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“The Torture of Colonization and the Holocaust: Multidirectional Memory in *The Nature of Blood*”

Caryl Phillips’ 1997 novel, *The Nature of Blood*, compels readers to think about the relationship between the Holocaust and colonization through the use of multiple narratives interwoven throughout the novel. The novel’s narratives include the life of Eva Stern, a young Jewish woman who physically survives the horrors of a Nazi death camp, only to find that she cannot emotionally survive the loss of her family and community, leading to her suicide; the life of Stephan Stern, Eva’s uncle who abandoned his family to join the underground in Palestine and who eventually finds that he will never achieve the paradise he is trying to create for the new generation; the life of general Othello, the black man of Shakespearean fame who loses his family and sense of self in a failed attempt to assimilate into Venetian culture; the lives of three Jews of 15th century Venice, Servadio, Giacobbe, and Moses, who are falsely accused, convicted, and executed for the murder of a young, Christian boy; and the life of Malka, a struggling Ethiopian Jewish nurse brought to Israel who also cannot find acceptance in the racist world. The thread that obviously connects all of these stories is the strikingly similar struggles of colonized people and the Jews. The relationship between colonization and the Holocaust is more fully understood by using methods defined by Michael Rothberg as multidirectional memory. Phillips’ novel disturbs the supposed linearity of time, which thereby contests modernity’s storyline in which a never-ending progression through linear time exists. The book also demonstrates the blood and pain underlining both colonization and genocide and reveals the pain found even within the supposed survival promised by assimilation. In my analysis of this work, I will first describe how Michael Rothberg’s idea of multidirectional memory helps the audience understand the connection between the Holocaust and colonization. Then, I will detail how

Phillips uses other works and his own characters to interpret the marginalization of the Jews and the colonized throughout time. Finally, I will conclude by underlining the impact of memory in the novel and the significance of my reading of it.

The Nature of Blood depicts multiple storylines which portray several historical periods: The Holocaust, the 15th century, the early modern period, and Operation Solomon in 1991. The novel is also post-colonial literature, which deals with the struggles of people as they reconcile past domination with new independence or liberation. One of the common tropes of post-colonial lit is endless footnoting and a rejection of linearity, which is portrayed in this novel by the numerous entwined timelines. Those tropes exist because “[postcolonial scholarship] attempts to undo (and redo) the historical structures of knowledge production that are rooted in various histories and geographies of modernity” (Shome 250). The work’s post-colonial nature is cemented by the fact that it was written by a black author and that it reimagines canonized works from marginalized perspectives and characters. “In its best work, [postcolonial scholarship] theorizes not just colonial conditions but *why* those conditions are what they are, and how they can be undone and redone” (Shome 250). Specifically, Phillips’ novel reimagines texts and histories from the perspectives of the colonized (such as Othello) and the victims of racism, which is the keystone of the genre. Therefore, Rothberg’s idea of multidirectional memory is a perfect lens through which to read the novel. He first introduced the concept in *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* to discuss the relationship between Holocaust memory and the memory of slavery in America. The dominant model of memory in the United States to which he was responding believed that collective memory is competitive: “many people assume that the public sphere in which collective memories are articulated is a scarce resource and that the interaction of different collective memories within

that sphere takes the form of a zero-sum struggle for preeminence" (Rothberg 2-3). In other words, the idea of competitive memory believes that memory can be represented in a physical sense where the nonrepresentation of, for example, the sufferings of African-Americans means that those memories are being ignored while the presence of a Holocaust museum means that those memories have won. Meanwhile, multidirectional memory is an understanding that memory is work and labor in the present, discursively constructed, collective, social, and cross-cultural. In his words, multidirectional memory is a "productive, intercultural dynamic" (Rothberg 3). The concept supposes that the memories of the colonized, the black diaspora, and the Holocaust, whether physically represented or not, are intertwined and related to each other, which Phillips is agreeing with in his novel. The way the multiple storylines are woven together (starting with the structure of the narrative and continuing with the connection between the colonized, the black diaspora, and the Jews found in Othello and Malka's stories specifically) indicates that the sufferings of the Jewish characters and the black characters are related. Furthermore, Rothberg asserts that "memory is the past made present," meaning "that memory is a contemporary phenomenon, something that, while concerned with the past, happens in the present" (Rothberg 3-4). Phillips' novel is an example of memory happening in the present because it discusses the past using contemporary ideas. Even though memory is from the past and cannot be separated from history or representation, the active part of memory is modern and ongoing, captures the constructive social side of the past, and displays the individual experience. As a result, the past informs who lives in the present and how they live; however, that relationship is never direct and is "never without unexpected or even unwanted consequences that bind us to those whom we consider other" (Rothberg 5). An example of this phenomena occurring within the novel is when Othello does not see his connection to the Jews around him

and understands them as entirely separate from his own experiences, despite that not being the case. Another more direct example is how Venice determined who would live within the Jewish and black community and how they lived, inevitably tying the histories of the three parties together despite Venice's attempts to ignore that truth. Stemming from that phenomena, one of the benefits of multidirectional memory is that "Memories are not owned by groups—nor are groups 'owned' by memories" (Rothberg 5). This benefit is especially important to note while reading *The Nature of Blood* because Phillips' presentation shows that bloodshed and pain are not unique memories and experiences to the Jewish characters nor the colonized characters separately, but that both parties have suffered in similar ways for similar reasons for centuries.

Through this post-colonial novel, Phillips gives a voice to marginalized groups within works, specifically William Shakespeare's *Othello: The Moor of Venice*, William Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, *The Diary of Anne Frank*, and the dictionary. Altogether, the way Phillips uses these texts, which have respectively shaped public memories of anti-black racism, colonization, and the Holocaust, further discusses, analyzes, and challenges memory, which is important to the concept of multidirectional memory. One such marginalized voice is Othello himself; in this novel, the audience sees Othello before the events of Shakespeare's play and without Iago's influence. The novel focusses on Othello's attempted assimilation into Venetian society and all of the harms that thereby befall him, which will be further examined later in this paper.

The novel also uses the canonized works to make a connection between early modern anti-Semitism and the Holocaust. The impact of early modern anti-Semitism in *The Merchant of Venice* is seen most clearly in the description of the role of and rules for the Jews in 15th century Venice: "The Jewish moneylender offered to the public an indispensable service. ... However,

despite their central role in Venetian society, Jews were ever-mindful that every debtor was a potential enemy, and that the goodwill of usurer often fed the greediness of the borrower” (Phillips 53-54). In Shakespeare's play, Shylock does compellingly criticize the anti-Semitism he experiences, which is often used in modern performances to give sympathy and a voice to the Jewish moneylender; however, he is still the central villain and loses by the end. Shylock's difficult situation is perfectly encapsulated within the novel's description of his role: Shylock suffers and is forced to convert to Christianity (or be killed) because one of his debtors is a powerful enemy. Unfortunately for both Shylock and the Jews of Phillips' novel, the Christian majority hurt them immensely because of their Jewish identities. The significance of the novel's exploring these plays comes down to the differing nature between the two mediums: plays depend on performance and novels give context and characterization that cannot change based on the reader. Meanwhile, Phillips' use of the Holocaust and *The Diary of Anne Frank* can be seen in Eva Stern's storyline: Eva's sister is Margot, Margot is dating Peter (the name of the boy Anne was dating according to her diary), and Margot hides with another family (as Anne's family had hidden). However, the Margot of the novel is closer in characterization to Anne, as seen by the fact that it is Margot's dream to go to Hollywood and that she is the more outgoing of the two sisters. The novel also somewhat alters the idea of destroyed innocence that accompanies the portrayal of the diary by Queering Frank's diary. While in the death camp, Eva forms a relationship with another woman whose complexion is darker than her own: “Bella, I want to live to love. To believe in something. To believe in somebody. Because of Bella, I hope with reckless vigor” (Phillips 179). Firstly, the novel is depicting Eva as a more complex figure than Anne Frank because the audience sees her relationships and her psychological deterioration. Secondly, Eva's love for Bella also reminds the audience that Jews were not the only victims of

the Holocaust: the Nazis eliminated anyone who did not perfectly fit into their idea of the perfect race. Additionally, innocence is destroyed in a new way with Margot's demise. Unlike within the diary, Margot is isolated, invents a friend for herself, and is sexually assaulted by the man who promised to protect her. "Her hiding father told her that things were very bad, and then one night, when his wife was out, he came to visit her. He looked at her, and touched her, but Margot dare not scream... (*Right now you're a very pretty girl, but as you get older your racial character will show.*)" (Phillips 175). Even as he assaults her, the man insinuates that he and his wife would not be helping her if she looked more Jewish and that he only sees her as a temporary object of desire. "When, a week later, the man visited her again, she slid to the floor so she would not fall, and then she screamed" (Phillips 175). Margot's story is not one where the good Christian family protects the innocent, but instead rapes her until she screams, dooming them all. Therefore, the obvious connection between the Holocaust and early modern anti-Semitism, as outlined by the novel, is that Jews cannot survive because they are marginalized and othered by societies wanting to destroy them.

Finally, Phillips also demonstrates that the dictionary fails marginalized groups by including the definitions of words such as Venice, ghetto, Othello, and suicide within the story. These definitions, which are surrounded by the characters living in and acting out the terms, demonstrate how many words and situations go far beyond their written meaning. For the terms of the novel specifically, the dictionary can never fully encapsulate the anti-Semitism, the racism, and the suffering they cause.

When Phillips first introduces the readers to Stephan Stern, the uncle of the main character, at the beginning of the novel, he is helping numerous individuals get to a new country where Jewish people will all finally belong. Another young man by the name of Moshe asks him

several questions about their new country, Israel, which prompts Stephan to describe a happy, utopian homeland: "The old world is dead. The survivors are here. Up there, gathered together on a hillside in Cyprus. The new world is just beginning, Moshe. And you are a part of it" (Phillips 9). However, even while he answers Moshe's questions and describes a happy new world, Stephan is very conflicted. In order to live in the new homeland, he was forced to give up his former life and family; his wife refused to follow him and let him take their daughter, and the rest of his family chose not to join him, instead becoming victims of the Holocaust. As a result, Stephan does not necessarily believe that what he is telling Moshe will ever apply to himself, which Phillips and this paper returns to later.

Meanwhile, Eva Stern exemplifies how blood underlines genocide and the pain experienced even through assumed survival and assimilation. Her story unfolds in a complicated weaving of her present and her memories of the past, which maintains the narrative's support of Rothberg's concept of multidirectional memory. Before the Holocaust, Eva's community was her family; however, her community even as a child was fractured by class, race, and religion. Regarding class specifically, her mother believes that she married beneath herself and refuses to relinquish that from her mind. As imperfect as it may have been though, Eva's community is completely obliterated by the Holocaust, starting with her family being shattered by death. Even after being liberated, she knows that her past cannot be regained: "My life here is dead. I lie down at night without a life. I rise up in the morning without a life. Mama, why did we not all hide together? Mama, why did Papa not turn around and look at me as he wheeled to the right?" (Phillips 47). At this point in the novel, Eva is in denial about her mother's death, but she cannot pretend with her father. She knows about the horrors of the gas chambers because she assisted in handling the bodies:

Today, they continue to burn bodies. (I burn bodies.) Burning bodies. . . . Clothed bodies burn slowly. Decayed bodies burn slowly. In her mind she cries, fresh and naked, please. . . . Death has swept another soul from off her feet. Sashaying musically across the floor, twirling and pointing, arms thrown wide, head tossed back, death is so happy, so fleet-footed, so free. A tempting invitation. (Phillips 170-171)

Among the horrors of the death camp, which words can hardly describe, death is seemingly the only option, the only positive outcome; however, Eva must keep going lest she give in to what her tormentors desire. In order to continue to burn bodies, she occasionally dissociates and cycles hopelessly between awareness and methodically working. Even though Eva was technically surviving by doing such forced labor, no humanity resides within the camps. She is left to only hope that she will not recognize the dead, leading to her faith in her family dissolving, her faith in any sort of community diminishing, and her hope transforming into hopelessness, despair, and eventually suicide. For a while Gerry, one of the soldiers who rescued her, revives an illusion of humanity for Eva to cling to, as he is her only means of survival, but he also fails her after he leaves and marries another woman, which he is only able to do because his brief relationship with Eva allowed him to enact a chivalric fantasy. The path starting with hope and ending with suicide is also seen in her friend, Rosa. The novel defines suicide as “An act of voluntary and intentional self-destruction” (Phillips 185). However, by the time Rosa and Eva committed suicide, they had arguably already been destroyed, not voluntarily, but by the horrors of their situations.

Despite the presentation within this paper, Eva’s story is completely nonlinear within the novel, which shows the lack of solace in her life. Her story begins within the death camp and then moves back in time. The nonlinearity therefore also makes the story rooted in and based on

memory, constantly working on and evolving the present based on the past. After she officially commits suicide, the novel again rewinds the clock. A doctor states, "*There was no reason to think that she would do something irrational. I know now that they suffer feelings such as imagining that they should have died with their families*" (Phillips 186). In the same way that the novel's provided definitions do not properly encapsulate what they define, Eva's diagnosis does not completely align with her situation. She did not necessarily believe that she should have died with her family but had actually just lost all faith in life and community instead. Her memories go beyond just the diagnosis of survivor's guilt, though her suicide led to a diagnosis that could hopefully save lives in the future. Interestingly, though Eva is not a colonized figure, her story also does partially encompass the aspect of postcolonial literature that "theorizes the geographical, geopolitical, and historical specificities of modernities *within* which other forms of power—such as race, sexuality, culture, class, and gender—are located" (Shome 253). From here onward, I will be examining such postcolonial themes and experiences in Phillips' work, starting with Othello.

Othello is the first key character to describe the miseries of the colonized and then unite them with those of the Jews. Therefore, despite not being blood-related to a previous character, Othello also plays an important part in the story beyond his existence within one of Shakespeare's plays. His story begins in his bedchamber with Desdemona, which is significant for several reasons. Firstly, the beginning of Othello's story is actually the middle, which results in a shifting and cyclic timeline for his narrative similar to the other characters' nonlinear timelines. Therefore, the telling of his story is also rooted in memory. Secondly, their bedchamber is the location that he eventually kills her in, which is ironic, is an immediate reminder to aware audiences that his attempt at happiness will not last, and, therefore, is tragic.

No matter what Othello accomplishes in this novel, his future murder of Desdemona and subsequent suicide linger in the audience's mind. Thirdly, this scene establishes the beginning of the doubt that will lead to her murder. He wonders what could be motivating Desdemona: "Truly, what am I to make of her? ... In her chastity, loyalty and honour, she is the most un-Venetian of women, yet is there some sport to this lady's actions? ... Has some plot been hatched against me? I am a foreigner. I do not know" (Phillips 106). Their marriage is unequal from the outset because she could technically accuse him of forcing or manipulating her into the marriage, which is just one of the many methods she could use to undo him. Therefore, even though he loves her enough to marry her, he strongly doubts her feelings and wonders if she is merely waiting to destroy or otherwise betray him. To an audience aware of Shakespeare's play, the conclusion to which he eventually comes is clear. Fourthly, some productions of Shakespeare's play are staged so that Othello and Desdemona never consummate their marriage (which is possible both because a precedent exists to not include what are considered upsetting aspects of Shakespeare's plays by contemporary audiences and because the script does not explicitly state that they did) and, therefore, never officially attempt to mix their races. The mixture of races, also known as miscegenation, is a common fear among the global North because citizenship is commonly determined by natality. As will be seen later with Malka, the fear of racial contamination within Venetian society runs rampant even to a contemporary time. In fact, Brabantio, Desdemona's father, equates political rights with racial contamination. Brabantio's fear is reminiscent of D. W. Griffith's unmistakably racist 1915 film, *The Birth of a Nation*, that gained immense popularity during Reconstruction, revived the Ku Klux Klan, and touted similar views: that African-Americans would contaminate and destroy American democracy while they attacked and raped white women. The film is not the only piece to

outwardly assert such claims, but it is certainly one of the most unapologetic. Fifthly, Othello's marriage to Desdemona should represent his completed assimilation and integration into Venetian society, but it does not. Othello works incredibly hard throughout the novel to assimilate, starting with just how enamored he is with Venice:

I had moved from the edge of the world to the center. From the darkest margins to a place where even the weakest rays of the evening sun were caught and thrown back in a blaze of glory. I, a man born of royal blood, a mighty warrior, yet a man who, at one time, could view himself only as a poor slave, had been summoned to serve this state; to lead the Venetian army; to stand at the very centre of the empire. (Phillips 107)

Beyond his wonder at the glories of Venice, he also marginalizes the rest of the world and himself. Before his forced slavery, he was royalty and had another wife and child; however, upon entering Venice, he is Venetian property and only permitted to exist with luxuries as long as he serves as their general. His internalized racism and the giving up of his wife and child are his efforts to further integrate, but he cannot change his race and cannot fully assimilate because he only exists on Venice's terms. In a way, assimilation is a form of death because he can never go back to his African life. The novel itself appears to criticize him for his decision: "And so you shadow her every move, attend to her every whim, like the black Uncle Tom that you are. ... My friend, the Yoruba have a saying: the river that does not know its own source will dry up. ... My friend, an African river bears no resemblance to a Venetian canal" (Phillips 180-182). The voice that criticizes Othello's actions is not named but it still knows that Othello is doomed to fail his assimilation because he will never look like and be able to perfectly act the part. Additionally, the moment that he steps out of his prescribed role of serving the white Venetians, he will be

killed, which is demonstrated when Brabantio accuses him of treachery due to his marriage with Desdemona:

But this was a time of war, and I suspected that the doge might be inclined to overlook the unusual nature of this rapid connection in order to secure my services, and so it proved. ... [T]o his mind, his General was not guilty of any wrongdoing. This was the first time that the doge had ever addressed me with the title of his General, and it caused my breast to swell a little. (Phillips 158)

In other words, if Othello had not been the general in a time of war, the doge would have had no qualms with killing him for marrying Desdemona and stepping outside of his prescribed role. However, that important fact seemingly holds little importance to Othello, who is instead thrilled that he has been given a rare instance of positive attention from the Venetians. His reaction is another prime example of Othello ignoring and/or misunderstanding the situation that the Venetians have put him in, which is also why he misreads the Jews in Venice.

Othello's story shows the relationship between Jews and blacks directly, even though Othello himself does not understand the connection. Before his marriage to Desdemona and as he waits for his services to be needed by the Venetian army, he discovers the ghetto in which the Jewish people have been relegated and entirely misreads the situation and their hardships. "Apparently, most of the Jews did not regard this arrangement of being locked behind gates from sunset to sunrise as a hardship, for it afforded them protection against the many cold hearts that opposed their people" (Phillips 129). What Othello does not realize is that the Jewish people not only had no choice in whether or not they were locked up, but also that they were not really being protected. If the protection of the Jews was being taken seriously, then Othello would not have had such ease entering the ghetto, since all he needed to do was pay a small amount of

money. As he continues his exploration, he only becomes more confused: "My exploration had unnerved me somewhat, for it was well known that the Jews were fortunate in their wealth. Why they should choose to live in this manner defeated my understanding" (Phillips 130). He again concludes that the Jews chose this life, which is not true, and does not see the connections to his own. He is also living in less than perfect conditions despite the important role he plays in Venetian society. Therefore, like the Jews, the novel demonstrates that he is only valued for his labor. In other words, Othello's post-occupation experience is likely just as dangerous as his occupied one and he will be forever viewed as a colonized and subservient subject by the dominant culture.

The penultimate key characters to discuss are the three Jews in 15th century Venice, whose story affirms that the Holocaust was not something that occurred out of nowhere; they are further historical precedence for the eventual horrors Eva experiences in the same way that Othello is the historical precedence for the discrimination and misery Malka undergoes. The three Jews are also introduced from an incredibly biased historian's perspective. Initially, the historian, who the audience can conclude is a male because of the dominance of the patriarchy, sounds coherent and appears to be making factual observations. However, once the Jewish people are brought into the narrative of Portobuffole, his bias and the reasons why the Jewish people cannot assimilate become clear. In fact, one of the initial indicators that the historian does not fit the mold of the story leading to the Jewish introduction is the fact that he introduces his narrative in a linear fashion. Considering how immensely nonlinear the book overall remains, the historian's linearity marks the first clue that he may be biased, especially considering how simple he tries to make the story when nothing else within the book is so simple. He describes how Christian hysteria in Germany led to all of the Jews barricading themselves in a synagogue and

setting fire to it, with only a few Jews remaining to run out of town. The historian's first Jewish story reveals how he aligns himself with the dominant Christian culture that does not understand Jewish culture and supports the damaging rumors surrounding them, such as the belief that Jews sacrifice Christian children to use their blood for rituals. That belief (along with a beggar boy who is seen briefly in the town and then disappears) leads to the following widespread, uncontrollable, and deadly rumor: "The Jews had killed an innocent Christian boy named Sebastian New. They had dared to make a sacrifice in the Christian town of Portobuffole" (Phillips 59). However, despite the rumor and the outrage that erupts from it, when the three Jewish men accused of the crime are arrested, they are not charged with anything. Their charges remain a mystery to them for some time and the verdict is practically decided from the beginning, even when higher authorities try to step in to calm the chaos by presenting an ultimatum: the Jews can either convert or be killed. However, conversion would not mean that they would survive for long, as they would always be seen as past and potential traitors. The men are eventually killed for their supposed crimes, but not before the audience finally gets the chance to hear from them instead of the historian. Servadio, one of the men, thinks, "*I tell you, I have never heard of this boy, Sebastian New. I have never seen such a boy. I know not what you are talking about. My wife is suffering, my family is drowning in tears. Why? Who is this Sebastian New? What are you talking about?*" (Phillips 181). While outwardly to his brothers he remains strong and tells them to remain strong, in his own mind he is confused, desperate, and terrified, which makes perfect sense given that he is about to die to reaffirm the dominant discourses about Jews and not through any fault of his own. Even if the town of Portobuffole were to listen to his confusion, they themselves would not be able to fully determine where everything originated, merely that he and his brothers must be guilty.

Interestingly, the novel is bookended with Stephan's perspective, which, along with Malka's perspective, represents how blood underlines both colonization and genocide. Though the genocidal connection seemingly lies mainly with Stephan's niece, in Stephan's view, the tragedy of the Holocaust necessitates the establishment of Israel, which Malka then must live in. Malka's journey to her new country is startlingly similar to the journey to Nazi death camps: "*And then you herded us on to buses. ... At dawn, we discovered that we were traveling through a desert that was littered with the skeletons of camels and goats. ... Relatives were being abandoned. And then on to the embassy compound, where we were stored like thinning cattle*" (Phillips 199). The people transported by Operation Solomon were Jews on their way to the new homeland; however, the transportation was quick and packed, leading to several family members being either separated or left behind. Then, due to a lack of resources for the overall task, people were starved, causing those who were already sick to die. For a group of people who are supposedly traveling to new and better lives, the journey reveals echoes of the Holocaust, just on a smaller scale. That unfortunate outcome likely happened because European descent is still privileged in Israel: British soldiers are the captors on Cyprus at the beginning with Stephan and Malka's life, specifically once she arrives in Israel, is marred by racial discrimination. Before Malka even arrives in her new homeland, she wonders, "*in this new land, would our babies be born white?*" (Phillips 201). The internalized racism that tells her white is better and desirable is further encouraged by her experiences. "*You say you rescued me. Gently plucked me from one century, helped me cross two more, and then placed me in this time. Here. Now. But why? What are you trying to prove?*" (Phillips 208). Her family has a miserable time attempting to assimilate in their new country and she, despite being a nurse, cannot find a job. The fact that she and her family are Jewish does not matter because of the fear of contaminating the national blood line

with the blood of blacks. When Stephan meets Malka at a club and eventually takes her to a hotel, she directly confronts him on the issue: “You can be honest with me. You do not want us here, do you?” (Phillips 208). Despite his insistence that not everyone feels that way, she knows that she does not belong and, after she has left, he acknowledges that she belongs to another land and should not have been brought over. Overall, the utopian homeland concept Stephan outlines in the opening is destroyed by the homeland’s rejection of Malka and by Stephan’s mental return to the past, where he reaches for his nieces and the past, which he had previously rejected by chasing his doomed future within Israel and to which he can never return.

As aforementioned, one of the key ideas of multidirectional memory is that the memories of one marginalized group informs, not eliminates, the memories of other marginalized groups. In this book, two of the groups intertwined throughout time and space in their misery and discrimination are Jews and black people. Several individuals, whether they be black, Jewish, or both, are marked for slow or fast deaths within the novel. Those deaths come from slavery, the Holocaust, the ghetto, murder, etc., and symbolize how deeply blood is ingrained within colonization and genocide. If the deaths are not quick, then the survival is painful: Nazis forcing victims to participate in the violence; Othello perpetuating violence and self-loathing; Margot deciding that she would rather scream and die than be sexually assaulted anymore. Simplified, slow deaths are alienating and psychologically painful. Eventually, if the pain becomes too much, the resulting suicide finishes the miserable journey. Furthermore, assimilation isn’t possible across generations. Phillips’ novel jumps around space and time and none of the Jews or black people are able to assimilate, meaning that the struggle and failure to assimilate is not owned by one group of people, especially Jews and blacks in societies that privilege European descendants and/or Christians.

Overall, reading Caryl Phillips' *The Nature of Blood* with Michael Rothberg's concept of multidirectional memory is important because it highlights the way the novel increases society's understanding of how the Other is created and in how the novel disrupts modernity. Groups of people are not isolated within society on a whim, but instead by centuries of perceived exaggerated differences. That isolation and persecution leaves a permanent mark on both the exiled and the persecutors that cannot be remedied in a few years or by a few simple actions. The pain that Jewish and black people have endured can hardly be put into words and the othering they experience aims to destroy them even as society relies on them. Society is not constantly positively evolving simply because people really want and believe in that positive change. Change can only happen through hard work, and even then, it will always leave someone behind.

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