The powerlessness that the colonial condition is alleged to have reduced millions to may be belied by resistance markers within the literature. Postcolonialism has in fact achieved remarkable success in elaborating an ideology and in showing strategies for the detection and critique of the silenced manifestations of subjected colonial subjects. Perhaps one of the problems hankering for a solution and which has defied a suitable "answering back" is the current Negro issue, coupled to deep-rooted racism, displacement and exclusion, dealt with extensively by Fanon (1986), Bhabha (1998) and Gilroy (2001). Although the representation of the post-colonial Negro issue in literature is worldwide, there is still a place to be carved in subject-subject relationships, without any hierarchies, stereotyping and without the residues of what Fanon calls the "epidermal schema".

Both in his novels and in his non-fictional works Kittitian Caryl Phillips's subject is the uprooted and displaced Negro, either of U.S. or African or West Indian origin, who is confronted with a dominant white environment and culture, in the context of slavery or in its repercussion within the life of the contemporary Negro subject. The identity of the Negro and the negotiation of his/her place in the world underpin Phillips's nine novels. Although Phillips's literary representation and conclusions may be bleak, they provoke readers in their concepts of identity, power relations, language and place of the Negro who may be taken as a metonymy of all Euro-different,

and thus excluded, people. The aim of this essay is to analyze several Negro characters in Phillips's *A State of Independence*, *Crossing the River* and *A Distant Shore*, respectively published in 1986, 1993 and 2003, with regard to the process of their subjectivity, which comprises identity, relationship and place.

SUBJECTIVITY IN THE RETURNING DIASPORIC "NATIVE"

The diasporic subjects' returning home has always been traumatic since a gap has been established between the putative ancestral home and the imagined community that has been nurtured in their minds. This fact is especially true not only when displacement occurred because of wars, genocide and natural upheavals, but also in study and job-seeking diasporas within the context of globalization (SAFRAN, 1991). To the diasporic subjects who have left their country to live in a foreign one the latter is always a place in which they have never been totally integrated, while the former is highly mythologized. With Garveyite idealism still somewhat extant (APPIAH & GATES, 1997), the mythologization of the country of birth has recently, albeit differently, been represented in Samuel Selvon's *Moses Migrating*, Joan Riley's *The Unbelonging*, Andrea Levy's *Small Island*, and in Zadie Smith's *White Teeth*, among others, with Hall (2003) harking on the linkages at the national and family levels, the consolidation of networks and experiences, and socialization within a transnational environment.

The diasporic Francis Bertram in *A State of Independence* arrives in his Caribbean island "home" on the eve of its independence from Britain. The returnee's subjectivity is constructed through a series of encounters which, although shattering his imagined "home", gives him a new insight into Caribbean conditions. Phillips' description of Bertram's psychological condition ("wondered"; "uncertain"; "unsure"; "confused"; "unclear", "mystified") is typical of the diasporic subject's ambiguous state of mind about his "not-at-home-ness". However, the encounters with former school mate, now powerful politician, Jack Clayton, with former girlfriend Patsy Archibald and with his mother Mrs Francis bring about the erasure of his life-lie, or rather, the self-illusion that he may contribute towards the "independence" of his island home, and start the subjectivity process.

Bertram's encounter with deputy Prime Minister Jack Clayton, famed for his "perverse familiarity with power" (PHILLIPS, 1995, p. 110), spurring "blood on anyone who comes near him" (PHILLIPS, 1995, p. 84), makes him aware of his ignorance of Caribbean problems, the effects of globalization and the illusion of black self-sufficiency in Garveyite terms. It becomes clear to Bertram that Clayton and other "native" bourgeois are forming a colonial

condition in the island after independence (MIGNOLO, 2005). This boils down to the fact that the underlying matrix of colonial power is maintained and a reproduction of the former dependency by “native” elites after Independence will ensue. Jackson immediately tells Bertram that the Caribbean island is “living State-side [...] under the eagle [since] England never do us a damn thing except take, take, take” (PHILLIPS, 1995, p. 112). The above statement, rather a confession of an illusory shifting of power, is a diagonally inverted position to the diasporic subject’s idea of economic independence which he expounds to his mother earlier in the day. “The only way the black man is going to progress in the world is to set up his own shops and his own businesses independent of the white man. There is no way forward for us if we keep relying on him, for we going continually be cleaning up his shit, and washing out his outhouse” (PHILLIPS, 1995, p. 51). The erasure of Bertram’s attempt at subjectivity and identity, corroborated by the introduction of cable TV directly linked to the U.S. and the scenes of cane-cutters in the fields, transforms him into a rather bleak person on “the state of independence” he has come to achieve for his country.

The construction of the diasporic subject’s identity is positively brought about by the mother-like attitudes of Patsy Archibald who, as a metonymy of the country of birth, assuages the guilt complex that has haunted him from the moment he feels himself an outsider and, consequently, brings about a reconciliation of sorts. Patsy’s catalectic contribution makes him come to terms with his experience as a diaspora Caribbean subject in Britain. Either Bertram is so confused that he does not know what happened to him during his 20-year absence in Britain or he is reluctant to make a clean breast of his experience. Through Patsy’s intermediation he admits the turmoil caused by the encounter between the colonial subject and the white British subject and describes the situation as a “hurricane”, or rather, the inverted image of what Europeans used to attribute to Caribbeans (HULME, 1981; 1986). In other words, Bertram starts to admit that the exclusion environment experienced in Britain has provoked disasters in the Caribbean subjects and imploded their identity. Patsy makes the Caribbean subject realize that what happened in Britain was “the frustration of trying to understand a people who showed no interest in understanding him” (PHILLIPS, 1995, p. 151). Indifference to the Caribbean subject by the British colonizer is a leitmotif in many contemporary novels written by Black authors as Levy’s *Fruit of the Lemon* and *Small Island* and Gordimer’s *The Pickup* testify. In *A State of Independence* Phillips seems to underline the traumatic aftermath of hostile conditions triggered by racial stereotypes in Britain, coupled with lethargy and acknowledgement of one’s own “mediocrity”, which together also produce

the *unheimlichkeit* feeling. "I don't yet feel at home back here either" (PHILLIPS, 1995, p. 152).

However, Bertram's bleak and pessimistic attitude, mitigated by Patsy's unconditional acceptance and a possible reconciliation with his mother, is tantamount to a lack of subjectivity and autonomy resulting from colonialism's aftermath and colonality's impact. In Bertram's view, the burning of the island's library and the symbolical rejection of the Caribbean multicultural past by young people reveal the islanders' uncritical submission to homogenizing U.S. culture and an indelible mark of frustration in the Caribbean subject (LEDENT, 2002; RAHBEK, 2004).

SUBJECTIVITY IN EXCLUSION

The final story in *Crossing the River* deals with Joyce, a white English woman, who falls in love with the black U.S. soldier Travis stationed near her village in Yorkshire during the Second World War. Travis is metonymically the son of the African father who in 1752 sold his three children on the African coast to the British slave trader Captain Hamilton. Travis, a victim of racist taunting by his white comrades, is one of the countless and nameless people who constitute the African diaspora today. On the other hand, since entries in Joyce's diary span some twenty-five years (1937-1963), Travis's part only begins in 1943 and leaves in 1945 when he is killed in Italy, leaving her a GI baby, Greer, given for adoption to the County Council. Greer only comes back looking for her in 1963, eighteen years later, when Joyce's new husband is away and her children at school.

Travis's story is not given in his own but the white woman's voice, a fact which is somewhat atypical in Phillips. However, he justifies this apparent exclusion of the Negro subject and the latter's emergence through a white voice to erase the binary cultural essentialism against which he strives. In fact, the Joyce-Travis experience concerns whites and blacks alike (JAGGI, 2004). Second, Phillips wants to show the uncanniness that the white person causes in the reader when she narrates the black man's story. Similar to the vain efforts that Susan makes so that the tongue-less Friday may narrate his story in Coetzee's *Foe*, the story of Travis, the "representative" of millions of muted slaves, is mediated through an open-minded female who does not actually erase his subjectivity and agency. On the contrary, in spite of the terrible pressures the Black American soldiers underwent during the war, Travis's agency is stoic, straightforward and sincere, and his voice is heard even though through a female voice.

"It's just that they're different. We want you to know that you'll have to be a little patient, that's all" (PHILLIPS, 1993, p. 145). This is Joyce's diary entry

on September 1942. The warning given by a white American officer on the arrival of Black soldiers in her village makes her remarks seep in parody against racism and the racist person. Joyce, capturing Travis's voice, rages against the white "smug bugger [...] and his confident pose" (PHILLIPS, 1993, p. 145). Such open-mindedness may be seen in the fact that Travis's condition as an Afro-descendant is never mentioned in the novel. Expecting the narrator to mention the character's skin colour and other "racial" traits is normal, even though bordering on bias. Statistically, albeit not normally in the proper sense, novel writers have always mentioned the "racial" characteristics of their characters. Joyce recalls Travis only as a tall person, smiling nervously, with a characteristic "gap in his teeth in the middle of the bottom row" (PHILLIPS, 1993, p. 162). Travis's subjectivity annuls the phobia that Fanon (1986) describes in the Negro when he encounters the white European and even Phillips's statement that "there's no other society on earth that [...] make[s] a nigger out of you in eight hours, before you've even left Terminal 3" (JAGGI, 2004, p. 122).

If Joyce is not an easily found non-racial British, similar to Katherine, Mike and the Andersons, as will be described below, the friendship between her and Travis is subjectifying even though commented on and a source of enigma for many. "Over his shoulder I could see everyone looking on. I could see it on their faces. They were shocked. And maybe a bit jealous, but I didn't care" (PHILLIPS, 1993, p. 163). Repeatedly Joyce refers to this embarrassing situation which deeply affects the British villagers speaking behind their back. Even though aware of the not-so-innocent motive, in his interview with Maya Jaggi Phillips, perhaps tongue-in-cheek, explains that during the war

the American army was segregated, and it was the first time many Britons outside of London, Liverpool, Bristol and the slaving ports had come into contact with black people in any numbers. Most Americans remember their time in Britain fondly because they were more popular than the white Americans – they weren't arrogant. Most of them came from the South, from Alabama and Mississippi – they had no idea that white people could even vaguely treat them as equal. (JAGGI, 2004, p. 115-116)

If Britons are "friendly" to Negro GIs because they have a return ticket in their pocket, the white American soldiers are always hostile to their Negro comrades. Travis tells Joyce that he has his officer's permission to marry the white British girl "as long as he didn't try to take [her] back to America with him" (PHILLIPS, 1993, p. 227). Further, the punishment meted to Travis for arriving late at the barracks is out of proportion and surely illegal with regard to the torture before confinement. Travis also confesses that "the army only liked to use them for cleaning and the like" (PHILLIPS, 1993, p. 208) and in the

war front they are deliberately placed on the front causing “the slow stride [...] hunched shoulders [...] huge bags under his eyes” (PHILLIPS, 1993, p. 225), noted by Joyce when he returns to meet his newly born son. Nevertheless, in Joyce’s diary a resigned Negro GI emerges after the incident, not in the subaltern sense but as somebody who comes out victoriously from an ordeal. However, the conundrum of the final section of *Crossing the River* lies in the fact that Travis’s journey to a supposedly discrimination-free Europe with a task to extirpate the racialized Nazi and Fascist governments ends him up discriminated by his white American comrades and by the British people to the point of abandoning his son Greer for racial reasons. On the other hand, things become complicated since “the black GIs who came to Europe in the vain hope of being recognized as Americans back home brought with them the very products that triggered off slavery, hence their own alienation: ‘An 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’” (LEDENT, 2002, p. 123). The greed of the colonizing nations as of the 15th century has re-introduced the institution of slavery and produced a hierarchized world transformation in which the diasporic Negro is made an instrument to his own undoing. Killed in Italy, Travis seems to have been a useless and unacknowledged subject as has been the painful non-recognition by the white population of Negroes in the building of the U.S. This fact may be corroborated by Joyce’s report on the propaganda films shown during the war in which “they just showed the Tommies. Never the Yanks. And if they did, never the Coloureds” (PHILLIPS, 1993, p. 223). Actually, it may also apply to Greer who is discriminated on birth by the midwife. “He’s like coffee, isn’t he, love” (PHILLIPS, 1993, p. 228), stamping him with the hallmark of non-belonging and *unheimlichkeit*.

Since *Crossing the River* is a novel on slavery and on “the social heritage of slavery” (DU BOIS, 1983, p. 639), Travis’s agency is furthered erased when Joyce fails to stand up for her open-mindedness, courage and generosity against mainstream British racism. In the end she yields to social pressure by putting her coloured son up for adoption and erasing Travis when she starts a new married life after the war. Actually these two factors are not merely a direct consequence of the racism inherent to British identity but a result of the dictum on the “disagreeable consequences of such an unnatural connection” (PHILLIPS, 1991, p. 145) between Negroes and White people. Levy’s *Small Island* also ends with the same theme when Jamaican Hortense accepts white Queenie’s black son and commits herself to bringing up a native Briton rejected by his own biological mother and by the motherland.

Further, it has to be borne in mind that slavery has radically disrupted the family. A recurring theme in U.S. and Black British literature, in *Crossing*

the River the African father sells and claims his children dispersed throughout the world, Martha is violently separated from her husband and daughter and, later on, from Chester, her faithful companion. After Travis's death on the battlefield, Greer, Joyce's son, could have been accepted within Joyce's new constituted family, but perhaps even this inclusion would have been disallowed by British cultural identity mores. When Greer comes to Joyce's house, she immediately recognizes him as her son. Although she invites him in, she ponders, "I almost said make yourself at home, but I didn't. At least I avoided that" (PHILLIPS, 1993, p. 232). The black British subject can call home neither his mother's house nor his country. Exclusion, the heritage of hundreds of years in the formation of British identity, has produced a culturally unstable and shifting identity in the "colonial other" which is both slippery and problematic. A positive tone is set in the Epilogue by the African father who, in an all-gathering vision of all excluded people, addresses the diasporic community and encourages it to pursue enriching experiences wherever it exists.

SUBJECTIVITY IN NEGOTIATING SPACE AND INCLUSION

Warnes (2007), Ledent (2004) and Gunning (2004) have already shown that the construction of the colonial subject in *A Distant Shore* is somewhat new and awareness-raising since it deals with identity and underscores the experience of non-belonging regardless of the subject being Black or White. Whereas the environment in England is one of exclusion, racism, hypocrisy and dominating attitude, the post-colonial subject may venture on subjectification within the context of a group of folks eager for community-building against the mainstream exclusion. The *fabula* of African Gabriel / Solomon, fleeing his war-striven country, and seeking refuge, first as an illegal immigrant and later as a citizen in Britain, shows his negotiating and inclusion strategies in his attempt to "transform" himself into a subject.

In pre-war times and during the civil war Solomon is a subject and a differentiated leader. Inclusion as a civil servant and a fugitive in the "middle passage" towards Europe is not linked to skin colour, gender or "race" but to money and kickbacks. It is only when Gabriel arrives in England that "blackness" differentiates the migrant. Or rather, his unbelonging is synonymous with dislocated insideness experienced by everybody who is non-British and non-European. This condition is perceived by his Iraqi cellmate Said, by the African Bright, and by himself when he is indicted on a false sexual charge. These disposable foreigners, nurturing high expectations of a job and a decent living in an industrialized country, share an imagined England. Said is convinced that in England "freedom is everything and [...]"

British people are good” (PHILLIPS, 1995, p. 70). In Bright’s opinion “only the white man respects us, for we do not respect ourselves. If you cut my heart open you will find it stamped with the word ‘England’” (PHILLIPS, 1995, p. 119). Therefore, living in England, free from the tragic reality of Africa, is, in their imagination, a place to develop one’s subjectivity and agency to the full. Exclusion because of the colour bar is not to the fore in their mind. However, the clue comes when Said is unjustly charged with theft and sent to jail. “The light in England is very weak. It depresses me. They have taken the sun out of the sky” (PHILLIPS, 1995, p. 71). His remarks are lost since negotiating with the white man (warder, doctor, policeman and lawyer) is denied and his efforts within diasporic history have been in vain. The history of the African Bright after his arrival in England is a gap which perhaps may be filled with another narrative of exclusion and death.

England as a nation-state has been built on ethnicity, which has been culturally shaped to remain closed and exclusive. According to Hall (2003) and Ashcroft (1998), the British identity of exclusion is one of the crucial characteristics that explain contemporary British racism. In fact, racial bias has been constructed in terms of a contestation of multi-ethnicity and multi-culturalism. This is the reason why Said and probably Bright are disposable: they do not belong to the place and are fated either to marginalization or to death. Since the British deny difference, the colonial subject is a marginalized self and a grotesque imitation. The white man is the norm and the skin colour as significant produces an ideology of racial typology, dominion and cultural degeneration (FANON, 1986). Agency of the coloured subject is rejected and skin colour becomes the most visible and acknowledged fetish with cultural, political and historical discourses.

Only the construction of Gabriel / Solomon’s subjectivity is narrated and a short time-lease is conceded to him, not because of his merits but due to negotiating space, before his tragic demise. An insight the exclusion policy in England has been communicated to Solomon when unbiased social officer Katherine suggests that he “go far away [since] it is not going to be easy if you stay around here” (PHILLIPS, 2003, p. 146). Solomon, therefore, tries to negotiate a humane and decent living in England by accepting the rules. Silence becomes Solomon’s strategy when he is falsely indicted of rape; good manners are Solomon’s leitmotif when no help arrives for his dying cell mate; patience is his reaction when Katherine’s husband makes a row over a Negro knocking at their door; a straight-forward attitude manifests itself in Solomon when he is given a lift by the Irishman Mike. Diagonally opposed to events in Africa where Gabriel had to fight, wound and cheat to survive, Solomon repeats the above good-manner strategy with the Andersons (the host couple), Dorothy (the lonely retired teacher) and the people of Stoneleigh (who hate

him because of his skin colour). In this imaginary land, the “motherland”, Solomon believes that he may live in a normal way in the land of the white ex-colonizing people.

Assimilation in a biased white society requires tact and patience and Solomon shows these by learning trade and car-driving with the Andersons and eliminating all physical clues to his country of origin and to his past life. The diasporic colonial subject actually “forgets” his family, his culture and its traditions to be accepted by the host country and its people (FIGUEIREDO, 1998). Erasure and minimum visibility are subjectification strategies for the African diasporic subject in a country which has historically built its identity through the hierarchization of the other and the establishment of chasms between themselves and different others. Foucault’s notions of “normality” and the “abnormal” may be surmised in *A Distant Shore* not merely from Solomon’s blackness, but also from other characters who are marked as “others” because of their difference and, consequently, second-placed. In petty-provincial Stoneleigh the female Jewish doctor and the uncanny former music teacher Dorothy are othered because of race, gender and somewhat strange behaviour (PHILLIPS, 2003, p. 9). In spite of all his politeness, the people in the village (Carla’s mother, the old man at the clinic, the barman, the hooligans) and in the town (policemen, wardens, doctors) merely perceive his blackness and close ranks in their racialized attitudes (letters with blades, excrement in the letter box, threatening attitudes) so that a deeper unbelonging is experienced by Solomon till his tragic death at the hands of the local young people. According to Hall (2003), the non-European subject (African, Caribbean, U.S. Negro) in Britain must either take a stand before the Other, maintain her/his identity and start the subjectification process in spite of hostile conditions, or s/he may assimilate her/himself to such an extent that no trace of her/his former identity remains. In the latter case, erasure would be total and complete. Similar to the characters in other contemporary British “Black” novels, such as Hortense and Gilbert in Levy’s *Small Island*, Bert Williams in Phillips’s *Dancing in the Dark*, Samad in Smith’s *White Teeth* and Dulé in Warner’s *Indigo*, Solomon accepts sly civility to shun the second option without overtly enhancing his blackness to the point of nagging British sensitiveness. In spite of these tactics, ingrained British racial reluctance and non-reducibility turn out to be dangerous and even lethal.

Dorothy’s introductory sentence “England has changed” (PHILLIPS, 2003, p. 1) and Solomon’s rhetorical question “This is England. What kind of a place did I come to? Can you tell me that?” (PHILLIPS, 2003, p. 36) explain in a nutshell not only the colonial subject’s feeling of exclusion but the metonymic environment on which racism has been built and is cultivated, and against which he can do practically nothing. The unbiased white Dorothy

feels guilty in belonging to a community which built an empire based on othering. Taking into consideration the miniature environment of her own home, Dorothy extends the racialized mentality of the British against all non-European subjects.

With Mum and Dad, for starters, both of whom disliked coloured. Dad told me that he regarded coloureds as a challenge to our English identity. [...] For him, being English was more important than being British, and being English meant no coloured. He would no more listen to me than would the teachers at school, who also hated coloureds. When people were around, they'd go on about them not really adapting well to our school system, but in private they were always "cheeky little niggers". (PHILLIPS, 2003, p. 37)

Solomon thus has to cope with and negotiate the "right to live" in hostile territory, even though he has legal papers warranting his permanence in Britain. Legal documents are a figment when Europeans and the British judge themselves as a paradigm for all. Needless to say, this has been rehearsed many times since the stratification of "races" by the Spaniards, Portuguese and Dutch in the 16th and 17th centuries and, in a special way and with special reference to Macaulay's infamous report, by the British in the 19th century.

In spite of his mimicry and sly civility put into practice through gentle manners, free trips to the hospital and a peaceful attitude, Solomon's difference produces a key significance of cultural difference and stereotype racism that intolerance becomes the issue of the day and an urgent task to be accomplished. Dorothy's stream of consciousness on the identity of racialized people who speak to her, live alongside her, sit on buses beside her shows the ubiquitous closing of ranks against the different and the other whose strategies are to no avail in the course of events. Hooligans kill Solomon after great harassment while the police and the people seem to be hushing things up. The other, almost a non-being, has not been important and if no true efforts are being made to prosecute the culprits, it is because the Other (almost synonymous with everyone) desired his demise. This is very similar to the conviction of his nothingness represented by black character Amboise in a novel by Guadelupean novelist Schwarz-Bart (1986). Solomon's tragic end, intimating that Britain is a dangerous place for non-whites, is bleaker than Hortense's and Abdu's future (respectively in Levy's *Small Island* and Gordimer's *The Pickup*), both of whom defiantly face racial bias ingrained in Western society. Solomon's failure in co-living, due to overwhelming racial pressure, demonstrates the permanence of a multicultural community still nurturing colour-structured hierarchization.

CONCLUSION

The representation of the Negro subject and his/her subjectivity in the novels of Kittitian Caryl Phillips is bleaker than one might expect. If blackness is taken as a metonymy of marginalization and negotiating a co-existence between white and black peoples as a strategy for inclusion and a re-vision of identity, the situation may be more disillusioning still. On the theoretical level, the Négritude and Garveyite movements have long been surpassed and Gilroy's concept of the "Black Atlantic", shunning "nationalist and ethnically absolute approaches" and advancing toward "an explicitly transnational and intercultural perspective", focusing on "the structure of the African diaspora into the Western hemisphere" (GILROY, 2001, p. 15) may be a way to achieve inclusion if individual attitudes are insisted on in fiction and in the literature. In fact, racism and exclusion may be disrupted by the community-building stance and Negro subjectivity reintegrated as a *sine qua non* theme in awareness-raising. Although Joyce's selfish husband Len calls her "a traitor to [her] own kind" (PHILLIPS, 1993, p. 217), namely to British whiteness and identity; although Dorothy's non-biased attitudes are incomprehensible to her parents and neighbours to the point of remarking that "abandonment is a state that is not alien to man" (PHILLIPS, 2003, p. 208); although Bertram is aware of the no-return attitude of the eagle-sided "independent" country, a sort of process of inclusion has already been provided by many Black British writers.

In all his pessimism about British reluctance to build a multicultural and multi-ethnic society, Phillips characteristically hints at community-building for the recovery of Negro subjectivity in a globalized and excluding world environment. Even in his direst novels, he seems to have in mind Hooks's words: "Sensibilities [exist] which are shared across the boundaries of class, gender and race, and which could be fertile ground for the construction of empathy – ties that would promote recognition of common commitments and serve as a basis for solidarity and coalition" (HOOKS, 1990, p. 27). In all three novels analyzed the agency of the Negro subject is highlighted even though the environment is hostile and exclusive (WARD, 2007). Patsy, Mike, the Andersons, Dorothy, Joyce establish a milieu where the Negro burdened with "a past he no longer wishes to be reminded of" (PHILLIPS, 2003, p. 237) can act through his subjectivity to find a space that would "provide the occasion for new and varied forms of bonding" (HOOKS, 1990, p. 31). This type of community building lies within the bonding and altruistic tradition of Warner's Caribbean *Serafine* in *Indigo* that puts to shame the imperial and disruptive discourses of racialized people who refuse to go

beyond the marginalization they think is the slave-descendant (African, Caribbean, U.S. Negro, Brazilian mulatto) offspring's lot.

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