

Chapter III

Geographic, Cultural, Social and Mnemonic Spaces: Displacement and the Vexing Question of Belonging in Caryl Phillips's Fiction

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J. M. Coetzee, while discussing Caryl Phillips's fiction, observes that the idea of 'home' and 'belonging' in Phillips's fiction resonates with "the history of persecution and victimization in the West" (Rabalais 182). Coetzee's remarks directly inform on Phillips's preoccupation with the traumatic experiences of displacement and dislocation generated by various historical events like transatlantic slavery, Jewish Holocaust and the consequent migrations of people in search of a 'home.' While Phillips focuses on the displacements and the movements of people caught up in slavery and Holocaust, he also pays significant amount of attention to the contemporary migrations that are inextricably linked with some of the important global issues like civil wars, genocide and national calamities. Most of Phillips's works reproduce these experiences of displacements and perpetual movements of people from their homelands to the uncertainties of England. In this context Ivan Kreilkamp mentions, "Caryl Phillips's fiction is about historical transit, about people travelling from birthplace to homeland, or from homeland to places unknown" (44). Phillips fundamentally uses 'migratory condition' as a subject matter in his fictional works to emphasise the sense of displacement and dislocation of his protagonists. To him, this diasporic consciousness in his characters challenges the conceptual limits imposed by national, ethnic and racial boundaries, and offers an alternative choice of 'routes' in place of 'roots.

Though the above displacements and movements present a number of significant material challenges to the migrants and refugees, Phillips's major concern in his fiction is to explore the psychic damages these displacements and constant migrations create. By declaring his firm commitment to examine these psychological vexations of displacement and issues of belonging, Phillips endorses the above observation made by Coetzee, "I'm much more concerned with lives, loneliness, isolation and grappling with the meaning of 'home'" (Rabalais 182). Phillips recognises that 'displacement' occurs in multiple ways and the vast stage of history opens before him not only the geographical displacement, but also subsequent displacements it produces in social, cultural, mnemonic and psychic spaces. In Phillips's view, to those who are dislocated and displaced from their geography, society, culture and history, the psychological displacement comes as easily as possible, leaving them in a permanent psychological vexation. The present chapter addresses these psychological complexities and vexations associated with such displacements and dislocations and the ensuing apprehension and disorientation of his characters.

Caryl Phillips's first novel *The Final Passage* (1985) is a typical narrative of displacement with its atmosphere rooted in the postcolonial conditions of West Indian islands. As the title of the novel *The Final Passage* indicates, the life of nineteen-year-old Leila Preston, its protagonist, is on constant movements, passages and exiles suggesting her continuous displacements and dislocations. Fixed between a loveless marriage and an egotistic husband, Leila decides to escape the depressingly pervasive disillusionment and dead-end life of her island to the promising spaces of 'Mother country' England. The migrating desire of

Leila and her family unfolds at the backdrop of a wave of migrations of ‘Windrush generation’ of West Indians to England during the 1950s, which is, as Louise Bennett says, almost like “Colonization in reverse” (qtd in Jones 52). Rampaged by colonialism and its decadent circumstances, the West Indian island of Leila becomes unsuitable for living. It appears desolate and depressing with its “defeated faces that lined [the] streets, men in grease–stained felt hats and women in deceptively gay bandannas, their eyes glazed, arms folded, standing, leaning, resting up against the zinc fencing of their front yards, their children playing, racing scraps of wood in liquid sewage” (*FP* 98). West Indians had, in effect, an exilic life in their own land as everything of theirs had been displaced and rendered strange and different by colonialism. Phillips captures these moments of (post)colonial conditions of West Indian islands as the befitting backdrop to tell the tales of Leila. As Benedicte Ledent notes, “... most of [Phillips’s] characters are displaced people who are trying to come to grips with the ambiguities of an intricate fate made up of dispossession, disruption, and dislocation, all experiences that are part and parcel of Caribbean history” (“Cary Phillips and the Caribbean” 80).

Having not attained the political freedom even during the 1950s, colonialism had clearly oozed out everything substantial in the West Indian island and in the lives of people like Leila’s husband Michael. Living in a society that has been left bleak and desolate by the legacy of colonialism, people like Michael have become disoriented and disillusioned. Lack of a job and difficulties for money take Michael to drinking and his life revolves round sheer negligence and irresponsibility arising out of such conditions. The disintegration and

disorientation in their life associated with the consequences of colonialism evidently reverberate in their family life as well, which finally compel Leila to think of travelling to England. While many of the people hesitated to leave their island, to many others, the wave of migrations brought forth many opportunities to grow both economically and socially. However, a sense of uncertainty and ambiguity is evident in the voice of Michael: “Leaving this place going make me feel old, you know, like leaving the safety of your family to go live with strangers” (*FP* 11). He becomes apprehensive of the consequences of their passage from the familiarity of their island to the strangeness of England, while profoundly anticipating a sense of displacement and uprootedness. Nevertheless, Leila could never feel comfortable in the island as her personal life and the public life were intricately tied with psychological conflicts. In one way, Leila’s life in the island becomes similar to the one that V.S. Naipaul describes about the West Indian situation – “exile at home” (Weiss 164). The difficult life in the island offers Leila no comforts and promises and therefore, it never contains a space for belonging or ‘home,’ but rather a ‘life in exile’ situation that complicates her life. However, in general, by an escape from these marginalised spaces and ‘exilic’ situations of the island, people in the West Indian islands anticipated freedom and opportunities. Later on, a more thoughtful Michael reflects, “We both decide it’s a new life for us over there so we just going come back when we come back. Not enough space to grow or do things here” (*FP* 103).

Finally, Leila begins her journey to England with her irresponsible and philandering husband Michael and their young son Calvin. Benedicte Ledent makes a significant observation with regard to Leila’s journey. She says, “...the

journey to England is not a fresh beginning, but the somewhat logical follow up to centuries of exploitation” (*Caryl Phillips: Contemporary World Writers* 28). To Leila, the movement from the island’s colonised landscape to England, the cosmopolitan centre, therefore, is expected to be an act of “arrival at the centre: hence freedom from exile” (Weiss 164). She believes that this would enable her to forgo and forget a deadening colonial history of her island. Accordingly, Leila decides to leave everything behind that would remind her of this colonial condition, including her ‘mental space’ – her traumatising memories associated with colonialism and dissolution in the island. While she stuffs her bag the night before they leave for England, Leila is careful that “... she must take as little as possible with her to remind her of the island” (*FP* 15). This keenness to make a ‘scission’ or ‘break’ with one’s land and history is symptomatic of the psychological effect of postcolonial conditions and its resultant sense of displacement. Coming to Britain, what Leila anticipates to do there, is to redefine and redraw the boundaries of ‘home’ that had been already under constraints in her island. One of the legacies of colonialism in the colonies of Britain has been a successful inculcation of an ‘idealistic’ picture or ‘a myth’ about Britain as the ‘Mother country.’ Therefore, a life in Britain is expected to be like a life of children with their mother. In the light of a postcolonial reading, one would consider Britain also as a rightful place for the people from the former colonies due to Britain’s involvement in constructing the postcolonial conditions of their colonies. This point is highlighted by Paul Gilroy in *There Ain’t No Black in the Union Jack*, “We are here because you were there” (286). By this, he brings to the attention of the imperial countries a specific invocation of truth that the influx of

migrants to the imperial countries is the consequences of those colonial histories in their territories.

After many days of voyage across the Atlantic, they reach in London. Moving to one of the poor pockets of London's corner, Leila is initially dismayed at what she finds there. The first shock at the sight of a poverty-stricken area of their living actually destabilises her desires to seek a 'home' or 'belonging' in England, because "...everything seemed bleak" (*FP* 142). She is confounded by the strange looks and disinterested attitudes around her that betrays her belief in Britain's success and grandeur. She wonders, "...what else her mother had left unsaid" (*FP* 151) about England. This sudden reality of depravity and poverty leads to a deepening sense of alienation and displacement in Leila. England that has been dreamt of and told about is different now for her with its colourless and unwelcoming circumstances. The sense of alienation that she experiences in England is combined with its discriminatory housing practices that prevent the blacks from renting the houses. The graffiti on the walls reads, "'No coloureds,' 'No Vacancies,' 'No children'" (*FP* 155), "'No vacancies for coloureds.' 'No Blacks.' 'No coloureds'" (*FP* 156). A dreadful awareness that England categorises people based on race and class distinctions makes her even more disoriented.

Leila realises now that the "emigration to the centre was a form of exile" (Weiss 164) as George Lamming (1927), one of the Windrush generation writers observes. As a result, she lives in a perpetual state of fretfulness and contradictions, and finds herself caught up between two deadening situations of exilic life at both the center and the periphery. As bell hooks argues that in times of displacement, "home is no longer just one place. It is locations.... One

confronts and accepts dispersal and fragmentation as part of the constructions of a new world order that reveals more fully where we are, who we can become” (148). To a disoriented Leila, the implication of what her mother, who travels to England for medical care, tells before her death becomes more predictive, “Leila, child, London is not my *home* ... and I don’t want you to forget that either” (*FP* 124; emphasis added). In the same vein, the narrator of the story observes, “England, in whom she placed so much of her hope, no longer held for her the attraction of her mother and new challenges” (*FP* 203). Ledent observes, “... a journey to Britain does not magically cure the malaise inherited from colonialism. On the contrary, it only seems to make it worse in the shorter term” (*Caryl Phillips: Contemporary World Writers* 25). However, the journey that Leila undertakes to England only accelerates the rapidity of her sense of displacement and disintegration that has been traumatising her psyche for a long time. Benedicte Ledent also examines the problematics involved in the mystification of England with ‘Mother country,’

This ambivalent equation of the mother with the colonial power is a measure of the predicament of the colonial migrant who feels attracted by the Mother Country with whom (s)he entertains the dream of a symbolic relationship. Yet the expected coming together never materializes once in Britain, and what the colonial experiences is a feeling of rejection akin to that felt by the child repudiated by his/her parents. (*Caryl Phillips: Contemporary World Writers* 28)

As Victoria Arana observes, “Britain opened the door to the Empire, but certainly did not expect the colonials to come, to stay, and to expect the same life

that the Anglo–Saxons themselves enjoyed” (1). Having experienced a sense of displacement and disorientation in ‘Mother country,’ Leila is again preparing to return, as the novel suggests towards the end, to her homeland. Once again, in England she attempts to wipe out every traces of her memories, which she does before her departure to England, by feeding “the fire with the objects and garments that reminded her of five months in England” (*FP* 200). Though the migrations have provided Leila with some excruciating experiences, they reveal her the contradictions inherent in the idea of ‘home’ and belonging under postcolonial conditions. Essentially, in Leila’s life neither Caribbean nor England offers her a satisfactory space to ‘belong.’ As Benedicte Ledent mentions, “All [of Phillips’s] characters, both black and white, are indeed torn by double sense of belonging and unbelonging, divided between a painful past and unwelcoming present, unable to find a place they can definitely call ‘home’” (“Ambiguous Visions” 198). Paul Gilroy discusses a similar predicament that migrants like Leila confront by examining the concepts of “‘routes’ and ‘roots’” (*Black Atlantic* 190). To Gilroy, the concept of dynamic ‘routes’ as opposed to static ‘roots,’ primarily suggest the fluid conditions and impermanent nature of travels and movements of postcolonial migrant, while it foretells the unavailability of a unique experience of ‘home’ as well. In Leila’s case, as one who participates in the historic Atlantic passages and constant movements of her ancestors, her continuous travels and migrations represent the complex way of defining her black identity. Such an experience of postcolonial subject’s inability to belong to either space is also clearly articulated by Salman Rushdie when he says, “Sometimes we feel that we straddle two cultures; at other times, that we fall between two stools” (15). Rushdie’s

observation explains Leila's psychological disorientation incurred through her constant displacements and dislocations. In his interview with Paula Goldman, Phillips observes, "The end result of embracing the notion of 'home' in romantic fashion may be kind of nonsensical or difficult to take on board as realistic ..." (89). Phillips clearly shows that under postcolonial conditions, a search for 'home' or 'belonging' can never meet with an absolute and essential point of certainties, but rather it continually produces successive displacements and associated psychological vexations.

The experiences of displacement and belonging become still more bleak and cold in Phillips's second novel *A State of Independence* (1986). As seen closely, the novel resonates partly autobiographical as *The Final Passage*. If *The Final Passage* was related to Phillips's memories of his parents' generation and his own migration at an early age similar to that of Leila's son Calvin to England, the focal point in his second novel is his own predicament in returning to St. Kitts, his birthplace after several years. In *The Final Passage*, it was the protagonist's journey to England leaving her homeland to find a 'home' in England, but in *A State of Independence*, the journey is made from England to protagonist's previous homeland in West Indian island. As the first novel articulates the experiences of exile and displacement in a foreign land, the second novel conveys in a more poignant manner the displacement and exilic life in one's own homeland. Benedicte Ledent notes, "... *A State of Independence* ... resolutely turned toward the Caribbean and focuses on the returnee's difficulty in coming to terms with what he used to think of as 'home'" (*Caryl Phillips: Contemporary World Writers* 42). To feel deeply displaced in one's own land becomes more excruciating, while

one leaves behind the uncertain conditions of a foreign land and opts for homeland. Avtar Brah remarks that home is a mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination, which is a place of no return, even if it is possible to visit the geographical territory that is seen as the place of 'origin' (189). This experience of being a stranger in one's own land makes the protagonist of *A State of Independence* psychologically more disoriented.

After having gone to England on receiving a coveted scholarship, Bertram Francis seems to have gone disorientated during his stay over there, and as a result, he performs poorly in his studies. During the initial days of his life in England, he becomes an enthusiastic and vigorous person, but a sense of frustration holds him back as his attempts to understand the white people are not reciprocated. This failure in experiencing participation and belonging in an 'imagined community' of England is what actually causes his predicament in England. Coining the term 'imagined communities,' Benedict Anderson notes that nations are imagined because regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each country, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship (7). Bertram fails to experience this comradeship in England. He reflects:

Europeans were like hurricanes, unpredictable, always causing trouble, always talked about, a natural disaster it was impossible to insure against ... [all he could bring to mind was] ... the frustration of trying to understand a people who showed no interest in understanding him. (*ASI* 151)

A cold stalemate between two worlds of dissimilarities puts him under psychological pressures and conflicts. A sense of being socially displaced makes Bertram more confounded and so his efforts to create a sociable relationship with the white world meet with frustration. This initial set back pushes him backward in his studies and keeps his performances poor to the point of being ousted from the university. Already displaced physically from his homeland, his attempts were to re-imagine a 'community' in England where he could feel at 'home.' The frustration emerging out of it and the resultant sense of displacement disrupt his psychic stability and put him under constant constraints. Once dismissed, the only way out for him is to get back to his West Indian homeland, but a sense of shame and humiliation overwhelms him so intensely that he delays it for twenty years. But, during this time he frantically engages at various jobs in England due to his inability to go back to his own land.

During the lapse of these twenty years, Bertram remains cut off from his family having no communication with them to the extent that he becomes even unaware of his only brother's premature death. He remains totally disconnected and displaced from his past, his home and hi(s)tory. The essential problem with Bertram appears to be his powerlessness to enter a relationship again and relate to his family and social environment. His psychological stress becomes very intense that in order to escape the recurrent memories of his family he relies on a deliberate 'forgetting,' a psychological defense mechanism. As the family photograph he carries with him reminds him of his sense of guilt and dislocation, he is forced to abandon them, an act that he believes would erase the memories of his family and keep him out of a looming sense of shame. The narrator observes,

“... for they had become a reminder of loneliness as opposed to a temporary cure” (*ASI* 152). The situation reminds one of the Freudian psychoanalytic concepts of ‘repression.’ According to Freud, “repression is a primary mechanism of defense, comparable to an attempt of flight” (Gay 18). In repression, people repress or drive from their conscious minds, shameful thoughts that, it subsequently becomes unconscious (Billig 1). In Bertram’s case, he deliberately ejects the shameful, guilt-laden memories of his past life into the unconscious territories of mind. He destroys not only the family photograph, but also attempts to discard a lot more memories of his past, his family and his homeland. For Bertram, nostalgia for home is associated with pain and loss, and the panacea that he discovers to overcome it is ‘forgetfulness’ rather than remembering and connecting with them. Therefore, one finds that his psyche is fixed between two contrary positions; a longing for his homeland but a simultaneous sense of dislike for it.

At last, twenty years of deliberations and negotiations with his own conscience bring him back to his homeland. But he is cautious not to be distressed by “... the feelings of guilt that lay inside him” (*ASI* 9). At the airport, from the emigration officer, and at home from his mother he receives the initial shock of estrangement. The emigration officer asks him, “How long you planning on staying here?” (*ASI* 12). Later on, he has to confront his mother’s pitiless question, almost in the same vein, “And when you planning on taking off again?” (*ASI* 49). “For a moment he could not admit to himself that he was *home*” (*ASI* 18–19; emphasis added). The realisation that his mother spoke to him “with an open contempt” (*ASI* 50) relegates him to the position of an ambivalent ‘outsider’ and ‘marginalised’ in his own home.

In addition to that, in view of becoming a part of his burgeoning country and establishing a new business "... that don't make [him] dependent upon the white man" (*ASI* 50), he thinks of financially investing in his country, but is spurned away, to his dismay, by everyone. What matters in Bertram's case is that his failure to maintain connections and relationships causes his being refused by others. In Bertram's case, as Roberta Rubenstein argues, "Belonging is a relational, reciprocal condition that encompasses connection and community: not only being taken care of but taking care" (4). This reciprocity – 'taking care of', undoubtedly, has been a missing element in the life of Bertram. This state of unacceptability in his homeland situates him within the boundaries of a psychological limbo. After his arrival in the island his 'home' becomes no more a space of nostalgia and belonging, but rather it becomes a space of psychological suffering. He considers his mother's act of ousting him as most awful and traumatic at a time when he most deeply desires to belong. His mother's instruction is to "...either go back to wherever it is you come from, or ... you must find a next place to live..." (*ASI* 85). To Bertram, they have been the moments of a larger estrangement and under such situation, 'home' transcends geographical locations, as there is no more 'home' of his mother and his brother Dominic. Therefore, for Bertram, both the past and the present are complicatedly fractured, while his future is eclipsed by his past and present life.

In fact, what Bertram is trying to recover now is not a physical space of home, but rather a cultural and psychological space where he could significantly belong to. As Ledent observes "... [Bertram's] exile, which he thought of only in geographical terms, has actually turned into a cultural and psychological

alienation, making him feel like a tourist in his own country” (*Caryl Phillips: Contemporary World Writers* 50). He continues to make efforts to gain access to his community through his former close-circle of friends. In the absence of Dominic and mother, the options left open before him are Jackson Clayton, his childhood friend and Patsy his previous lover. Jackson who “... had been as close to him as his brother, Dominic” (*ASI* 137) is now the Deputy Prime Minister as well as a minister of agriculture, lands, housing, labor and tourism. But Jackson spurns away Bertram’s request for a hand in his attempt to invest in a business. Ostensibly, Jackson’s question is, ““what do you have to offer us? What is about yourself that you think might be of some benefit to our young country?”” (*ASI* 110). Bertram realises his helplessness “to his horror ...” (*ASI* 113) and in a desperate frame of mind, he tries to convince Jackson of his own roots in the island, ““I was born here, and grew up here just like you” (*ASI* 111); “This is my island too, Jackson”” (*ASI* 113). But, Jackson rebuffs at Bertram’s claims of belonging by pointing out his divided position as an ‘English–West Indian.’

‘You English West Indians should just come back here to retire and sit in the sun. Don’t waste your time trying to get into the fabric of the society for you are made of the wrong material for the modern Caribbean. You all do think too fast and too crazy, like we should welcome you back as lost brothers...’ (*ASI* 136).

According to Jackson, two aspects essentially deter Bertram’s entry into the society. First, the returnee has been reformed himself into a non–Caribbean, essentially a hybridised ‘English–West Indian’ and this identity of being Western, no more offers him a welcome note. Bertram’s dramatic entry happens at a

moment when the country is trying to shed off its shackles of colonialism. Second, it is related to the reception of the returnees in a sense of welcoming back ‘the long–lost children of home.’ In Jackson’s view, such sympathetic concern is immaterial as the Westernised–Caribbean is an ‘outsider’ as well as a ‘representation’ of Western coloniser. However, the only person in the novel seen to be offering some comfort to Bertram is his old lover Patsy whom he forgets during his stay in England.

Oscillating between his sense of ‘desire’ and ‘denial,’ Bertram is in a perpetual state of exile and disconnectedness and he “... was desperate that he should not appear either lost or rootless on his own island” (*ASI* 145). In the island, since a negotiating space is found impossible, Bertram does not totally discard the possibility of a turning back to England again, but he feels ashamed of this project. “I really have nothing to go back to in England, [but] I don’t yet feel at home back here either” (*ASI* 152). With each journey of displacement, the degree of intensity of psychological disintegration shoots up. Bertram tries to hold a grip over these continually emerging ambiguities of his displacements and uprootedness. Roger Bromley argues that it is crucial that the migrant should be able to find space to construct an identity that can accommodate what he or she once was and is now supposed to be – an identity that is somewhere in–between (66). This uncertainty and ambiguity in the case of Bertram, suspended above the notions of re–rootedness, makes him an exile again in his homeland. As Elena Machado Saez notes, “Faced with the image of a perpetual migrant, Bertram is confronted with potentially dismal future: the never–ending journey of the homeless” (33). These displacement and disavowal take place in Bertram

simultaneously and endlessly ‘within’ and ‘without’ his person, and he never seems to be redeemed from this continuous sense of alienation. Thus, as the title of the novel indicates, Bertram’s psychological and physical ‘state of independence’ remains challenged and ambiguous and it moves on to further displacements.

Phillips’s fifth novel *Crossing the River* resonates with multiple levels of displacements, separations and losses, the hallmarks of slavery. The novel explicates how in a system transatlantic slavery, the definitions of nation, culture and family relationships are displaced and rendered into new formations for the African descendants. According to Carol Margaret Davison, *Crossing the River* is an explication of a “... sophisticated, sometimes–sorrowful meditation upon the painful dislocations, longings and ‘weird’ relationships borne of the aptly named ‘peculiar institution’ of slavery” (20). The entire narrative of the novel is fitted into the framework of the reminiscence of a guilt–laden conscience of a mythical African father who sells his three children subsequent to the failure of crops, while the narrative of each of the children becomes the “many–tongued chorus” (*CR* 1). The African father and his three children become the archetypal images for Africa and its displaced people through slavery, and their accounts provide light into the nature of displacements and disseminations of Africans in the history. In this context, Yogita Goyal comments, “Africa has no contemporary existence. Guilt–ridden due to its complicity, it is cast outside history and time, ossified in the primal moment, birthing the diaspora through this act of betrayal” (“Theorizing Africa in Black Diaspora Studies” 18). In the same way, the three protagonists Nash Williams, Martha and Travis in the novel may not to be identified with the same children sold by the African father at the beginning on the white beach, but

rather they form the archetypal images for the African slaves who are dispersed in the history.

The displacement of African slaves, as is informed by the mythical father, originates at the “shameful intercourse” of bartering the African children, “their warm flesh” exchanged for cold goods (*CR* 1). Since then it transpires that the perpetual displacements and diaspora become a part of the long history of African descendants. The novel tells various significant moments in the African diaspora, in which they are marked by multiple losses, separations and desertions. Essentially, this experience of displacements and dispersions forecloses the possibility for the African descendants of a return to the original native land, as there is “No sign posts. There is no return. To a land trampled by the muddy boots of others. To a people encouraged to war among themselves. To a father consumed with guilt. You are beyond. Broken–off, like limbs from a tree” (*CR* 2). According to Carol Margaret Davison, this peculiar mode of displacement and the subsequent psychological trauma of a sense of desertion of the African descendants across the ages and history is reflected and reiterated in the novel through the Biblical cry of “Father, why hast thou forsaken me?” (95). What transpires at the end of these irrevocable dislocations and disseminations is that they are all linked across the space and time by transcending and intersecting the racial barriers, national borders and cultural boundaries traditionally imposed upon them. But, according to Yogita Goyal, it is neither the memory of slavery that brings these descendants together, nor suffering nor the experience of the middle passage, nor a qualified access to modernity, nor double consciousness rather it is

the simple fact of being born in Africa (“Theorizing Africa in Black Diaspora Studies” 17).

The story of Nash Williams, an ex-slave in the first section of “The Pagan Coast” in *Crossing the River*, revolves round various displacements and separations of relationships. As repatriated in 1830s by the American Colonization Society, Nash experiences the pain of severing the bonds with America and his benevolent father-master, Edward Williams. Generally, the repatriation of the liberated slaves to Liberia is coupled with multiple stages of displacements and disruptions as it had been in the case of African slaves in the Middle Passages. While repatriation programmes created massive levels of problems for the liberated slaves, for America, the repatriation programme served two important purposes behind the facade of evangelisation. The narrator in the section examines this point:

But [Americans] hoped that the natives would see reason, and that the prospect of welcoming home their lost children might help to overcome any unpleasant cultural estrangement that the African heathens might temporarily experience. ... [As well as] America would be removing a cause of increasing social stress, and Africa would be civilized by the return of her descendants. (CR 8–9)

Benjamin G. Dennis and Anita K. Dennis observe that the real goal of the society was to rid America of the “Negro problem” (10). But, while promoting this repatriation programme, many of the blacks hesitated to cooperate with the project whole-heartedly because they had dreamt of building up a new life in America

after the civil war, and the forced repatriation cast a shadow over their hopes. For Phillips, repatriation of slaves to Liberia resembled Britain's project of repatriating slaves to Sierra Leone. In one of his articles, Phillips conveys his dislike at what the British did in Sierra Leone to get rid of the 'problem' of 'black cargo' and a number of black people on the streets of London ("Distant Voices"). For Nash, leaving America for Liberia provides number problems, including leaving the familiarity of American society to the strangeness of Liberia, a new country. It is not enough that he merely goes and starts teaching the tribes around the interior of Saint Paul's River in Liberia, but rather he, along with others, is supposed to build up the new country in manifold ways. He recognises the challenges and difficulties in such a task imposed upon him. Despite posing himself initially as one of the 'whites,' this self-assumed position is seen to be of no help to him for a survival in Liberia. Thus, the geographical dislocation in the case of Nash as a freed slave provides enormous psychic pressures and fears.

Not only is Nash displaced geographically, but also he is disjointed from various relationships and connections. As a child of slave parents, he is uprooted from his parents at an early age and brought up under the benevolence of his master Edward Williams, whose relationship with Nash raises some homosexual overtones. Nash is taught to hold his master Edward in the highest regard and so he addresses him variously including 'father.' This unnatural paternal-filial relationship grows to the extent of culminating in the guilt-laden conscience of Edward Williams in sending Nash to the land of Liberia. However, an unexpected severance of their unusual relationship occurs, when Nash is repatriated to Liberia. The letters that Nash sends to Edward Williams from Liberia testifies to their

former illicit relationships. Gail Low notes, “The complex relation between (former) slave and master is the covert subject of all of Nash Williams’ letters and of Edward's ruminations” (134). Edward’s wife Amelia suspects their ‘unusual’ affair and attempts to sabotage the communication between Nash and Edward by destroying the letters before it goes to the hands of Edward. Finally, understanding that the relationship cannot be ended, Amelia commits suicide. However, Edward’s feelings of love and his desire for ‘Nash’ explain why Edward, when he receives a letter that informs the disappearance of Nash, travels to Liberia in search of him. This relationship with Edward has tremendous effects in his personal life. Nowhere in his narrative, has he referred to his actual parents. Such a relationship established with Edward essentially severs his ties with his own parents and it goes to extent of erasing his every knowledge and memory about them. On the contrary, when Nash realises that Edward Williams does not respond to the correspondences, he experiences a sense of abandonment and subsequently goes disillusioned in Liberia. Thus, when Nash enters new relationships and connections, there are also blood relationships that are undermined and disconnected. This aspect of relationship compels Gail Low to observe that “The Pagan Coast” is, in part, an exploration of kinship, desire and connectedness (135).

While in America, Nash is meticulously educated in the Christian principles and English language. By wearing the mask of American cultural life, he makes his cultural erasure, complete. This disjunction between his true African self and his newly masked American self constructs his psychological alienation. Having sent to Liberia, Nash experiences the consequences of his excessive assimilation into the American cultural life. The most complex aspect for Nash in

Liberia, at a later stage, is that he realises that American life cannot be compatible with a life in African Liberia. Therefore, this predicament leads him to abandon American life and embrace polygamy and heathen worshipping. Essentially, by an imposed journey on Nash, his unique cultural experiences, national borders and identity formations are all challenged and rendered into new paradigms, which constitute his diasporic black identity. Although Nash embraces African cultural life at the end, his transformation cannot be taken as an instance of his arriving at 'home,' because of the persistent transformations and contradictions taking place in his life. To Caryl Phillips, the idea of a back-to-Africa policy in which the diasporic black tradition is essentially tied to its 'roots' is inconceivable. He raises doubts on the authenticity of having an absolute and unique African cultural 'belonging' and experience for the black diaspora. In one of his interviews, Phillips argues, "One can never go back. The old Garveyite dream of returning to Africa makes no sense" (Sharpe 30). Phillips here refers to Marcus Garvey (1887 – 1940), an important figure in African history, who stood for the political, economic, religious, educational and cultural independence of Africans. Being part of centuries-long black diaspora, Garvey's mission involved in seeking to bring back the Africans to their original land. However, the impossibility of this mission is emphasised by Phillips through the narrative voice of the African father at the end of the novel: "There are no paths in the water, No signposts, There is no return" (CR 237).

The section "West" in *Crossing the River* (1993) represents the persistent displacements of Martha as a runaway slave. She struggles between displacements and quests for 'belonging' or in other words, a search for relationship with her

kinship folk. The story explicates the idea that for those who are involved in the diaspora, the experience of ‘belonging’ or ‘home,’ especially in the community life, is a contested and deferred state. As a slave woman she remains separated and psychologically stranded from the early days of her life. The mythical father in *Crossing the River* sells her at “... a smooth white beach where a trembling girl waited with two boys and a man standing off, a ship. Her journey had been a long one. But, the sun had set. Her course was run. Father, why hast thou forsaken me?” (CR 73; emphasis original). Martha’s story accentuates the history of displacement of African slave women caught up in transatlantic slavery where their notions of kinships and family relationships remain blurred. For the slaves, often the small family units are the only means of alleviating their daylong suffering and pain. With the rupture of these family ties, the trajectory of their life often runs a difficult course through multiple displacements and psychological havocs. Martha is a slave sold at Virginia auction block where she is awfully uprooted from her husband Lucas and little child Eliza Mae. Her suffering becomes pathetically escalating at the parting of her little child whose memories grapple her fretful survival.

I did not suckle this child at the breast, nor did I cradle her in my arms and shower her with what love I have, to see her taken away from me.... 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 76–77)

Martha's life is spun along the lines of long displacements. Her fleeing to the world of freedom from Hoffmans' does not provide her any substantial amount of comfort when viewed against the absence of attachments and relationships. She wonders, "If freedom was more important than love, and indeed if love was at all possible without somebody taking it from her" (CR 86). Therefore, Martha's each journey becomes stirred by this relentless search for attachments. In her words, "I didn't need no help, I just needed some companionship, that's all" (CR 83). Moreover, this tragically woven thread of survival enables her to redefine and reposition the borders of her kinship ties to include Lucy and Chester, whom she meets on her travels, into the circle of her 'kinships.' As Gail Low remarks, "She finds other daughters (Lucy) and other husbands (Chester) and they all echo her original family" (135–36). Phillips's novels demonstrate that the separations from kinships that produce constant struggles to make reunions or an alternative structuring of kinship borders is characteristic pattern of the postcolonial displacements. Under such patterns, for Martha, the painful past is temporarily lightened by Chester with whom she weaves a happy life for a short period. Martha reflects, "This man has made me forget – that's a gift from above" (CR 84). After the death of Chester, she joins the African pioneers to California and becomes "part of the colored exodus that was heading west" (CR 87). These recurrent displacements and journeys of Martha are primarily owing to her position as a slave woman. As regarding the postcolonial subject, the displacements characteristically offer never-ending predicaments, and the resultant losses and separations of family bonds cause psychological estrangement and loneliness. All the slave characters like Nash Williams in "Pagan Coast" and

Cambridge in the eponymous novel, the collaborator in *Higher Ground* and Martha in “West” undergo almost similar experiences of separations and disjunctions. Clarence Major notes that *Crossing the River* leaves an impression that the black people in the diaspora have the same troubled common ancestral roots in Africa (173). All the African blacks trapped in the system of slavery experience this displacement and dislocation.

Phillips, very sympathetically takes up the concerns of African woman as a mother and a wife under the system of slavery. Even after twenty–five years of Martha’s escape to freedom she is “assaulted by loneliness and drifting into middle age without a family” (CR 79). The displacements and separations are harder than death for her, as her husband reminds her before being taken to the auction block. He confessed, “...death would be easier...” (CR 76). With each loss of companionship her sense of isolation and loneliness are intensified and deepened. Martha’s journey is allegorically an exodus, a journey from her desolation and destitution to the ‘Promised Land’ of California where she hopes to join her kindred folk in building up a community and not being a stranger any more.

... prospecting for a new life without having to pay no heed to the white man and his ways. Prospecting for a place where things were a little better than bad, and where you weren’t always looking over your shoulder and wondering when somebody was going to do you wrong. Prospecting for a place where your 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 73–74)

However, withered by isolation and early age, she realises her own inability to meet the “promised land” for she feels, “...my own state became perilous, racked as I was with exhaustion” (CR 91). Unable to proceed with the pioneers, she is left alone by them at Denver on a chilling day of snowfall where she dies ironically at the hands of a white woman. In her doctoral thesis, Elena Machado Saez argues that the concept of community via migration in the case of Martha is precisely the myth that Phillips seeks to demystify within his texts (203). Her attempts to get a grip on her ‘home’– the relationships become futile in successive displacements created by slavery.

Caryl Phillips, by engaging the history of the Jews, looks at human oppression and victimisation beyond the barriers of race, colour, class and gender. Interlacing the psychological issues of both the African descendants of slavery and the Jewish Holocaust, he proceeds to enter the impacts of European colonial activities. ‘Diaspora’ as a concept is related to the dispersal of the Jews after the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC and as Robin Cohen emphasises that it refers “... in particular the experience of enslavement, exile and displacement” (508). As it has been widely used in the postcolonial studies, its meaning remains expanded to include great migratory movements produced by colonialism and its repercussions. In the section “Higher Ground,” with the same title of the novel, Phillips explores various moments of displacements caused by Jewish Holocaust. As Phillips does not enter the details of Holocaust, his main concern is how such mechanised systems of persecution exert massive forms of displacements in the lives of people who directly or indirectly have been affected by it. Wendy Zierler accuses Phillips for this act of evading from directly dealing with the crucial

problems in Holocaust in “Higher Ground.” In her words, “... Phillips shies away from directly depicting the Holocaust, enshrouding Irene’s story in so much hazy description...” (61). But his treatment of Irena/Irene as a victim of European racist ideologies and her ensuing displacements shows how such colonial acts like ‘Final Solution’ can displace the lives of innocent people. The two names Irina/Irene denote the same person “whose two selves can never be reconciled after being torn apart by exile” (Ledent, *Caryl Phillips: Contemporary World Writers* 59). *The Nature of Blood* presents the story of a German Jewish girl Eva Stern who survives the Nazi concentration camp and ‘liberated to permanent dislocations.’ In both cases of Irena/Irene and Eva, they suffer from the deprivation of their psychological equilibrium and go mad, which explains enough the extent of trauma and suffering they undergo due to their geographical and psychological displacements, as well as due to their separations from their families. One notices a number of similarities between their stories, their initial dislocations, exiles to strange places and inability to survive the trauma of the past and the present. Finally, both the victims remain psychologically unhinged.

The section “Higher Ground” in the novel *Higher Ground* explores the displacement and the psychological vexation engendered in the Polish Jews during the days of Jewish Holocaust. It particularly exposes the trauma of displacement and victimisation of Irena/ Irene, a Jewish refugee girl who escapes the Nazis from Poland. She finally ends up distressed by isolation and psychological breakdown in one of the mental sanatoriums in Britain. Although Irena/Irene is not a direct victim of Holocaust itself, a series of displacements emerging from anti-Semitic sentiments have deep impacts on her life. Having been admitted to a mental

sanatorium due to an immediate psychological distress caused by a failed marriage and an attempted suicide, her life has been characterised as “shipwrecked and alive” (*HG* 182). In the sanatorium, through terrifying dreams and delusions, she flies back to those days of terror and victimisation both in Poland and in England.

The multiple levels of displacements of Irena begin when she is separated from her parents and sister permanently at the imminence of Nazi occupation of Poland immediately before the days of Second World War and her ensuing exile to England. The atmosphere during these days had been complicated for the Jews in general. Mutual suspicions, lack of communication, anxiety and frightening atmosphere had all been the prevailing psychological conditions everywhere. Marion A. Kaplan observes that the days preceding their deportation and dehumanisation the everyday life of the Jews substantially had deteriorated. In her words, “The general atmosphere was as to how to sort out the truly menacing from the merely annoying or disappointing and how to react – by ignoring? warding off? fighting back?” (32). The physical and psychological oppression brought on the people during those days are beyond description. Irene and Rachel, the two daughters of a Jewish shopkeeper, while retaining the prospects of having university studies are forced to abandon them all. However, at present, having left with no choice, Irene is instructed by her father to leave the country in a children’s transport with a family photograph to Vienna and from there to England. “‘... pack your small suitcase with sensible things, and then come down here in your overcoat ready to leave’. Irena felt numb with shock” (*HG* 207). A terse and unexpected ‘order’ from her already traumatised father gives her no other choice but to oblige him. This initial shock of displacement from her affectionate family

is beyond her comprehension and endurance. She is not given any alternative rather the decision is taken for her because of the urgency of situation, where the Nazi's approach is imminent. With her multiple levels of displacements beginning at this stage, the future is set bleak and desolate forever for her: "...the future that lay ahead of them was already as great an area of concern as the past they were leaving behind" (*HG* 209).

After coming to England as a refugee, Irene's present is mingled with her past memories. What Phillips focuses in the story of Irena/Irene are the causative factors that lead to her present psychological instability. England does not proffer her that warmth of relationships and sense of 'home' that she has lost in Poland. For Irena, survival requires a painful exile to a land unknown, "where she knew nobody, with a suitcase and a photograph album (and a feeling that she was being punished), and a mind tormented by the fear that she might never again touch or hold her sister" (*HG* 202). Fred D' Aguiar points to Irena/Irene's predicament by observing, "she is white, but she is a woman, Polish in Britain with little English to begin with, and Jewess, alone in a male-dominated world" (287). Her coming to England is characterised by her helplessness and vulnerability in a strange and lonely place. Therefore, in Irena/Irene's case, the experiences of 'place' and 'displacement' are related to perpetual psychological trauma.

Her attempts to 'belong' to new place – England, take Irene through ridiculous relationships with people. Her thoughtless love affair with Reg becomes a failure. Impregnated by him, she is often threatened and abused. The narrator observes, "... he worked off his fantasies and frustrations by spitting words at Irene. He argued to kill. He often asked Irene to cry quietly, then he would be

apologetic and offer her money, then he would order her to cut off her hair” (*HG* 211). These abuses finally end up in creating a sense of being abandoned and in the miscarriage and finally leading to the close of their married-life. “A fag-end that needed stubbing out, their marriage had smouldered for long enough...and [he] slammed the door behind him” (*HG* 211–12). The result is “she tried to throw under the train (like Anna Karenina) and had been taken to the hospital (not for her bruises)” (*HG* 211). The abandonment by Reg “... remind(s) her that she had twice been abandoned.... She could not afford a memory-hemorrhage, but to not remember hurt” (*HG* 180).

Sometime later, even though she enters a relationship with Louis, a West Indian, it does not succeed as he is required to go to his country immediately. She goes again desperate and distressed for, “...she did not want this man to leave her alone. He was kind. And she feared the loneliness of dreaming, whether asleep of awake...” (*HG* 216). From now, she becomes skeptical about the friendships and relationships with the world of men because she becomes obsessed with the thought of being abandoned and isolated. She is never equipped to trust any more.

They had told her nothing about how to deal with men. They had told her nothing about how to avoid men...Irene learned to hate friendships proffered and attempted attachments and imagined love, and she would let nobody touch her...there were no longer anybody to pretend to.... It hurt to sleep.... given her past the unkindest cut of all was that in ten years that they had told her nothing about how to deal with men. They had told her nothing about how to avoid men.... Irene did not want to

believe or hope (and she did not want to remember but she did not want to forget). (*HG* 200–201)

Irene strongly believes that she has been deceived and deserted. Her repeated cry is that no one told her how to deal with men and how to avoid men. Relationships were painful for her and still more painful was remembering them later. Finally when Louis leaves her, “the single cautious flame rose and then flickered and then died...tears began to spill from her eyes for Irene knew that her life was finally running aground” (*HG* 217).

Now lost with recurrent separations and incomprehension, the nightmares and delusions have been Irene’s only companions.

She went to the window and pulled it open. A cat screamed like a child. The lamp-posts had small heads and long necks...Irene looked at the naked trees, their arms sharp and pointing in all directions. She liked it best when the trees wore the clothes, then she would wear hers. The snowflakes spun with religious monotony that made her want to sing. Instead Irene laughed and imagined God to be shaking a great celestial salt-cellar before he ate up his children. We deserve to be eaten up, thought Irene...this will be our last night...she was prepared to be shoveled up on to God’s spoon and devoured. If he chewed, she would bleed. She decided that she would rather drown in his saliva and be swallowed up whole....
(*HG* 176)

These delusions become, in fact, a projection of her death wish in her owing to the excessive psychological damage that her constant severance of relationships, displacements and desertions. James D. Page observes, “Delusions are created and clung to because they serve some useful purpose. They are disguised wish formations designed to satisfy inner needs” (51). “Bolted, suffocating, and trying to survive a journey ... she cried out fearful of the long night ahead, more fearful of the morning, for ever lost without the sustaining love”(HG 218). Her distressed mind takes away her sleep, and when she sleeps, she sees awful dreams. “... for her sleep was cruel ... it hurt to sleep, it hurt not to sleep” (HG 176–77) and the sleep comes to her only after a ritualistic crying every day. Charles P. Sarvan notes that the trauma of her experiences and the cold incomprehension she encounters in England drives her to bleak loneliness and then to numb sexual experience and a loveless marriage, and finally to a breakdown and attempted suicide (518). Though Irena is neither a slave nor a prisoner as the protagonists of the previous sections in the novel *Higher Ground* are, her situation is one of captivity where she is caught between her past memories and successive displacements. As Jon G. Allen observes, “To remember trauma with its full emotional force is to undergo trauma again, in your mind. Such experience keeps the traumatic memory stirred, and it could become a form of rehearsal; like any other memory, the more the traumatic memory is rehearsed, the more easily it will come to mind” (84). In Irene’s case, the traumatic incidents of displacements and severed relationships in the past generate its repercussions in the present through her dreams and memory.

Eva Stern in *The Nature of Blood* surfaces from the depth of her traumatic experience of being victimised in Holocaust persecutions and its immediate

psychological effects. As J.M. Coetzee remarks, "... pages of Eva's story seem to come straight from hell, striking one with appalling power" (39). What is precisely focused here is the extent of psychological havoc emerging from a series of displacements of Eva at the backdrop of holocaust victimisation. Phillips in *The Nature of Blood* shows the psychological impacts of Holocaust on those who survived that persecutory system. Holocaust and the ensuing experiences in the lives of the Jews almost become parallel to the experiences of 'Middle Passages' of the African slaves.

The preceding and ensuing days of Holocaust completely distress the life of Eva and she is forced to break up with her parents, sister, friends and finally, her mental sanity. For Eva, this daily trauma is mixed up with fearful anxieties and worries. During those days, the people stumbled in confusion and disorientation. For Eva and her people, each journey is produced to uncertain destinations. Marion Kaplan observes on the deceit by which the Jews were led to extermination centres. He says that the Nazis used euphemisms to describe their torturous journeys to mass murder as "evacuation to work in the East," "resettlement," or "departing" which obviously tricked them into death (184). Eva witnesses that the deportation to the death camps essentially contained the violation of human dignity and distinction. "Lying in the straw sodden with faeces and vomit, all classes and social distinctions had disappeared.... And then undernourished and tired, their minds eventually slowed to a pounding numbness ..." (*NB* 161). She contemplates on the sordidness of the concentration camp where "human life is cheap" (*NB* 167) and where they are "... reduced to a small

tangle of bones covered with skin that is stretched tight and stained with bruises and bites. Bald and powerful eyes” (*NB* 167–68).

In Eva’s narrative, she remembers those days spent in concentration camps, where death and life makes no difference. People approached death as a “trivial affair ... [and] a habit ...” (*NB* 167). This oversimplification and triviality attached to death is to be perceived as the consequences of having been overexposed to extreme forms of brutality and persecutions. Eva’s terrific experience of human violence at the death camp shakes the foundations of her trust in the beneficence of humanity. She looks at life with a kind of sordid detachment and believes that “...to try to survive ... [is] terrible” (*NB* 167). Survival for the victims, in the concentration camp and after, becomes constant struggle through a life-in-death situation, where both life and death have equal significance. “My life is dead. I lie down at night without a life. I rise up in the morning without a life” (*NB* 47). Death becomes the constant companion for Eva, staring and demanding. She reflects: “Death waits with us, visible, staring us in the face. We simply wait” (*NB* 185).

At the height of her melancholic states, Eva even discards the idea of returning to her ancestral land of Palestine, a dream cherished by many people like her. When, in the makeshift dormitory of the liberated camp, the other women next to her make “nervous plans” (*NB* 44) to go to Palestine, she contemplates on the futility of such project, at least hers. She understands that constant displacements and dispersions have made them a people without history and identity. She recounts,

They are making nervous plans. For Palestine ... we have wandered long enough. We have worked and struggled too long on the lands of other peoples. The journey that we are making across the bones of Europe is a story that will be told in future years by many prophets. After hundreds of years of trying to be with others, of trying to be others, we are now pouring in the direction of home. I am not included in their plan.... (NB 44 – 45)

Although she does not hatch a plan at present to go to Palestine, her intense longing for the ‘Promised Land’ is obvious in what she says, “I too have dreamt of Palestine” (NB 45). This desire of Eva is mingled and echoed with the voices of millions of Jews who have been on perpetual diaspora. The uncertainty and unavailability of the concepts of ‘home’ or ‘nation’ for the Jews are articulated by Eva’s mother. “Remember, Eva, you are a guest in this country” (NB 92). The world seems to pay too little attention to their cause, while the homeless diaspora remain on the same uncertain conditions. Eva’s mother relates what typifies the vain attempts of Jews to ‘belong to.’ “Eva, where in the world is the United States? Where is Russia, even? One day you are neighbours, the next day they spit on you. We are stupid for being proud to be what we are not ...” (NB 93). Maurizio Calbi notes that *The Nature of Blood* relentlessly problematises a sense of home and belonging predicated upon the rootedness in one’s blood, soil and language. However, like blood, home and belonging remain in a permanent state of flux for the Jews (49).

Eva’s rescue by the Allied Forces and post-Holocaust survival in the liberated camp heighten her psychological torment. Stephen Clingman observes,

“After Eva’s liberation, there is equally no ‘fix’ between her inner and outer worlds – the distance between the two simply unnavigable” (*The Grammar of Identity* 81). In the moments of anxiety, caused by her experiences in the past, she develops a particular psychological state in which she worries about the likelihood of a torturous return to the concentration camp. In psychological terms, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder characterises the emotional disturbances of Eva. Re-experiencing the traumatic event is characteristic of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, which is one of the several anxiety disorders. Jon G. Allen observes that re-experiencing symptoms encompass recurrent and intrusive distressing recollections of the event, including images, thoughts or perceptions; recurrent distressing dreams of the event; acting or feeling as if the traumatic event were recurring, including a sense of reliving the experience, illusions, hallucinations, and dissociative flashback episodes (174). Eva’s persistent concern over the possible torturous return to the concentration camp and its awaiting extermination makes her continuously nervous. “Camp life. The scream that deafens with its terror, the terror of deafening silence. The rigidity of motion, heavy stones weighing on everybody’s hearts. Travelling daily beyond the frontiers of life with an obscene selfishness as one’s sole companion” (*NB* 32).

However, trauma does not necessarily end when the traumatic situation is long past; the traumatised persons continue to re-experience the trauma whenever these disturbing memories of the event beset the mind. In the case of Eva, cut off from her mother and sister, and suffering chronically at the liberated camp, her life pivots on memories and hallucinations because for Eva, “reality was much worse. Nightmares were acceptable” (*NB* 166). As such, Eva’s nights are burdened with

fearful dreams and memories, and anything that gets through her hands stimulates these complex memory networks. One of the most disturbing reveries of Eva is of her mother whom, in her dreams, she secretly hides in the camp. The trauma and victimisation compel her to be 'obsessive' with mother's thoughts. Stephen Clingman observes that this projection of the mother, which is a form of internal dissociation, fulfils a number of psychic functions at once. Firstly, it allows Eva to get a mediated and 'cushioned' access to the truth. Her mother tells Eva of her dream of her father's death which Eva must know already in order to fashion the intimation. Secondly, her mother represents something precious that Eva keeps from inspection, a recurrent motif of the novel. Thirdly, she represents the mother that Eva has failed to be: in a dream in which Eva is parent to her child—mother who dies at Nazis' hands. It is a dream that manifest the unsustainable and most painful cycle of Eva's inner self-reproach and grief— her failure to be her mother, to protect others even as she desperately needs protection ("Forms of History" 150). In the context of this psychological destabilisation of Eva, Ashley Dawson borrows the psychoanalytic term 'melancholia' from Dominick LaCapra to describe her possession by memories of her mother and by her absent sister Margot (90). In Freud's conceptualisation, Melancholia is characterised by a profoundly painful dejection, cessation of interest in the outside world, loss of the capacity to love, inhibition of all activity and a lowering of the self-regarding feelings to a degree and often it culminates in a delusional expectation of punishment ("Mourning and Melancholia" 224). However, Eva's memories and hallucinations simultaneously perform the functions of reuniting her lost

relationships while it reminds her of various losses, separations and the traumatic life during the Holocaust days.

In her melancholic state of mind, Eva adopts multiple psychological dispositions. Derrick Silove endorses the view made by Gorst–Unsworth and others that the victims and their communities of traumatised life face a crisis of trust, faith and meaning that may intensify feelings of alienation and emotional isolation (46). Significantly, Eva keeps herself isolated and cut off from others; this sense of isolation had already been systematically infused in her by the Nazis in the concentration camp as an instrument of torture. Her recourse to psychic defense mechanism of reversion to silence and isolation in the liberated camp is way of keeping her inner life tight together from the outside world. This silence and isolation, stemming from a fear of having to communicate with the outside world, a typical to melancholia, keeps her guarded even from the psychiatrist who examines her. The medical expert regrets his lack of understanding of her closely fortified interior world. “She didn’t talk much. In fact, I don’t think she said anything to anybody. Including myself” (*NB* 186). Nevertheless, according to him, by merely observing the manifest symptoms, “she wasn’t considered a serious problem” (*NB* 186), while he fails to discover her to be a suicidal risk. Stephen Clingman argues, “Eva’s resolution to revert to silence is part of her withdrawal from the life, society and world at large. It is natural that Eva reverts to silence, for silence is the protection of inwardness, holding something inviolate from the world ...” (“Forms of History and Identity” 151). Unable to bear the frustration and abandonment, finally Eva attempts to commit suicide. In Eva’s fragmented narrative, the accounts of her present events and her memories of the past are

jumbled together and it befits well with her internal and external displacements.

Clingman notes,

Eva's entire narration in the novel is an inward one, itself a mark of her solitude and dissociation. Her voice moves through multiple times, both forwards and backwards: the relived present of the concentration camps; the past of what seems so distant as to be the prehistory of that experience; a different level of the present in the post-Holocaust aftermath she inhabits like some residue of all these pasts (*The Grammar of Identity* 82).

Through two meticulous and profoundly compassionate articulations of the stories of Irena/Irene and Eva Stern, Phillips shows how under colonial conditions, geography, relationships and memory become vulnerable to successive displacements and dislocations, and how they remain impossible to retrieve.

Gabriel's displacement in *A Distant Shore* (2003) belongs to the transnational migratory pattern, in which cross-border movements and migrations of refugees and asylum seekers are made in the wake of modern-day civil wars and national calamities. Gabriel/Solomon's displacement occurs due to a civil war in his country and a fresh course of life is sought after in England. Caryl Phillips comments that his growing concern in the issues of asylum seekers in Europe in the last few years is part of his deep commitment to the notion of 'history' (Morrison 135). Phillips views modern migrations originating from particular political and social strife from a historical perspective and evaluates the position of the migrants against their continuous displacements and search for belonging.

Though Phillips did not have any specificity of the locale in his mind in rendering the story of Gabriel/Solomon in *A Distant Shore*, except that it is somewhere in Africa, his non-specificity of locale renders the universality of such postcolonial conditions. In an interview Phillips remarks, “I didn’t base Gabriel’s character, background, or journey on any particular African country. However, I did have in mind, Rwanda, Liberia, the Congo, and Sierra Leone” (Morrison 136). The fact is that Phillips realises that the tensions and conflicts in the countries of African continent have been the results of new power-shifts and economic dynamics. According to Vigdis Broch-Due, though modernisation, multiparty democratic governments and resource privatisation have been implemented in many of the African nations, they have not succeeded in every respect in maintaining stable and flourishing communities across the continent. Violence continues to be endemic in many areas of African life from civil war and political strife, and often, the locus of conflict shakes different classes or ethnic groups irrespective of gender and generations (1–2). The present-day civil war experiences in the lives of many individuals as in the case of Gabriel, a soldier in his war-torn country, have created constant displacements and desperate attempts in seeking asylum in economically developed countries. While these people succeed, in most cases, in migrating to these developed countries, life in such locales becomes much harder and discouraging due to a number of other reasons.

In Gabriel’s unnamed country, seemingly after a recent independence, a dominant tribe or an influential ethnic group appropriates the government power structures pushing the country into its present neocolonial conditions. This postcolonial atmosphere in the country disrupts the social harmony and constitutes

a hierarchy of tribal units, and obviously displaces the people to the peripheries and locations where they do not belong to. The displacement of Gabriel essentially arises from the power-gearred civil war in his country leading to political conflicts and rivalries. He involuntarily becomes both a part and a victim of this civil war as a soldier, and this imposes on him manifold displacements and psychologically disorientating concerns. His psychological disorientation is apparent in what he says, "I was not prepared for the life of a soldier" (*DS* 123). His family is brutally avenged by the armed forces for the massacres conducted by Gabriel's squadron led by Patrick. However, he has not involved in such atrocious activities, for as he says, he "... did not have the heart for this savagery" (*DS* 131). His never-ending predicaments begin when he witnesses the brutal murder of everyone of his family, while he himself hides in a cupboard. He recounts those terrific moments, "I watched without fear. I watched with ice in my heart...my father and my sisters being shot like animals" (*DS* 263). His escape leaving behind his half-dead mother unattended creates in him a deep-rooted guilt, driving him to a "coward who had trained himself to forget" (*DS* 263-64) as against his previous image as "Hawk", a "Major Hawk" (*DS*127). This sense of guilt constantly plagues him that he is haunted by unhappy dreams and nightmares about both his mother and his former employer, Felix whom he kills to secure the money he needed for his travel to England. According to Jaclyn Rodriguez, these kinds of thoughts of guilt are prompted by the belief that one did not pay enough attention to, or care well enough for the one who stood in need of it (344). In the case of his mother, he very well recognises his negligence in performing his responsibilities.

Gabriel's act of disregarding his wounded mother problematises the rest of his life that complicatedly mixes up with guilt-ridden conscience, dreams and traumatic memories. He fears if his mother holds him in contempt for his negligence and for the entire tragedy that befell the family. However, in a dream he sees "His mother is not only physically hurt and bruised, she is also mentally damaged....He implores her to flee with him, to let him rescue her, but she looks at him with scorn..." (DS138). In this context, not only does he feel psychologically traumatised, but also he prepares himself to justify his actions thereby giving vent to his pent-up guilt feelings. According to Jaclyn Rodriguez, this sort of bargaining is characteristic of guilt-laden conscience as the subjects try to find what wrong they did. They take a moral inventory to see where they could have been more loving or understanding. In addition, in an attempt to resolve guilt feelings, while grieving the loss itself, it may doubly complicate and contribute to the development of what is considered an 'abnormal grief reaction' (344). The third person narrative of justification lends Gabriel a chance to distance his culpability from his remorseful conscience and to detach him from being held accountable. His self-justifying questions are rendered through a third person perspective, which also can be taken as his own defensive stance. "But what can he do? Carry her out with him? If she does not wish to come with him, then he has no choice but to accept her decision. He continues to look at his mother, who is staring back at her 'Major son' with contempt that she seems incapable of disguising" (DS139). These 'unpretentious' questions while suffering from the guilt make his psychological condition more precarious and debilitating. The murder of Felix unsettles him with the same force and strength alongside the sense

of guilt that he experiences from disregarding his wounded mother. He is plagued by delusions and hallucinations in which he sees Felix in the face of the child of Amma, the woman whom he meets and loves at the transit camp. “The child has Felix’s face. Not just a resemblance, or a similarity, the child is Felix, and now the child points at Gabriel and begins to laugh” (*DS* 139). The constrained past continues to speak to him through his frightening dreams and reveries, for “his dream is becoming a nightmare” (*DS* 140). It also serves to function, in a sense, an outlet to his guilt-ridden mind.

The long passage and displacements of Gabriel/Solomon through Europe and along the Channel to England is reminiscent of the ‘Middle Passages’ of his African ancestors from the west coast of Africa to the Americas. It shares some resemblances to the Middle Passage, in which “perhaps one hundred men and women who [are] seated on the floor with their backs to the wall of the plane” (*DS* 99) presents the image of the cramming of slaves in the slave ships. Apart from that, filthy atmosphere and refugee camps, the ruthless brokers like Solomon’s uncle Joshua, various methods of travels and risky journeys, all adequately illustrate the monotonous and tedious journeys of the refugees. Finally, Solomon arrives in England washed up on the south coast after crossing the Channel dangling from the side of a ship. Solomon’s long journey to England, in which he finds “no dignity to his predicament” (*DS* 149) now, is intended to make a break with the past as well as a new beginning. “I was blessed to be in England, but this life bore no relationship to the one I had known in my country...” (*DS* 259).

Nevertheless, in England he undergoes the worst experiences of a displaced African. The criminalisation and the initial days of isolation in England reveal the

falsity around the dream of England as a safe haven for refugees. During his initial days, for a charge of alleged sexual assault on a girl, he is treated cruelly and consequently incarcerated. As an African migrant and an asylum seeker, the subsequent travels from the racist south to the north of England bring him a temporary sense of 'belonging.' For a short time, living in Weston, he develops a friendship with a white lady Dorothy Jones, for both are characteristically displaced physically and psychologically. As Alessandra Di Maio argues, "... their loneliness, their sense of displacement, their quests for new beginnings and renewed identities, and their search for a 'refuge' or a place to call 'home' could not be more alike" (59). However, the life in Weston does not offer him a continued sense of 'belonging' as a migrant and refugee. The cycle of his persistent displacements and travels is complete with his brutal murder at the hands of some village hooligans, who try to make fun on the *foreigner*. His death shows how a limited participation is defined for the migrant in the society that values racial supremacy.

Looking at the life of Solomon, one wonders how modern-day calamities and civil wars collapse the life-patterns of individuals. Carol Margaret Davison argues that Phillips has spent his literary career probing the ramifications of displacement, which is a complex condition that characterises the twentieth century lives and that which engenders a great deal of suffering, confusion and soul searching (19). Africa, in the contemporary times, has been destabilised by various political factions and power-gearred insurrections. In the recent times, such instabilities have created great influx of migrants to the various parts of Europe, especially England. But, very often, the approach to such exiles of refugees and

asylum seekers does not meet with essential human dignity. According to Stuart Hall, for migrants, belonging is truly a tricky concept, requiring both identification and recognition; if people from ethnic minorities are to become not only citizens with equal rights but also an integral part of the national culture, the meaning of the term 'British' will have to become more inclusive of their experiences, values and aspirations (Kowaleski–Wallace 3). Essentially, Solomon's identification and categorisation as a 'migrant,' 'foreigner,' and 'outsider' make his presence more complex in England.

Caryl Phillips's novels that examine the predicaments of the displaced people from their geography, culture, identity, community and psyche are written from Phillips's own sense of displacement, exiles and from an early experience of being located at the edges of English society. His attempts are to show how the displaced postcolonial subject confronts the realities of 'belonging' in an unstable, fluid and plural cultural experiences of postcolonial conditions, which, in turn modify and reconstruct their psychological orientation or disorientation. Each case of displacement and dislocation discussed above finally brings to attention an awareness that under postcolonial circumstances, the postcolonial subject confronts multiple levels of displacements, and an attempt of retrieval of the lost 'home' or 'rehabilitation' constantly remains contested, thereby producing incessant psychological vexations and disorientations.

When the colonial incursions, projects and conditions destabilise and displace people from their cultural, social and geographic territories, the postcolonial identities are transformed through a process of cultural hybridity and cross-culturality. The field of postcolonial studies continues to witness significant

changes in the way cultural identity is formulated under the conditions of postcolonial displacements. The theorising and fictionalising of the experiences of cultural identity in Phillips's novels arise from his own experiences of migrations and travels undertaken across the Atlantic – between Caribbean, England and America – his 'home' destinations. In his novels, while the displaced West Indians and the Africans find difficulties in constituting their cultural identity within their diasporic conditions, the black Jews remain in a more profoundly problematic condition owing to the permanent nature of their diaspora and experiences of racist segregations in 'white' Israel. Therefore, for Phillips, the notions of 'fixed,' 'homogenous' and 'essential' identity and culture, rooted in the concepts of 'nation,' 'race' and 'ethnicity' remain challenged and contested; instead, a negotiation of cultural identity takes place on the overlapping territories and cross-cultural exchanges that accommodate cultural differences, cultural plurality and hybridity. The next chapter examines how the identity transformations of the displaced individuals take place under constant travels, journeys and migrations, while it also shows how in multiple identities they experience psychological distress and uneasiness.