

Notes

1. Since Mahayana Buddhism, or any other kind of Buddhism for that purpose, disappeared from India after the Muslim arrival in the eleventh-thirteenth centuries, when speaking of Mahayana Buddhism I generally look, as many Sanskritists have done before, at Tibet. Indian Buddhism was transmitted to Tibet in two waves (first in the eighth c. and then in the eleventh c. AD) and through its hybrid appropriation of the Mahayana we can infer how certain aspects of Indian Buddhism were like.
2. As King explains at length in *Early Advaita and Buddhism*, both traditions develop in dialectical dispute and debate against each other, thus borrowing each other's arguments constantly for the purpose of refutation. Ironically, they ended up resembling each other substantially.
3. For an account of this process and its reversal in an Advaita context see Suthren Hirst (2005: 83–85). For the Buddhist explanation see Freemantle (2003: 141–72) and Trungpa (2002: 121–48).
4. For a discussion of how these liberative narratives work in a Mahayana Buddhist context see Kapstein.
5. For an instance of how the Advaita path to liberation is mediated through a homecoming narrative see Suthren Hirst (2005: 81). A similar analogy to one's own nature (i.e. Dharma as such, or phenomena as they are) as a true home beyond the endless wandering through illusory homelands can be found in the following verse by Milarepa (eleventh c AD): 'Sometimes longing for your homeland may arise / When longing for your homeland arises hold the permanent place of Dharma-as-such as your home. / Understand your motherland as illusion. / Experience whatever arises as Dharmakaya' (Gampopa, 1998: 316).
6. Frequently in the *Mahabharata* a dilemma experienced by one of the characters is used as a way of introducing a store that might offer some way of resolving or dissolving such ambivalence. For a thorough exploration of many such dilemmas see Matilal (ed.) (1989).
7. In fact the historicity of certain tellings of the *Ram Katha* remains a highly contended political issue, as the 2007 Ram Setu controversy instantiates. For a Hindu nationalist account of the Ram Setu incident see Hindu (2007).
8. As any encounter constructed as foundational, the story has been told and retold on numerous occasions. Two interesting instances from the colonial period are 'Zamor' and 'Alexander the Great and the Brahmin Sanyasins' (Anonymous [1828] and Bhonsle [1926], respectively).
9. Bhabha's definition of mimicry seems to fit Willie's project, since it constructs 'the signifier of colonial *mimicry* as the affect of hybridity – at once a mode of appropriation and of resistance, from the disciplined to the desiring. [...] Then, as discrimination turns into the assertion of the hybrid, the insignia of authority becomes a mask, a mockery' (1994: 172).
10. For a brief discussion of some of these debates, especially about the differences between Gandhi's and Ambedkar's approach to the caste issue see Ghose (2003).

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Jewish/Postcolonial Diasporas in the Work of Caryl Phillips

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1 Jewish/postcolonial diasporas

In this chapter I consider Caryl Phillips's representation of diasporic subjectivity from the perspective of the metaphor-metonymy debate and in the context of the gaping disciplinary divide between Jewish and postcolonial studies, a divide that comes as something of a surprise in light of the host of shared concerns that might seem to unite them. Bryan Cheyette (2000; 2009), Paul Gilroy (1993; 2004) and Michael Rothberg (2009) have recently remarked on the conspicuous lack of interaction between the two fields, both of which grapple with the legacies of histories of violence perpetrated in the name of racist ideologies and imperialist political projects. In the introduction to a recent special issue of *Wasafiri* devoted to 'Jewish/Postcolonial Diasporas,' Cheyette notes that histories of victimization such as the Holocaust and colonial oppression, and the literatures dealing with these respective histories, are being thought of in isolation as a result of 'the narrowness and exclusions of the academy' (2009: 2). Histories and literatures are limited to 'separate spheres' by 'our professional guilds,' as '[n]ew disciplinary formations – postcolonial studies, diaspora studies, ethnic studies, Jewish studies and Holocaust studies – tend to define themselves in relation to what they exclude' (2009: 2). In his book *Between Camps: Nations, Cultures and the Allure of Race*, which extends the argument first made in the last chapter of *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (1993) about the need to make connections across black and Jewish diasporic histories, Gilroy asks: 'Why does it remain so difficult for so many people to accept the knotted intersection of histories produced by this fusion of horizons?' (2004: 78).

Cheyette addresses just this question in an earlier article, in which he explores theoretical impediments that prevent postcolonial studies from incorporating Jewish history into a broader understanding of a colonizing Western modernity (2000: 53). Continuities and overlaps between Jewish and colonial experience have remained underexplored, Cheyette points out, because of the reluctance or inability of many postcolonial theorists to perceive Jews as anything other than as part of a supposedly homogeneous white, 'Judeo-Christian' majoritarian tradition (2000: 54). Such a stance 'flattens out the ambivalent position of Jews,' who, while historically at the heart of European metropolitan culture, were at the same time banished from its privileged sphere (2000: 55). By talking about a dominant Western 'Judeo-Christian' tradition, postcolonial theory denies Jews minority status and dismisses them as simple beneficiaries if not enablers or perpetrators of European oppression.

Cheyette gives three reasons to explain postcolonial theory's resistance to breaking down the separate spheres between Jews and other ethnicities. The first of these is the past complicity of many individual Jews with the colonial enterprise. The most famous example of this phenomenon is the Jewish-born British prime minister Benjamin Disraeli, who 'successfully promoted English Jingoism along with the Victorian cult of Empire' (2000: 55). Secondly, there is the history of Zionism, which points to Jewish collusion with colonial practices that continues to this day. Thirdly, tensions in contemporary black-Jewish relations in the US, both within and outside the academy, have reinforced the compartmentalization of black and Jewish histories and literatures. At the heart of the problem is the perceived appropriation of black experience by the Jewish community. The Holocaust has achieved mainstream recognition in the US, making it 'a convenient filter through which other more immediate American histories of oppression – such as the history of slavery and the genocide of Native Americans – can be under-played' (2000: 58). The Americanization of the Holocaust, Cheyette goes on, 'allows the United States to forget or play down its policies of genocide and racial oppression on its own back door,' which explains why black-Jewish relations in the US have become increasingly strained since the late 1960s (2000: 58).¹

While Cheyette's focus is on the diffidence shown by postcolonial studies towards Jewish studies, it is fair to say that the feeling is mutual. Indeed, further complicating the dialogue between Jewish and postcolonial studies is a strongly held belief in the uniqueness of the Holocaust among many Jewish studies scholars. As Rothberg points

out, the proponents of uniqueness typically refuse to consider the Holocaust and other catastrophic histories in a common frame: they 'assiduously search out and refute all attempts to compare or analogize the Holocaust in order to preserve memory of the Shoah from its dilution or relativization' (2009: 9). Critics of uniqueness or of the politics of Holocaust memory, on the other hand, 'often argue [...] that the ever-increasing interest in the Nazi genocide distracts from the consideration of other historical tragedies' (2009: 9) – this is, of course, the third reason adduced by Cheyette to explain postcolonial theory's cold-shouldering of Jewish history.

Though, generally speaking, there has been little interaction between Jewish and postcolonial studies, a number of theorists and historians have long recognized continuities between the history of the European Jews and the history of European colonialism. In the early 1950s, Hannah Arendt identified an inextricable interrelationship between the phenomena of anti-Semitism, imperialism and totalitarianism, which, in the preface to *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, she named '[t]he subterranean stream of Western history' (2004: xxvii). Around the same time Aimé Césaire argued, in *Discourse on Colonialism* (2000), that Nazism should be viewed as the continuation of Europe's treatment of various non-European peoples in the previous centuries. Hitler, he suggested, 'applied to Europe colonialist procedures which until then had been reserved exclusively for the Arabs of Algeria, the coolies of India, and the blacks of Africa' (2000: 14). This understanding of Nazism as colonialism revisited on Europe also informs more recent research in the fledgling field of comparative genocide studies by scholars such as A. Dirk Moses (2002), Mark Mazower (2008), David Moshman (2001), Dan Stone (2004) and Jürgen Zimmerer (2005). These and other scholars have sought to remove the 'conceptual blockages' (Moses, 2002) in comparing modern atrocities, to move beyond notions of the Holocaust's uniqueness that might inscribe a hierarchy of suffering across modernity, and to elicit the structural continuities and discontinuities between atrocious events.

There has so far been little parallel work by literary and cultural critics; however, notable exceptions include Michael Rothberg (2009), Bryan Cheyette (2000; 2009), Max Silverman (2008), Paul Gilroy (1993; 2000b), Robert Eaglestone (2008) and Aamir Mufti (2007). A particularly noteworthy intervention is Rothberg's recent monograph titled *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (2009), which illuminates what he calls the 'multidirectional' orientation of collective memory. Rothberg offers an alternative

to the 'competitive memory' model – shared, as he points out, by many proponents and critics of uniqueness – according to which the capacity to remember historical tragedies is limited and any attention to one tragedy inevitably diminishes our capacity to remember another. Against this framework, which understands collective memory as 'a zero-sum struggle over scarce resources', he suggests that we consider memory as multidirectional, that is, 'as subject to ongoing negotiation, cross-referencing, and borrowing; as productive and not privative' (2009: 3). Rothberg disputes the idea that comparisons between atrocities inevitably erase the differences between them and imply a false equivalence. In focusing on the Holocaust, he seeks to avoid the twin pitfalls of sacralization and trivialization: the tendency, on the one hand, to emphasize the distinctness of the Holocaust to such an extent that it cannot be compared to anything else; and that, on the other, to relativize or dilute its memory by homogenizing very different histories. In his book, Rothberg engages with an important but largely overlooked archive of literary as well as theoretical and cinematic texts at the intersection of Jewish and postcolonial studies, in which Holocaust memory and memory of slavery or colonial memory come together again and again, not in competition but resonating deeply and profoundly with and through each other.

One master of this genre of what Rebecca Walkowitz has called 'comparison literature' (2006; 2009) is no doubt the black British Caribbean writer Caryl Phillips, to whose work Rothberg devotes half a chapter of his book.² The other half of the chapter deals with the work of the French Jewish author André Schwarz-Bart. 'I can think of no other two authors,' Rothberg writes, 'whose projects turn so definitively on interrogating the links between European Jewish and African, African diaspora, and Caribbean history' (2009: 153). Taking my cue from Rothberg, I will investigate how and to what effect memories of black and Jewish suffering are brought together in Phillips's fiction and non-fiction. In his novels *Higher Ground* (1989) and *The Nature of Blood* (1997), as well as in his travel book *The European Tribe* (1987c), Phillips interweaves stories of anti-Semitic and racist violence set in many different times and places.³ I will illuminate the connections between different histories established in these texts by recourse to rhetorical tropes such as metaphor and metonymy, understood not only as poetic devices but also in the extended sense of deep structures of thought that determine the way one looks at history (cf. White, 1973). Phillips's work, I argue, seeks to foster attunement to multiple histories of suffering and to

move beyond various tribalisms by supplementing a metaphorical view of history, which, in its insistence on similarity, threatens to conflate distinct historical experiences, with a metonymical view, which places them alongside one another and thus preserves the distance between them. Dismantling anti-comparativist impulses, his work can be seen to present a fuller picture of the dark underside of modernity and to pave the way for alliances and solidarities that transcend race, ethnicity, nationality, religion and culture.

2 Caryl Phillips and the Jewish experience

Phillips's interest in Jewishness is not due to family connections, though he is in fact partly Jewish. As he reveals in his collection of essays and reviews *A New World Order*, his maternal grandfather, Emmanuel de Fraites, was 'a Jewish trader with Portuguese roots that reached back to the island of Madeira' (2001: 130). However, Phillips did not learn about this Jewish ancestor until the 1980s; his fascination with the Holocaust started much earlier. In his essay 'In the Ghetto,' included in *The European Tribe*, he notes that his interest in the Nazi genocide can be traced back to his experience of growing up black in Britain at a time when there was little informed public discussion of his own situation: 'As a child, in what seemed to me a hostile country, the Jews were the only minority group discussed with reference to exploitation and racialism, and for that reason, I naturally identified with them' (1987d: 54). Having no access to any representations of slavery, colonialism or their legacies, Phillips tried to make sense of his experience and history through the prism of Jewish suffering: 'The bloody excesses of colonialism, the pillage and rape of modern Africa, the transportation of 11 million black people to the Americas, and their subsequent bondage were not on the curriculum, and certainly not on the television screen. As a result I vicariously channelled a part of my hurt and frustration through the Jewish experience' (1987d: 54). Phillips's earliest response to the Holocaust, then, was one of substitution: there being no public reference points for the black experience in Britain, the Holocaust was made to fill that void.⁴

The metaphorical logic underlying Phillips's relationship to Jewish history at this point in his youth also informs his earliest literary production. As he reveals elsewhere in *The European Tribe*, in an essay titled 'Anne Frank's Amsterdam,' the first piece of fiction he ever wrote, as a teenager, was '[a] short story about a fifteen-year-old Jewish boy in

Amsterdam' (1987a: 67) who manages to escape transportation to a concentration camp and is saved by a farmer. He wrote this story, which obviously has an element of wish-fulfilment about it, after seeing a programme on television: an episode of the *World at War* series about the Nazi occupation of Holland and the subsequent rounding up of the Jews had made a deep impression on him, summoning up feelings of 'outrage and fear' (1987a: 66). Watching library footage of Bergen-Belsen and Auschwitz, he realized not only 'the enormity of the crime that was being committed' but also 'the precariousness of my own position in Europe' (1987a: 66). After all, 'If white people could do that to white people, what the hell would they do to me?' (1987a: 67). As Phillips has since remarked of the story he went on to write, 'The Dutch boy was, of course, me. A fourteen year old black boy [...] in working-class Yorkshire in the North of England' (1998: 6).

It is clear, then, that Phillips has drawn inspiration from Jewish experience right from the start of his career as a writer. However, when he later revisits the Holocaust in his 'Jewish' novels *Higher Ground* and *The Nature of Blood*, he implicitly criticizes and checks his initial impulse to analogize black with Jewish suffering. As Wendy Zierler points out, *Higher Ground* and *The Nature of Blood* are 'an outgrowth of this early impulse,' but 'instead of presenting his black experience as equal or directly analogous to Jewish experience, Phillips's novels argue for contiguity, not sameness' (2004: 58). More precisely, they are marked by a 'dialectic of difference and sameness' (2004: 58), as Phillips plants within his narratives 'thematic seeds of connection and mutual engagement' but 'preserves distance and difference by telling discrete stories that take place at different times and places, using markedly different narrative points of view, which he then interweaves to explore the larger themes of exile, memory, and alienation' (2004: 58). It should be noted, though, that this metonymical logic is not entirely absent in *The European Tribe* either, as the young writer's identification with Jewishness does not take the form of a 'full-scale metaphoric substitution of one identity or history for another' (Rothberg, 2009: 156). As Rothberg points out, 'Phillip's childhood vicarious experience [...] represents an alternative to notions of competitive memory: the other's history does not screen out one's own past, but rather serves as a screen for multidirectional projections in which solidarity and self-construction merge' (2009: 156). In what follows, I will discuss how the metaphorical and metonymical logics at work in the two 'Jewish' novels that emerged out of *The European Tribe* operate.⁵

3 Parallel histories in *Higher Ground* and *The Nature of Blood*

Both *Higher Ground* and *The Nature of Blood* are obvious examples of what Walkowitz calls 'the anthological novel' (2009: 571), by which she means novels that borrow the structure and strategies of the anthology, sampling and collating stories of – in Phillips's case – racism and anti-Semitism. The anthology is a useful model for Phillips in that 'it articulates at the level of form the problems of order, inclusion, and comparison that migration narratives articulate at the level of content' (Walkowitz, 2006: 537). Aptly described on the book's dust jacket as 'a haunting triptych of the dispossessed and the abandoned – of those whose very humanity is being stripped away', *Higher Ground* features the story of an unnamed African who works as an agent and interpreter in a British slave-trading fort on the west coast of Africa in the late eighteenth century ('Heartland'); the story of Rudy Williams, a young black American detained in a high-security prison for armed robbery during the 1960s ('The Cargo Rap'); and the story of Irina, a Jewish refugee from Poland who escaped the Nazis on a children's transport to England, and Louis, a West Indian man Irina meets hours before he is to return from London to the Caribbean, disillusioned with British society ('Higher Ground'). *The Nature of Blood* follows an even more winding path through space and time, exploring the Nazi persecution of the Jews of Europe through the story of Eva Stern, a young German Holocaust survivor; retelling the story of Shakespeare's Othello, the Moorish general brought to Venice to wage war against the Turks; recounting the story of a blood libel and the ensuing public execution of three Jews in a town near Venice in the late fifteenth century; and following the life of Stephan Stern, Eva's uncle, who left Germany in the 1930s to help found the state of Israel, where in his old age he has a brief encounter with Malka, an Ethiopian Jew suffering racism at the hands of her white co-religionists.

Both novels invite the reader to detect thematic connections between the discrete narratives about disparate characters in different times and places which they juxtapose. In the case of *Higher Ground*, which consists of three clearly demarcated, ostensibly self-contained novellas, the book's subtitle, *A Novel in Three Parts*, encourages the reader to read the three sections together and to uncover parallels between the lives of the individual protagonists. The title of *The Nature of Blood* similarly suggests a basic continuity between the narratives which it places

alongside one another. As Rothberg notes, it gestures at 'a commonality that links the different stories as essentially the same. A transhistorical racist imaginary obsessed with purity of blood seems to unite the various Jewish and black victims across time' (2009: 164). The extremely fragmented structure of the text also prompts the reader to look for connections. The narrative strands that make up the novel are not divided into clearly marked sections or chapters, as in *Higher Ground*, but merge and mingle at an ever-accelerating pace. In the process of disentangling these closely interwoven storylines, the reader cannot help but reflect on what it is that unites them.

The numerous words, phrases, motifs and themes that echo from one narrative to another in both *Higher Ground* and *The Nature of Blood* have been discussed at length by other critics. Rather than rehearsing them here, I will give just a few examples of links between black and Jewish experience from the two novels. In *Higher Ground*, one of the themes connecting the enslavement of Africans recounted in the first section, the plight of black convicts in 1960s America explored in the second section, and the Holocaust and its aftermath examined in the third section, is that of physical and/or psychological captivity. The connection is made explicit by the protagonist of the second section, who, in letters to his relatives and would-be legal representatives, constantly filters his own situation through the prisms of both the Holocaust and African American slavery. Rudy repeatedly uses Holocaust terminology to describe his own experience of incarceration, calling the prison in which he is kept 'Belsen' (1989: 69; 1989: 84; 1989: 145); referring to the wardens as 'the Gestapo Police' (1989: 127); and wondering, while being held in solitary confinement with 24-hour light, whether 'in Nazi Germany they used to keep the lights on as a form of torture' (1989: 72). He also employs images of slavery to depict his detention, and black US citizenship in general, as similar states of imprisonment. For example, he regards the US as a 'plantation society' (1989: 67; 1989: 90) in which emancipation has yet to happen. Having been released from the maximum-security wing into the main prison population, he writes: 'Restrictions still apply, but to me they are as welcome and as liberal as the emancipation proclamation that we have yet to hear' (1989: 147). Rudy's current predicament and the past experience of slavery are linked most memorably in the deranged letter to his dead mother with which this section ends, which brings prison life and plantation atrocities together in a hallucinatory fusion.

In *The Nature of Blood*, the parallels suggested between different characters are even more numerous and conspicuous. For example,

the experience of the black Ethiopian Jew Malka in the 1980s is subtly connected with that of the white German Jew Eva in the 1930s. Their departure from their respective homelands is described in strikingly similar terms. Malka speaks of being 'herded [...] on to buses' and being 'stored like thinning cattle' on the Israeli embassy compound, where she and the other Ethiopian Jews were left to 'graz[e] on concrete' before being airlifted to Israel (1997: 200). This image of people treated like cattle uncannily recalls Eva's description of the crowded boxcar trains in which she and her parents had been forced to travel, like animals, to the concentration camp. Moreover, Malka and Eva both meet with prejudice and suspicion in the foreign country – Israel in the case of the former, England in the case of the latter – in which they try to rebuild their lives after their respective ordeals. Two other characters whose lives closely parallel each other are Stephan Stern and the African general whom we recognize as Othello, though he is not actually named as such in the text. Both characters leave behind their homeland, a wife and a child to start a new life in a different country. Each passes through the island of Cyprus, on the border between the East and the West, and forms a romantic attachment across the colour line. Moreover, each is deluded by a naive idealism: Stephan is disappointed to find that the new homeland for which he had fought as a young man and which he had imagined as a haven for 'the displaced and the dispossessed' (1997: 5) is not free from exclusionary practices, and Othello similarly underestimates the forces of nationalism and racism militating against his dream of being accepted into Venetian society and beginning 'a new life of peace' (1997: 174), although he, unlike Stephan, does not quite seem to have realized this yet when his narrative suddenly breaks off.

4 Difference and distance in *Higher Ground*

In establishing such links among the narratives, *Higher Ground* and *The Nature of Blood* appear to invite the reader to recognize a common human essence that persists across space and time: differences between people which may seem profound are revealed to be only skin-deep. The equation between distinct historical experiences which Phillips's juxtaposition of stories of black and Jewish suffering thus appears to effect has led to accusations that he is appropriating or usurping histories that are foreign to him to articulate his own (people's) distress.⁶ What is often overlooked, though, is the extent to which the novels themselves criticize or problematize such an approach. For example, in *Higher Ground*, the metaphorical conception of history implicit in Rudy

Williams's account does not go unchallenged. As we have seen, Rudy understands his own situation in terms of the historical experiences of Holocaust victims and African American slaves. He regards history as a hall of mirrors, a walk through which affords one endless possibilities for self-recognition. Rudy is far less interested in entering into an ethical relationship with historical others than in appropriating their experience to bolster his own claim to victimhood. His epistolary interactions with his relatives and sympathizers, all of whom he manages to alienate by self-righteously castigating them for their failure to live up to the radical political ideals that he himself has espoused, also betray a measure of ruthlessness. In a rare moment of self-criticism and humility, Rudy admits lacking the strength to love and to be kind, which, as he points out, involves 'giving up not acquiring, opening doors not closing them, reaching out not holding back' (1989: 168–9). Through his life-long endeavour to shape both the past and the present in his own image, he has closed himself off from encounters with modes of existence and experience different from and irreducible to his own. The fact that Phillips follows his story with one of Jewish suffering – that of a Polish Jewish refugee who is haunted by memories of her family members who died in the Holocaust – can be seen as a rebuke of Rudy's self-serving and exploitative analogizing.

Also worth noting is the hesitant, indirect manner in which Phillips tackles the subject of the Holocaust in *Higher Ground*. The first two stories, which are written in the first person and use simultaneous or epistolary narration, are characterized by a sense of intimacy and immediacy that is absent in the third story, which uses third-person retrospective narration. Moreover, as Zierler has observed, the Jewish narrative stands out in that 'it demonstrates a marked reticence about its very subject. Throughout *Higher Ground*, Phillips shies away from directly depicting the Holocaust, enshrouding Irene's story in so much hazy description that one never really gets the same sense of her character and realness as one does for the protagonists of the first two parts' (2004: 61). While Zierler calls Irina's story 'the weakest' of the three pieces on account of its oblique and circumspect treatment of the Holocaust (2004: 61), I subscribe to a more generous reading which regards its not being fully imagined not as proof of writerly failure but as an implicit acknowledgement on the part of the writer of his own distance from the experience he describes. The remarkable restraint which the author shows in dealing with the Holocaust stands in stark contrast – and serves as a corrective – to Rudy's arrogation of imaginative control over this traumatic history.

Moreover, while *Higher Ground* encourages the reader to search for connections between the different histories it recounts, the novel actually stages 'a series of missed encounters' between those histories (Rothberg, 2009: 159). Rudy's overidentification with slaves and Holocaust victims, which traps him in 'a rhetoric of absolute victimization that ultimately eliminates all agency' (Rothberg, 2009: 161), can be regarded as one such missed encounter; the most obvious example, though, is the missed encounter between Irene and Lewis. Though attracted to Irene, Lewis decides to return home to the Caribbean, thus refusing Irene's offer of contact and solidarity. As Rothberg puts it, in *Higher Ground*, 'black and Jewish histories do not actually intersect, but approach each other and then veer away asymptotically' (2009: 162).

5 Complex relations in *The Nature of Blood*

Black-Jewish relations remain a complex matter in *The Nature of Blood*, as is apparent from the stories of Othello and Stephan Stern. Othello, as represented in Phillips's novel, tragically lacks insight into his own situation, failing to see the similarities between his own precarious position and that of the ghettoized Jews in Venice.⁷ In an essay in *The European Tribe* ironically titled 'A Black European Success,' in which he sketches his interpretation of Othello, Phillips points out that behind the imperial glory of Venice lay a pervasive racism and xenophobia: 'Sixteenth-century Venetian society both enslaved the black and ridiculed the Jew' (1987b: 45). Phillips's Othello visits the Jewish ghetto and is depressed by the squalid conditions in which the Jews are forced to live, but he makes no connection to his own situation. Though a Jewish scholar acts as an intermediary between Othello and Desdemona, suggesting the potential for connections between blacks and Jews as victims of European modernity, Othello fails to acknowledge the correspondences between their respective predicaments and learns very little from the Jews' experience of racism and ghettoization. Stephan Stern's brief affair with the black Ethiopian Jew Malka, which concludes the novel, also appears to offer a glimmer of hope, but is marred by incomprehension and prejudice. Few words are exchanged between them, and Stephan never learns the story of Malka's journey to Israel and the racism she and her family have experienced, a story which is offered to the reader in a series of interior monologues that are italicized and enclosed in parentheses. Stephan's and Malka's essential isolation and loneliness, a feature shared by all characters in *The Nature of Blood* (Ledent, 2002:

137), is ultimately unrelieved. It even turns out that Stephan, for all his youthful idealism, is not free from xenophobic impulses himself (Nowak, 2003: 124; Nowak, 2003: 132). Lying in bed with Malka, an immigrant just like him, he reflects: 'she belonged to another land. She might be happier there. Dragging these people from their primitive world into this one, and in such a fashion, was not a policy with which he had agreed. They belonged to another place' (1997: 211–2). The Zionist vision of togetherness and mutuality meets its limit, it seems, in the figure of the racial other.

These missed encounters indicate that *The Nature of Blood* does not assume an uncomplicated relationship between black and Jewish identities and histories. The fact that the differences – both formal and thematic – among the narratives that Phillips juxtaposes are at least as pronounced as the similarities further suggests that the novel rejects simple equations and straightforward analogies. As Stephen Clingman writes, 'the echoes between the stories are suggestive rather than symmetrical, [...] there are waves of connection but also of refraction, interference and shift. We might say therefore that there is a kind of oscillation and vibration among these stories, a displacement back and forth between the metonymic and metaphoric, in which the principle of recognition is at work, but not of simple reproduction or repetition' (2004: 160). In bringing together black and Jewish history, Zierler observes, Phillips 'maintain[s] a pattern of asymmetry,' thereby 'safeguard[ing] their respective integrity and specificity': 'He creates contiguity without direct correspondence, effecting comparison without displacement' (2004: 62–3).

The indirect approach to the Holocaust that characterizes *Higher Ground* is absent, however, in *The Nature of Blood* – or so it seems at first sight. While Phillips's treatment of Jewish history in the former novel is marked by respectful reticence, *The Nature of Blood* broaches the subject of the Holocaust head-on, ostensibly abandoning all restraint. The central consciousness through which Phillips represents the Nazi persecution of the Jews in *The Nature of Blood* is not that of a refugee who has escaped the worst atrocities and hence has no first-hand experience of them, but that of a concentration camp inmate who turns out to have been a member of the *Sonderkommando* and thus an eyewitness to the horror. *The Nature of Blood* draws a psychologically convincing and deeply moving portrait of a Holocaust survivor, of which no less a writer than J. M. Coetzee has remarked: 'pages of Eva's story seem to come straight from hell, striking one with appalling power' (1997: 39). This power derives at least in part from the experimental

modes of representation which Phillips employs in these sections of the novel, which register the shocking and unassimilable nature of the traumatic historical events they portray in formal terms. Yet, while the novel appears to put the reader in close contact with the reality of the Holocaust, it continually reminds him or her of his or her, and the author's, own distance from Eva's experience through the use of intertextuality. The representation of the Holocaust that we are offered is filtered through a number of well-known literary and testimonial texts, most prominently Anne Frank's *Diary of a Young Girl* (2000), allowing Phillips to self-consciously signal his historical and cultural remove from, and his inevitably mediated mode of access to, the reality he represents.⁸

Moreover, the author thwarts easy identification with the Anne Frank story which he echoes by departing very markedly from his source text, thus estranging and unsettling the reader. In his version of the story, the protagonist does not die of typhus in Bergen-Belsen but survives the Holocaust, only to commit suicide in an English hospital a short time later. Eva's older sister, who, like Anne's, is called Margot, turns out to resemble the Anne we know from the diary much more closely than Eva herself. However, sent into hiding by her parents, Phillips's Margot is raped by the man who is sheltering her – clearly a very different character from the individuals who assisted the Frank family while they were in hiding – is arrested, and dies 'on a cold grey morning in a country that was not her own' (1997: 174). As Anne Whitehead points out, the alternative versions of the Anne Frank story that the author provides in Eva and Margot are 'both aimed at revising and challenging popular myths and misconceptions of Anne Frank's story which highlight a consistently optimistic voice' (2004: 107). If Eva's fate shows that 'survival is not necessarily a happy ending,' Margot's fate demonstrates that 'not all of those who sheltered Jews were as selfless in their motivations as the helpers of the Secret Annexe' (2004: 107). Phillips also undermines redemptive, 'feel-good' readings of the diary by radically revising its much-abused most famous line: 'I still believe, in spite of everything, that people are truly good at heart' (Frank, 2000: 329–30). He recasts Anne Frank's hopeful words to convey a message of utter despair which leaves no room for recuperation: 'You see, Eva, in spite of everything that we have lost, they still hate us, and they will always hate us' (1997: 87). Such conspicuous departures from the original story puncture the reader's complacency and invite him or her to confront his or her own appropriative tendencies.

character in *A Distant Shore*: Dr Epstein, who tried to establish herself in an English village but, according to the barman in the local pub, did not 'blend in' (2003: 9). Finally, references to Jewish history and anti-Semitism can be found throughout *The Atlantic Sound*.

4. In the same essay, Phillips mentions how, 'as a black man living in Europe,' he always remembers the words of Frantz Fanon, who in 1952 wrote of his philosophy professor, a native of the Antilles, warning him: 'Whenever you hear anyone abuse the Jews, pay attention, because he is talking about you' (1987d: 54).
5. The analysis that follows reframes and expands the reading developed in my 2008 article 'Linking Legacies of Loss: Traumatic Histories and Cross-Cultural Empathy in Caryl Phillips's *Higher Ground* and *The Nature of Blood*,' which argues that the novels enact a kind of empathy that combines affect and critical awareness, thus opening up a space for cross-cultural encounters in which differences are not effaced but respected.
6. See, for example, Mantel (1997).
7. See also Dawson (2004: 95–6), Thomas (2006: 57) and Whitehead (2004: 102). Zierler, by contrast, misreads Othello's visit to the ghetto as an example of 'Jews and blacks recogniz[ing] themselves in each other' (2004: 64). Another overly affirmative reading of this episode is offered by Nowak, who claims that 'Caryl Phillips is at pains to establish a bond of mutual sympathy between the Moor and the Jews of Venice in the narration of Othello's visits to the ghetto and of his meeting with a Jewish scholar' (2003: 131).
8. Other intertexts include famous literary and testimonial accounts of the Holocaust by Primo Levi (1959), Cynthia Ozick (1990), André Schwarz-Bart (1961) and Elie Wiesel (1956).

8

Metaphors of the Secular in the Fiction of Salman Rushdie

Stephen Morton

1 Introduction

The secular is a significant and unstable trope in Salman Rushdie's fiction. Rushdie's use of metaphor may seem to preserve the distinction between the secular life of the postcolonial nation and the non-secular world evoked in Rushdie's images of the otherworldly such as his parodies of Bombay cinema and in his engagement with *The Arabian Nights*. Yet it is precisely through metaphor that Rushdie interrogates the democratic claims of Nehruvian secularism. Beginning with a discussion of Rushdie's figuration of Saleem Sinai's body as a synecdoche for the Indian body politic in *Midnight's Children*, this essay considers how the secular idea of India is placed under pressure by communal violence, neocolonialism, war and class politics. Saleem's failure to represent the entire Indian population mirrors the false universality of Nehru's nationalist rhetoric. And by staging this false universality, Rushdie imagines the possibility of a future secular nation to come. Such a critique of Nehruvian secularism is developed further in his novel *The Moor's Last Sigh*, wherein Aurora Zogoiby's surreal palimpsest paintings juxtapose the imaginary worlds of Moorish Spain and late-twentieth-century India to disclose the fault lines in postcolonial secularism, as I go on to argue. If the secular idea of India is lampooned in *The Moor's Last Sigh* through the image of Nehru as a taxidermied dog, in *Shalimar the Clown* Rushdie suggests that secularism is bound up with the idea of an imaginary homeland. In the renaming of the female protagonist India as Kashmir in *Shalimar*, the essay concludes by suggesting that Rushdie returns to the utopian land of lost content that framed his diasporic vision of India in *Midnight's Children* and *Imaginary Homelands*.