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The Poetics and Politics of Intersectionality: Trauma and Memory in Caryl Phillips' *The Lost Child*

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Abstract: Trauma theory has long been used to explain Eurocentric, event-based, and nationally experienced traumas like war crimes or the Holocaust. In this article, I focus on the smaller-scale tragedies of everyday life and how trauma theory can illuminate them, too, if combined with an intersectional approach. Caryl Phillips' novel *The Lost Child* (2015) demonstrates how the mechanisms of complex, co-effecting oppressions may turn everyday life into a series of traumatic experiences by sketching out the ambiguous and matrix-like effects of gender, race, class, ethnicity, age, cultural position, and education-related marginalization. Counter to Cathy Caruth's argument, I claim that intersectionality allows us to conceptualize a traumatic life that does not originate from a single clear event. Intersectionality's kaleidoscopic vision of trauma is able to grasp the co-constitutive effects of small, ordinary, or quotidian hurtful memories and experiences that easily fade in the face of collective, national, and commemorated traumas. Phillips' intersectional framing of individual stories highlights how individual experiences are historically, socially, and culturally mediated.

Keywords: Caryl Phillips, intersectionality, trauma, memory, *The Lost Child*

In her much-cited conceptualization of trauma, Cathy Caruth considers trauma an exceptional and catastrophic event (4–9), whereas Caryl Phillips sketches out the ambiguous and matrix-like effects of gender,

race, class, ethnicity, age, cultural position, and education-related marginalization that, in particular circumstances, may intersect in a traumatic manner. In this article, I claim that intersectionality might be the way to conceptualize a traumatic life and modes of remembering that go unstudied when trauma is narrowly viewed as originating from a single catastrophic event. Intersectionality's kaleidoscopic vision of trauma is able to grasp the co-constitutive effects of small, ordinary, and quotidian hurtful memories and experiences that easily fade in the face of collective, national, and commemorated traumas. The intersectional approach to trauma is exemplified by bell hooks in *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* (1984), in which she reminisces about her feminist discussion group: "We talked about the need to acknowledge that we are all suffering some way, but that we are not all oppressed nor equally oppressed. Many of us feared that our experiences were irrelevant because they were not as oppressive or as exploited as the experiences of others" (59). In this article, I take an intersectional approach to reading the transnational and multilayered trauma in Phillips' intertextual novel *The Lost Child* (2015).

The Lost Child uses a palimpsestic literary structure to illustrate the intersecting, co-conditional effects of multiple simultaneous hurtful structures affecting an individual life. As is typical of Phillips' work, the novel is a collage of stories and perspectives situated in different historical times and cultural contexts. In this collage each story is interpreted through the other stories.[1] The novel's structure activates transcultural and transgenerational memories that frame individual feelings of marginalization. I suggest that Phillips' narrative structures resonate intersectionally: class oppression alone might not drive a character into depression and a mental breakdown, but if that oppression takes place in the historical context of colonialism and racism while intertwined with a precarious sexual and gender identity, the effects are traumatic. In this article I turn to intersectionality as a mode of reading *The Lost Child*'s formal, heteroglossic composition in order to grasp the traumatic experiences that echo painful historical memories. Thus, I consider intersectionality's potential for illuminating how literary scholars consider trauma.

In her milestone study *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures* (2003), Ann Cvetkovich finds new sites of trauma that are neither counted as "national" nor occupy the public sphere. Cvetkovich examines how minority experiences of trauma give rise to different ways of analyzing traumas and "in particular to a sense of trauma as connected to the textures of everyday experience" (3–4). Besides this sense of everyday trauma, Cvetkovich recognizes how traumatic histories continue to affect the everyday lives of many people. She also considers how the national sense of trauma has "amnesiac powers," which suppress forms of individual trauma (16). I argue that intersectionality may render visible the smaller experiences that are forced to "undergo" history, to use John McLeod's word. By "undergoing history," McLeod refers to the ways seemingly ordinary cultural tasks and tactics from everyday life routinely move under "power's historical imprint" ("Caryl Phillips and Ordinariness" 25). According to McLeod, Phillips attends to everyday life undergoing history when he explores "the rhizomatic, oblique, but by no means untethered connections which entangle the innocuous motion of everyday life . . . within the wider machinations of history" (25). Intersectionality addresses, for example, how various institutional, symbolic, historical, or social contexts can multiply the effects of racism. Experiences of racism may be deepened by homophobia, classism, or gender bias within each of these contexts.

Below, I explore intersectionality's potential to conceptualize the challenges trauma studies faces—namely, as Laura Brown argues, that it has for so long addressed mainly the experiences of white, middle-class, straight men. Cvetkovich uses Brown's term "insidious trauma" to describe traumas that are related to "more systemic forms of oppression" (32) like the everyday experience of sexism rather than some nationally memorialized event. I use intersectionality to illuminate the complex and matrix-like system of power that traumatizes the sense of the self in *The Lost Child*.

I. Layers of Intersectionality

The themes that Phillips often explores in his writing—namely cultural identities, alienation, displacement, and traumatic histories—are also

present in *The Lost Child*.[2] The main story of *The Lost Child* stretches from the 1950s to the 1970s and depicts the tragic life of Monica Johnson, the daughter of "a schoolmaster in one of the most highly considered grammar schools in the north of England" (Phillips, *The Lost Child* 15). The novel is a response to Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*. It tells the story of different kinds of orphans and outcasts, with Monica's modern struggle to raise her sons at its centre. Phillips tackles *Wuthering Heights*' themes on several historical levels, highlighting how the past always informs the present. The novel illustrates how the current moment is always shadowed by the past; the complexity of the pain of everyday living becomes graspable through transnational layers of history and the characters' memories. In general, Phillips' novels challenge the notions of roots, origins, or ethnic backgrounds by paralleling different characters' histories. The paralleled histories make one past matter in relation to others and reimagine nationally foundational memories in transnational and transhistorical contexts. In *The Nature of Blood* (1997), for instance, the memory of the Holocaust is diachronically brought into dialogue with a rewritten version of Shakespeare's *Othello*. The novel situates Eva Stern's afflictions in a concentration camp within a longer history of alienation and othering by portraying Othello's feelings of alienation in Renaissance Venice and the executed Jews of Portobuffole in the fifteenth century.[3] The Shakespearean hypotext[4] also emphasizes the textual layers of collective memory.

Phillips' narration often inserts an individual traumatic life intertextually into the frames of the transnational history of slave trade and patriarchy: hypotexts such as *Othello* or *Wuthering Heights* signal this presence. Michael Rothberg argues that Phillips develops "an aesthetic premised on hospitality to histories of the other" (137). While Rothberg sees these histories of "the other" as simply ethno-cultural in nature, I suggest that Phillips' hospitality is intersectional: *The Lost Child* depicts several forms of othering, including othering through poverty, gender, sexuality, racism, and colonialism. While intersectionality has its roots in identity politics-based poetry,[5] it is not considered to be a literary theory. My focus here is to (re)turn the intersectional perspective to the sphere of literature. I argue that intersectionality might be, first, a

method for reading manifold identities and social relations; second, a tool for understanding the cultural and historical constitution of human experiences; third, a novelistic form that highlights heteroglossic and multilayered narrative structures; and fourth, a new way to consider cultural memory. I contend that all of these uses of intersectionality are needed in order to grasp the traumatic individual experiences in Phillips' novel. I explore intersectionality's potential for analyzing novelistic structures; in other words, I look at intersectionality's use not only in politics but in poetics.

In *The Lost Child*, Monica's experiences are layered upon the intertext of Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*, particularly with Heathcliff's story. Phillips' Heathcliff character has an enslaved mother who experienced the horrors of the transatlantic triangular trade. The novel begins with a small piece of personal information about Heathcliff's mother: "She likes to sit down by the docks in a place where sunlight can discover her face" (3). In terms of the slave trade, docks have hosted traumatic encounters throughout history. Other characters call the mother "Crazy Woman." She is not seen as a person but othered: "the people continue to walk by . . . unable to disguise their loathing for the skeletal woman" (4). Her son, fathered by a rewritten Earnshaw from *Wuthering Heights*, is the absolute outcast, one of the lost children in the novel. The first chapter of this fragmented novel describes the enslaved mother's traumatic experiences of enduring sexual and racial violence. She embodies the horrors of "the Black Atlantic," to use Paul Gilroy's term for the web of contemporary diasporic elements that have been deeply shaped by slavery, since she was shipped first from Africa to the Caribbean and later to England:

> The least of the female litter, she mounted a wooden platform and waited until all the others had been taken. . . . The human cargo was chained and manacled in the hold, where they rolled to the left and then back to the right, their rotations determined by the undulating waves, but on each occasion that the vessel dipped, the cargo received a blessing of a libation of slime. Soon they were too nauseated to eat, and most were

> too grief-stricken to cry, and she lay surrounded by the woeful mourning of those who rotted in the darkness. . . . During her second voyage she remained anchored to the splinted floor of the captain's cabin unless he had business with her. (Phillips, *The Lost Child* 4–5)

This and other chapters about the slave trade and the abuse of women provide the context for 1950s Leeds, where Monica Johnson's story is set. Because the novel makes intersectional connections between Heathcliff's mother and Monica, Monica's story cannot be read without a story about slavery. The reader is compelled to engage with a deeply distressing history of gendered colonial violence. Phillips does not equate the two stories but establishes an ethical discussion about their circumstantial differences.

Besides the story of Heathcliff, his mother, and Earnshaw, Brontë herself is turned into a fictional character in *The Lost Child*. In Chapter IV, "The Family," Emily has slowly taken ill, and despite her sisters' care, she is losing her grasp on reality. She is but a weak and ailing substitute for a lost son to her papa. The novel illustrates how gender, race, origins, transatlantic movements, alienation, abuse, and a traumatic sense of loss intersect. In Rothberg's words, Phillips develops "a fractured form of relatedness" (138).

Originating from the long tradition of Black feminist social movements and literature, intersectionality today is a research tool that conceptualizes multiple, relational, and complex workings of power connected to race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, class, able-bodiedness, age, caste, or any factor relevant to our social experience. While focusing on both the structures of society and lived experience, intersectionality analyzes how these factors locate people differently in our social and cultural reality, especially in relation to societal structures of inequality.[6] Nira Yuval-Davis, for one, emphasizes that intersectionality does not merely consider identities or subject constitution but also analyzes how social divisions are created and take effect simultaneously on organizational (institutional), intersubjective, experiential, and representational levels. For her, "the interlinking grids of differential positionings . . .

tend to create, in specific historical situations, hierarchies of differential access to a variety of resources—economic, political and cultural" (Yuval-Davis 199). Intersectionality is a prism-like device that examines this access, multiplying one's view of a certain phenomenon. For example, intersectionality diversifies scholars' research questions in different ways, depending on the topic.[7] According to Devon W. Carbado, Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, Vickie M. Mays, and Barbara Tomlinson, intersectionality is a method, a disposition, and a heuristic and analytic tool at the same time. Intersectionality suggests new perspectives; it mobilizes potential starting points "for understanding the work that . . . theory potentially can—but has not yet been mobilized to—do" (Carbado et al. 312). My essay aims to invite intersectionality, as a heuristic device, to suggest new questions for postcolonial trauma and memory studies.[8] I claim that intersectionality enables a more nuanced, matrix-like way to understand Phillips' use of memory.

II. Multidirectional Narratives and Epistemic Agencies

In the scene in *The Lost Child* that involves Heathcliff's enslaved mother, Phillips reveals the role of gender in the colonial legacy that frames contemporary cultural memory. Phillips' intersectional inclusion makes intelligible the co-constitutive structures of marginalization. This kind of intersectional co-constitution of trauma is best described by Luticha Doucette, an African American disability rights activist who writes about the co-conditional effects of ableism and racism. Doucette notes how the history of racism and the traumas of Black female servanthood are made visible if the only accessible entrance to a restaurant, for example, is through the back door. By paralleling the tragic mental declines of the enslaved mother, Emily Brontë, and Monica Johnson, *The Lost Child* illustrates the historical accumulation of oppressive meaning-making practices that shape collective memory. In her analysis of the role of gender in trauma narratives, Sharon Marquart uses the term "hermeneutical injustice" to refer to a "lack of critical concepts" that keep "marginalized subjects from articulating their experiences in meaningful ways to others" and thus from reaching epistemic agency (169). In what follows, I read *The Lost Child* intersectionally in order to

scrutinize its aim at epistemic justice for those suffering from insidious and accumulated collective traumas.

Throughout her life, Monica experiences alienation from the people she is closest to. As a little girl, Monica is close with her father, but as a teenager she grows distant from him, "carefully widening the gap with each passing year" (Phillips, *The Lost Child* 16). The reason for this is only hinted at in the novel, but it may stem from accusations made by Dr. Greenwell. "My daughter doesn't much care for the way you leer at her" (208), he says to Monica's father. This short line suggests that Monica may not forgive her father for the "leering" of which he is accused. Later, Monica is accepted at Oxford, where she falls in love with the African Caribbean independence activist Julius Wilson. They soon marry, and Monica quits her studies, thus breaking all connections with her family. Julius and Monica, however, struggle to communicate effectively, and he gets carried away with his political struggles while Monica feels sad and lonely, particularly after their two sons are born. Monica's slow decline into isolation, poverty, and depression begins when they separate; Julius goes back to the Caribbean, and she moves to a shabby apartment in Leeds. Her sons, Ben and Tommy, suffer from racism, poverty, bullying, and other forms of social marginalization while Monica is emotionally abused by a boyfriend, Derek Evans. In their disheartening apartment, Monica slides into a numb silence, becoming estranged from the world little by little. Finally, social services take away her sons, and Monica loses her sense of reality altogether, like the Heathcliff-character's mother.

In addition to the Heathcliff-character, Monica's younger son, Tommy, is another lost child in the novel: he disappears on the moors and apparently dies. The narrator hints that he might have been sexually abused by his mother's boyfriend. Not long after, Monica dies in a psychiatric institution. *The Lost Child* connects the historical trauma of slavery to the pain of everyday life and displays the intersections of gendered, sexual, racial, and class-based forms of marginalization that take effect co-conditionally. The traumatic lostness in *The Lost Child* conveys the history of epistemic injustice experienced by multiply marginalized subjects. The novel's intertextual references convey the uneven

encounters between the Global South and the Global North: the children of the British Empire are still affected by these encounters. The ur-trauma of slavery and colonialism continues to haunt the memories of future generations, like in the racist "Jimmy Jamaicas have come to steal your jobs" (147) comments Ben and Tommy hear at school.

Rothberg analyzes the transnational narrative framings in Phillips' earlier books in terms of what he calls "multidirectional memory." According to Rothberg, multidirectional memory is "the interaction of different historical memories" illustrating "the productive, intercultural dynamic" between memories such as the Holocaust and slavery (3). These memories do not compete with those sanctioned by the public sphere (in which collective memories are articulated) but have the potential to "create new forms of solidarity and new visions of justice" (Rothberg 5). Rothberg's conceptualization rejects the notion of a straight line from memory to identity, which would constitute exclusive versions of cultural identity. Instead, his notion of multidirectional memory acknowledges how remembrance both cuts across and binds together diverse cultural and temporal sites, creating new forms of solidarity (11). However, Rothberg focuses on solidarity between cultural and ethnic legacies of trauma. I want to build on this idea of connection by focusing on intersecting axes of gender, sexuality, and class.For Rothberg, Phillips' texts provide alternatives to competitive memory. He argues that in Phillips' work, the other's past does not screen out one's own history but "serves as a screen for multidirectional projections in which solidarity and self-construction merge" (125). I consider the potential of multidirectional solidarity in terms of intersectionality, which is also committed to solidarity—not only between people of different ethnicities but between people with several kinds of diverse identity markers.

III. Making Postcolonial Trauma Intersectional

Both the Eurocentric nature of trauma studies and its orientation towards traumas caused by events such as genocide or war have been criticized over the past two decades. Several scholars have demanded the decolonization and pluralization of trauma studies.[9] Sonya Andermahr,

for one, calls for a decolonized trauma theory that will "redress the marginalization of non-Western and minority traumas[,] . . . challenge the supposed universal validity of Western definitions of trauma," and address "the unexplored relationships between so called First and Third world traumas" (501). I suggest that this vision could be complemented by adding the effects of intersecting vectors of gender, class, and sexuality. Intersectionality's potential to multiply interpretative structures attached to trauma studies—by highlighting the cumulative effects of marginalizing vectors of power—remains understudied. We can see how this multiplication would work by turning to *The Lost Child* and piecing together the jigsaw that intersectional experiences—Julius' racial identity politics, her father's expectations about education and social standing, her mother's suppressed femininity, poverty, and the racism faced by her sons—have on Monica.

Intersectionality highlights the particularity of each hurtful experience. By insisting on the specificity of each trauma, intersectionality resists "crude empathy," where one simply assimilates another person's sorrow (Craps, "Linking Legacies of Loss" 195): in feeling *for* the other while still recognizing their difference, intersectionality acknowledges that each traumatic experience has different temporal, social, and cultural dimensions divided by several experiential axes without simply "assimilating other's experiences to the self" (195). An intersectional perspective on trauma studies also highlights the unique nature of the impact that a combination of hurtful experiences have in specific circumstances. Phillips' literary technique of juxtaposing the cultural traumas of different kinds of people has been much debated in scholarship on Phillips. Some critics argue that he appropriates the experience of the other, while others contend that he challenges the artistic ghetto of authenticity and moves beyond the tribalism of identity politics.[10] I see Phillips' technique more as an act of narrative solidarity than of appropriation. Phillips uses intersectional practices as "an empathetic unsettlement"—Dominick LaCapra's term for a type of relationality that avoids "crude empathy" and inappropriate identification with trauma victims (41).

In *The Lost Child*, Monica's mother, Ruth, is traumatized by her husband's persistent subjugation and disparagement. The schoolmaster recalls how people considered his marriage as "him stooping down to the bottom drawer" when marrying a girl "without his advantages" (Phillips, *The Lost Child* 59). He "educates" his wife in posh manners with the result of forcing her into constant agony: Ruth's arthritic condition causes "shooting pains in her feet and ankles, so much so that these days she wore only carpet slippers" (58). However, the schoolmaster "had drawn the line for this kind of vulgarity" (58) and forces her to abandon her comfortable slippers. Ruth learns to lock all her feelings inside. Intersectionality unravels, in Ruth's case, the co-conditional microaggressions of classism boosted by patriarchal structures. Phillips also illustrates intersectional forms of oppression through the bullying that Tommy and Ben face in school. In the school cafeteria Tommy "follows the other boys, feeling the double humiliation of not having anybody to talk to and understanding that he will most likely have to ask somebody where the line is for those who have free school dinner" (118). Poverty conditioned by racism marginalizes them. Intersectionality reaches towards unique, undiscernible, and "insidious" traumas that remain hidden when trauma is too broadly understood as simply cultural or as related to a specific event. Intersectionality challenges psychiatric universalisms, multiplying the levels on which co-constituted differences turn into traumatic everyday experiences. Intersectionality becomes a decolonizing tool for trauma studies as it considers the multidimensional nature of each traumatic experience. *The Lost Child* illustrates the effects of what Stef Craps calls "insidiously cumulative micro-aggressions" resulting in trauma (*Postcolonial Witnessing* 26). I suggest that intersectional analysis captures the interrelated nature of the cultural, political, and social inequalities that enable these microaggressions.[11] Through an intersectional prism, we see how seemingly unremarkable actions may leave the strongest traces.

McLeod emphasizes how unremarkable actions become "ethical, urgent necessities" in Phillips' novels ("Caryl Phillips and Ordinariness" 31). McLeod aptly sees Phillips as depicting unassuming, ordinary

cultural tactics that add up to trauma—the quotidian business of undergoing power's historical imprint. Monica's story opens a vast network of intersecting experiences "undergoing history": her modern loneliness and the otherness she experiences because she has brown children in racist 1960s Leeds, poverty, insecure sexuality and gender identity, the harsh bullying of Ben and Tommy in school, Julius' inability to meet her needs, and her distant patriarchal father co-condition her everyday experience. She regresses emotionally until she is numb, making her unable to reach epistemic agency. She cannot act or move, falling into depression. After making a scene at the social services office to see Ben, her only living son after Tommy's death, the social worker gives Monica the chance to meet Ben at Christmas. When the day comes, Monica is paralyzed: "On Christmas morning I didn't answer the door because I knew that it would be the social worker come to take me to see Ben. I pulled the blanket up over my head and waited until she'd finished shouting through the letter box. . . . Then I turned on the television set, and I didn't move from in front of it for the rest of the day" (Phillips, *The Lost Child* 223). After losing her child, Monica stagnates like the enslaved mother.

Monica's traumatic everyday experience undergoes history (Cvetkovich); it belongs to neither the dominant (British national) memory nor the postcolonial counter-memory embodied in Julius but to seemingly trivial occurrences that can be elucidated only by intersectionality. *The Lost Child* revisits the insidious archives of pain that are left out from discourses of national or collective trauma and seeks justice for mothers who have lost their children over the course of history. Thus, the novel's complex narrative structure has two outcomes. First, it illustrates what Craps calls an "ethics of engagement"[12] in Phillips' texts, which work against and move beyond individuals' isolation in experiencing their trauma ("Linking Legacies of Loss" 201). Second, it activates LaCapra's "empathetic unsettlement": the reader is not allowed to inappropriately identify with Monica's pain because the focalization changes from the enslaved mother, Mr. Earnshaw, Emily Brontë, Monica, her father, Ben, Tommy, and Heathcliff, complicating and contesting a single perspective. Phillips' oeuvre of rewriting the insidious archives of pain from

Heathcliff's mother to Monica's modern-day depression connect seemingly isolated incidents that nevertheless are historically related.

IV. Intersectionality as Poetics

The theme of "writing back" to the canon of English literature has been widely analyzed in postcolonial literary studies.[13] Postcolonial rewritings negotiate, abrogate, dialogize, mimic, and invert the discursive field that the canonized pre-text represents. For John Thieme, instances of writing back engage "the whole of the discursive field within which such a text operated and continues to operate in postcolonial worlds" (4). Rewritings adapt the textual field that canonized certain texts, such as *Wuthering Heights*, by reorganizing its naturalized colonial structures. Postcolonial rewritings hybridize their intertextual relations with canonical texts beyond the logic of original versus copy. Homi Bhabha argues that the effects of mimicry on the authority of colonial discourse are so profound and disturbing that a rewriting unsettles the "original" colonial logic (86). Rewriting remembers the canonic text differently, adding fictional layers to the original text. The chains of adaptations, cultural translations, and rewritings constitute a (textual and poetic) memory for a certain text. Postcolonial literature, in many ways, takes on the task of creating counter-memories, stories retelling local or oppressed memories in order to enable remembering for culturally displaced subjects. I argue that the way *The Lost Child* "remembers" *Wuthering Heights* is fundamentally intersectional. In this sense, intersectionality complicates narrative intertextuality: the rewritten textual layers in *The Lost Child* intersectionalize the colonial logic of Brontë's novel. *The Lost Child* does not merely retell *Wuthering Heights* but uses its colonial frame to describe how other axes of experience (class, gender, sexuality, etc.) take effect within a colonial paradigm.

Phillips includes the textual and historical legacy of colonial marginalisation in *The Lost Child*. Its depictions of modern marginalization and depression are framed alongside the colonial and gothic ethos of *Wuthering Heights*. Gilroy explicitly connects memory to the renewal of the novel form in *The Black Atlantic* (1993). He argues that the novel form is connected to "the different types of memory and remembrance

which it solicits from its readers" (Gilroy 218). The narrative structure of *The Lost Child* also engages with the Black Atlantic. The novel connects modern British experience to the transnational history of slavery, particularly through the figure of the enslaved mother sitting at the Liverpool harbor. Thus, Phillips' process of rewriting is an act of poetic remembrance that conveys cross-cultural legacies for future readers. Phillips creates a modern nexus of social dis/advantages in dialogue with the colonial past: the metanarratives of *Wuthering Heights* are rewritten in the transnational and intersectional sphere as Monica's story actualizes through the history of the Black Atlantic.

Literary genres, too, might be considered in terms of memory. Genre marks the similarity of features within a corpus of texts and so is not particular to a specific text. By conveying the characteristics of previous texts, genre "remembers" the texts that came before. Thus, genre gives aesthetic and poetic directions for readers navigating a unique work of fiction. For Mikhail Bakhtin, genre preserves some elements of writing yet allows them to change over time: "a genre lives in the present, but always remembers its past, its beginning. Genre is a representative of creative memory in the process of literary development" (106). In *The Lost Child*, generic memory is intersectional: Phillips recalibrates *Wuthering Heights* in order to highlight gender, race, class, and sexuality. For instance, Monica's numbness and insidiously traumatized sense of self become comprehensible through intertextual "memories" of the enslaved mother's trauma and Emily Brontë's psychic decline. Bénédicte Ledent and Evelyn O'Callaghan argue that the novel evokes mysteriousness and the recognition of unreason in its literary reference to *Wuthering Heights* (233). They also claim that Phillips' allusions to *Wuthering Heights* provide a tradition or literary progeny to dysfunctional family ties (236).

Two chapters in *The Lost Child* address these dysfunctional family ties: "The Family" and "Family." The first describes the Brontës, and the latter concentrates on the schoolmaster's efforts to connect with his grandson Ben. In both chapters, the loss of a mother haunts the narration. In "The Family," Emily thinks about "the mother whom neither sister can fully recall" and "the numbness of loss" that "followed them

out of childhood" (Phillips, *The Lost Child* 96). In "Family," Ben lets the traumatic memories of loss come to the forefront when he meets his grandfather:

> Memory blunders towards Ben as he suddenly feels undone by the very sound of this man's voice. He has spent six long years attempting to empty his mind of his mother's treatment of them both [Ben and Tommy], and now here he is, in this hotel bar, suddenly remembering the dumb stories that Derek Evans encouraged her to write that he said he'd pass on to the arts editor of the Post. Tommy insisted he was alright, but Ben was always trying to tell his brother that Mam's friend was a liar. (205)

Ben's anguished memories about Derek further connect Monica, in her numbness, to Emily. They are both women who write, an activity not possible for the dark-skinned enslaved mother. For readers, the sense of loss connecting both novels becomes a kind of genre-related memory infusing Monica's and Ben's experiences. *The Lost Child* remembers the genre of the colonial novel that features lost boys and orphaned children. Fractured families and lost children of the Empire haunt both the fictional and metafictional levels of *The Lost Child.* I suggest that intersectionality can be expressed through textual layering and chains of intertextuality. Intersectional memory grows out of the textual layers of *The Lost Child.* Writing back and supplementing canonical texts provides Phillips a space for creating history from absences—intersectional archives for the oppressed.

V. Politics of Palimpsest

Max Silverman uses the concept of palimpsestic memory to describe the nature of the present as nonlinear, derived from the condensation of different moments and temporal horizons. Silverman argues that the relationship between past and present "takes the form of a superimposition and interaction of different temporal traces to constitute a sort of composite structure, like a palimpsest, so that one layer of traces can be seen through, and is transformed by, another" (3). For him, palimpsest

memory emphasizes the shadows of the past in the present; furthermore, the past appears as multiple moments in time and space that condense "different moments, and recreates each due to the connection between them" (3–4). I intend to complement Silverman's ideas with intersectionality. I consider intersectional memories as hubs where several experiential axes meet but are insufficiently described using single-axis terms. Silverman highlights palimpsestic structures whereby "one element is seen through and transformed by another," composing hybrid forms of cultural memory in literature and film that resist the tendency of traumatic histories to "compartmentalize memory on ethno-cultural lines" (4). However, Silverman limits his discussion of palimpsestic memory to ethno-cultural events, analyzing, for instance, how Holocaust literature is often in dialogue with other stories of racism. These ethno-cultural palimpsests can themselves be further hybridized and mobilized by intersectional palimpsests, which recognize their gendered, sexualized, and class-related layers.

Silverman also discusses the poetics of palimpsestic memories—that is, how they are depicted in art. For him, literary palimpsests, like palimpsest memory, reveal "how time and space are reconfigured through a ceaseless process of straddling and superimposition of elements and condensation of meaning," and art has a responsibility to examine the "shapes of memory" regarding traumatic events (22). Silverman concludes that "palimpsestic memory is therefore a politics of memory founded on a poetics of memory" (22). I find this argument crucial to reading Phillips' *The Lost Child*. The novel activates palimpsest memory by evoking the history of slavery, Brontë's mental fragility, and Monica's psychic condition together. Phillips complicates the shadows of the past with an intersectional matrix of memories, thus turning memory politics into memory poetics with multilayered stories. These seemingly unrelated issues give individual (gendered, sexualized, class-related) anxiety a collective and historical dimension. *The Lost Child* comprises a constellation of memories shaped by and interpreted through layers of other memories. These memories are not only ethno-cultural but intersectional: the novel supplements stories about race with those of gender,

sexuality, class, or bodily ability. The poetics of intersectional palimpsest is inherent in the structure of the novel.[14]

In *The Lost Child*, memory depends on different historical frames. The reader encounters Monica guided by the ghosts of the enslaved mother and Emily Brontë. Monica's unhappy love affairs and her evolution from an Oxford student and middle-class daughter to a marginalized social security recipient with children taken into custody are haunted by her foremothers' tragedies. The novel depicts the women turning into ghostly memories, palimpsests beneath reality. The foremothers take on a ghostly presence at the moment of their death: the enslaved mother's ghost goes on "another journey, another crossing" after her final breaths (Phillips, *The Lost Child* 12), while the chapters describing Monica falling into madness are preceded by the depiction of the Emily Brontë character also turning into a ghost. In the coffin Emily knows that she now lives "in two worlds" (112). The two ghosts are metaphors for haunting histories and palimpsestic pasts in *The Lost Child*. They frame and mediate Monica's suffering by relating it to women's collective traumas. Cvetkovich uses the concept of haunting to describe the past that remains hidden but present in cultural practices and the psyche.[15] However, in *The Lost Child* this haunting is not only palimpsestic but intersectional, as one ghost carries the female suffering of the Black Atlantic while the other mediates the suffocating nature of white patriarchal society. Monica's alienation and her boys' traumatic experiences are framed by the Middle Passage histories of the slave trade, the sexual abuse of female bodies, and forced exile.

Besides ghosts, Phillips' novel uses silence as a metaphor. The hurt is pushed aside, and the silence "screens" (to use Freud's term)[16] something that remains unarticulated. Silence marks the traces of insidious trauma, as the characters leave things unsaid throughout the novel: "Tommy chose to say nothing to me" (Phillips, *The Lost Child* 167), Ben explains; Ben himself hates Derek, "but he didn't tell this to Tommy" (205); Monica's father "deliberately didn't say anything to his grandson" (209); Monica's mother learns to lock away "all her talk inside her" (58); Emily Brontë moves her mouth "but no words emerge" (95);

and Monica decides not to "ask questions, or answer them" (236). These silences denote the intersectionally insidious trauma for which they have no words. Their traumas are not single issues that can be named but the results of lives full of hurt, rendered visible only through intersectionality. Tommy's life is traumatic not only because he lives in a racist society and is bullied at school but for a myriad of other reasons: his lost father, the empty promises made by Monica and Derek, poverty, the wasted chance to pursue a professional football career, his frail mother, his distant brother, and the cumulative effects of class, race, and social status. Sandra Courtman reads Phillips' essay "Colour Me English" (2011) as a way to gain "linguistic control" over individual trauma by framing it within a broader history of colonial violence (31). While the characters of *The Lost Child* are not able to gain linguistic control over their traumas, the palimpsestic intertextuality of the novel creates an engagement with a broader history of oppression.

Phillips' many palimpsests are also self-reflexive because he uses his own works as intertexts. Monica lives in a "tiny attic room" (214). She "creep[s] around the house" when everybody else is asleep (evoking characters from novels by the Brontë sisters) and has "a face that does not fit" (214) (reminiscent of Jean Rhys' Creole characters). Monica is also reminiscent of Emily, a main character in Phillips' *Cambridge* (1991) as well as the Othello character from *The Nature of Blood*.[17] Phillips' intertextuality thus evokes his own previous texts, deepening and varying his own themes and adding another level to the textual memory of the novel. According to Ledent and O'Callaghan, Phillips "asks readers to build bridges between different narratives" that have in common "the pathologized human products of racial and cultural contact, those creolized and miscegenated, often illegitimate children of empire, in most cases unwanted and unacknowledged, who are still wandering in search of a textual home" (240). I suggest that these bridges are intersectional. The traumas and memories of *The Lost Child*'s characters are historical and cultural, going beyond simply individual experiences. The novel's textual composition, using heteroglossic references, is intersectional. Ledent and O'Callaghan describe the novel's composition as "broken in terms of structure and fractured in terms of narrative," which mirrors the

fractured lives of the book's characters (243). I suggest that this brokenness is held together by intersectional bridges and palimpsestic structures.

VI. Cultural Memory as Intersectional

The Lost Child introduces a variety of characters whose sense of the past is fragmented. In the section called "Childhood," which consists of fragments of Ben's memories, the chapters are titled with pop songs that he associates with a particular memory. Ben's sense of the past is mediated by popular culture, and auditory stimuli tease out his memories: "The summer before I went to university was the hottest on record, and Abba were at number one for nearly two months. Even now when I hear the song ["Dancing Queen"], I start to sweat" (Phillips, *The Lost Child* 187). For Ben, the past is linked to social and cultural events, which guide Ben's process of remembering. Ann Rigney recognizes a plurality of ways in which creative artists and artistic representations may change and multiply the repertoires of cultural models that mediate memories (73). The pop songs framing Ben's memory underline the cultural nature of his process of remembering personal events. Ben reacts to his family's poverty by "nick[ing]" an Adam Faith record and listening to "The Time Has Come" (142); Mary Hopkins' "Those Were the Days" sets the tone for the best evenings when Monica is with Ben and Tommy instead of with Derek (145); "Hey Jude" plays in the background as the woman who takes care of the brothers after they are taken into custody shouts at them angrily (151); Mungo Jerry plays "In the Summertime" when Ben is invited to a party for a first time (155); and Rod Stewart's "Maggie May" frames the memory of Ben looking at the chest of his first crush (157).

Representations mediate seemingly personal memories. Besides pop tunes, the Olympics organize Ben's memories:

> Our Tommy disappeared the same summer that they had the Olympics in Munich, West Germany. I used to watch every day, mainly the athletics and the swimming, and I remember all the excitement over Mark Spitz and Dave Wottle and Lasse Virén, and the sudden confusion when the athletes were killed. I was confused too. (172)

The Munich killings involved Jewish athletes and were an attack of extreme ethnic violence.[18] *The Lost Child* demonstrates how memory is influenced by gendered, sexual, class-related, religious, and other social and psychic experiences. In analyzing the several temporal levels of Phillips' earlier novels, Rothberg discusses the novels' "metonymic chains of multiple identification" (157), chains that connect "colonialism to other histories and thus sets a stage for the articulation of multidirectional memory" (158). Metonymic memory guides the juxtaposition of Tommy's disappearance and the shooting of Jewish athletes: the individual's pain is mediated by and paralleled to international and public trauma.

Phillips' fiction, rather than creating counter-memories (relying on an oppositional logic between dominant and subversive memories), creates multidirectional and transnational webs of memories representing the interlinked nature of several versions of narrated memories that do not form a cohesive whole. A white single mom in 1960s Leeds experiences poverty differently from the way an orphaned Black child in an early 1800s Liverpool port does, yet the juxtaposition of their stories shows how they share an experience of alienation. In this way, the novel directs the reader's empathy for the orphan child towards the single mom, too, multiplying the reader's affects in a way that avoids "crude empathy" (Craps, "Linking Legacies of Loss"). Postcolonial memory studies use such terms as "rememory"[19] and re/membering to challenge the colonized past. Memory highlights minority groups' fragmented sense of history that must become, collectively and creatively, composed anew in order to narrate themselves into being, to re/member their own past.[20] I suggest that *The Lost Child* intersectionalizes layers of memory by telling stories of poverty, loneliness, and gendered abuse.

The way to remember in Phillips' novel incorporates both remembering and forgetting, telling and remaining silent. These acts are not oppositional but relational; furthermore, they build matrix-like sites for memory. Adrienne Rich argues that all kinds of cultural amnesias should be resisted vigilantly in order to avoid romanticized nostalgia. Her example is the nostalgic longing for the romanticized "Gay" 1890s with its flamboyance, "gaslight, looped velvet swags, mustache cups, and marble-topped tables" (140). According to Rich, this is a white man's

nostalgia that forgets genocide against Indigenous peoples, immigrants living under neoslavery, and women's wages in sweatshops (140). In this example she intersectionalizes the nostalgic memory by supplying other memories that take into account race, gender, and class. The intersectional memory studies that I am envisioning here deconstruct and render visible the other implied vectors beyond ethnic relations that are foundational to Rothberg's multidirectionality and Silverman's palimpsest memory. Intersectional memory looks at the blind spots of cultural memories. It renders visible how cultural frames for remembering might include presuppositions of whiteness, middle-classness, or heterosexuality. *The Lost Child* intersectionalizes the frames on which collective memory is based and through which it is interpreted.

VII. Conclusion: Intersectionality as Poetics and Politics of the Novel

Depictions of memory in literature highlight that the past is never fixed; instead, it is subjected to retelling and restructuring. Intersectionality provides a kaleidoscopic vantage on the past, complicating monolithic versions of it. For Silverman, the concept of palimpsestic memory allows for new solidarities to emerge across a transnational and postmodern age since correspondences, substitutions, and transformations may open up alternative histories (29). For Phillips, these correspondences are intersectional. His vision of intersectional memory enables readers to grasp the insidious, everyday pain that undergoes history. In its effort to mobilize and challenge dominant memory practices, the novel's intersectionality is reflected in its structure and formal elements. Intersectional politics and poetics in *The Lost Child* challenge the idea of one shared, collective memory and in doing so help uncover the insidious effects of marginalization.

As intersectionality evokes transnationality and solidarity, I suggest that a shared sense of alienation provides a basis for understanding and solidarity in Phillips' novel. It is not sameness but rather a shared sense of difference that enables new possibilities for solidarity and understanding, reflecting "the cross-cultural ethical engagement" that Craps envisions (*Postcolonial Witnessing* 2). By framing Monica's story

with complex culturally and historically intersecting memories, Phillips' novel connects her loneliness and alienation to historical traumas, a technique Rothberg calls "indirect invocation"—the disruptions and continuums of a traumatic history whose effects still register (Rothberg 170). Monica's economic, psychic, and gendered isolation registers histories of slavery, orphaned children, and madness. Her individual emotions become metonymically identifiable for a wide readership, and the novel thus suggests the potential for solidarity. The intersectional framing of individual stories highlights the relative and complex nature of the individual experience as historically, socially, and culturally mediated. Phillips renders visible the other implied vectors of traumatic experiences that are too easily lost in official archives to engage with the invisible injustices inherent in insidious traumas.

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Notes

1 In this way, *The Lost Child* is reminiscent of Phillips' other writing, which, according to Rothberg, examines themes of juxtaposed histories and diasporic memories as well as the structural problems that connect these seemingly separate histories and memories (Rothberg 159).
2 For more on typical themes in Phillips' novels, see Ledent, Rothberg, Ledent and Tunca, Boutros, and McLeod's "Caryl Phillips and Ordinariness."
3 See Dawson and Rothberg for discussions of how Jewish history is intertwined with the Othello-character's story in *The Nature of Blood*.
4 In Genettean understanding, hypertext derives from or refers to a previous text, a hypotext. A hypertext, such as Joyce's *Ulysses*, is a direct "descendant" of its hypotext, Homer's *Odysseia*. Hypertexts are related to hypotexts but are not necessarily commentaries on them.
5 For more on identity politics-based poetry, see my article "Identity Politics."
6 For more on intersectionality's effects on different levels, whether personal, social, or symbolic, see Collins and Bilge, May, and Carastathis.
7 Matsuda formulates questions of intersectionality as follows: "When I see something that looks racist, I ask, 'Where is the patriarchy in this?' When I see something that looks sexist, I ask, 'Where is the heterosexism in this?' When I see

something that looks homophobic, I ask, 'Where are the class interests in this?'" (1189).

8 I have applied intersectionality's potential to Caribbean literature, particularly in terms of queerness, in *Queer Rebellion*.

9 For more on decolonial demands on trauma studies, see Ward, Craps' *Postcolonial Witnessing*, Kabir, Rothberg, and Cvetkovich.

10 For more on the debate about Phillips' practice of juxtaposing texts, see Craps' *Postcolonial Witnessing* and Ledent.

11 For more on intersectionality and trauma theory in literature, see my article "Intersectionality."

12 In his analysis of Phillips' *Higher Ground* (1989) and *The Nature of Blood* (1997), Craps sees Phillips' overall objectives as fundamentally cross-cultural and transnational. My argument is that Phillips' artistic vision has evolved towards intersectionality.

13 The concept of postcolonial authors rewriting or "writing back" to the colonial canon can be found in Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin; McLeod's *Beginning Postcolonialism*; and Thieme.

14 Silverman focuses on memory studies with his analysis of various palimpsests in literature and art as do I. In literary studies, however, the most influential articulation of palimpsests is Genette's. Genette uses the concept of the palimpsest to describe the myriad ways in which a text is related to other texts.

15 Cvetkovich borrows the concept of "haunting" from Gordon's *Ghostly Matters* (1997).

16 Freud's screen memory refers to how one memory can be replaced by another. In Rothberg's words, "Freud determines that the banal memory of the everyday is in fact a screen memory, 'one that owes its value as a memory not to its intrinsic content but the relation obtaining between this content and some other which has been suppressed'" (Rothberg 13).

17 See Ledent and O'Callaghan, pp. 235–42 for their analysis of Phillips' inter- and intratexts (references to his own previous novels). I apply their findings to my discussion about palimpsestic memory.

18 During the 1972 Munich Olympics, members of the terrorist group Black September attacked members of the Israeli Olympic team. After killing two athletes, they took nine athletes as hostages. All of them were killed.

19 Rememory is a term that has been incorporated into the field of postcolonial literary studies through Morrison's use of it in *Beloved*. According to Rody, "[r]ememory transforms memory into a property of consciousness with the heightened imaginative power sufficient to the ethnic historical novel's claim to represent the past" (28).

20 For more on minority literatures, memory, and postcoloniality, see Anim-Addo; Göttsche; and Singh, Skerrett, and Hogan.

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