

Migration and Personality Disintegration in Caryl Phillips' *In the Falling Snow*

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Abstract: The nature and consequences of the two World Wars and the slave trade across the Atlantic nurtured and left very negative memories and impressions about migration be it voluntary or forced. After the wars and with the rise of industrialization in Europe and the Americas, Africans, Asians and West Indians, felt a new pull to the lands of prosperity, of hope and personal development, and of intellectual and professional growth. Migration to the “developed world”, unlike in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, became a means by which individuals hoped and believed to attain and accomplish their dreams. Edward Said (1993) and Paul Gilroy (1993) have argued and demonstrated that mutation or the “Émigré”, within the context of Globalization remains inescapable yet profitable in challenging oppressive systems and cultures. However, the literatures of Judith Bryan (2004) among others have a common factor of the hypothesis that migration causes trauma not just at the historical but especially at the personal level. I aim to demonstrate that the enthusiasm for migration, that is spurred by the confidence in physical and mental abilities; by a spirit of tenacity and by a quest for success and growth, blurs the realities of cultural, racial and environmental differences. The urgent desire for intellectual and economic growth overpowers the sense of truth about dislocation and relocation of an individual with a different cultural experience. The paper seeks to critically engage with questions as where is home? Is home just a place of ethnic attachment or where the individual feels welcome materially, psychologically and morally? What is the place of cultural identity in the global era? The arguments and analysis will be done against some important tenets of psychoanalysis and New historicism. The dilemma suffered by characters, the issue of politics of location and identity will constitute the concerns of this paper. In regard to this, I argue that migration, irrespective of the time and space, is usually motivated by “Edenian vision” but the end is most often a sad disillusionment.

Keywords: Migration, personality, disintegration, trauma, identity, disillusionment.

Introduction: The nature and consequences of the two World Wars, that saw the massive recruitment of Africans, Asians, and West Indians to fight for their colonial masters in the West, and the slave trade and slavery across the Atlantic Oceans, left little to be desired about the process and consequence of migration. Migration to the West, be it voluntary or forceful migration especially in the late Eighteenth and Nineteenth centuries was synonymous to loss of freedom. The experiences and lives of such people like Olaudah Equiano and Ignatius Sancho reveal overwhelming testimonies of the dreadful yet memorable nature of slavery. Although her focus in «The Evolution of Black London» is mainly to show “[...] that black history and Britain's history are inextricably

linked” for “As soon as one defines oneself as 'British', one is participating in a century-old tradition of cultural exchange, of ethnic and linguistic plurality” (Judith Bryan 2004, 63); Bryan's analysis of Olaudah Equiano and Ignatius Sancho's works give us detail account of the presence of blacks in England from the 18th Century. «Britain is a nation of hybridity, since many other 'Classic' writers [like Phillips] were not born in Britain either, but in the colonies, whether as colonizers or the colonized » (63). Her analysis, which is one among many, evoke the issue of the politics of location and the politics of identity; concerns that are very present in Phillips' novel. Bryan's account inadvertently exposes the unpleasant experiences and nature of slave trade and slavery beyond the Caribbean into the Metropolis. Whether they were 'domestic slaves” or “plantation slaves”, all were subject to the temperament of their masters, suffered physical violence, there was the constant threat of being sold on, or returned to plantation slavery» (64).

The quest for freedom therefore became pivotal in the existence of the Black British in the metropolitan cities in the early 19th century. “Free blacks tended to be those who have been released by their 'owners' or had purchased their own freedom” (64). The life lived by most of the black slaves evacuated to London in 1783, after America won its war of independence and the brutality of plantation life have been vividly portrayed in *Longest Journey: a History of Black Lewisham* by Joan Anim-Addo (1995) and *Black Londoners, 1880-1990*,¹ Susan Okokon (1998), (Bryan, 2004: 64).

Unlike the Eighteenth and Nineteenth centuries, the nature and reasons for immigration especially from the Caribbean to Western Europe witnessed a shift. In the Introduction to *Caribbean Migration to Western Europe and the United States: Essays on Incorporation, Identity and Citizenship*, Margarita Cervantes et al (2009: 4) have pointed out that "As a result of transnationalism related to the Caribbean migration since the second half of Twentieth Century, the 'Caribbean has emerged as a region of «immigration». After World War II, tens of thousands of Caribbean workers [like Gordon] migrated to metropolitan centers”. The reasons for such migration of course vary depending on the individual and sometimes on the social status of the migrants, depending on whether they come from an independent or non-independent region. Whatever were the motivational factors for their departure from the Islands, their conditions and status as strangers remained the same. The factors that define the Homogeneous nature of the migrants in mainland England have been succinctly categorized into four common characteristics According to Cervantes-Rodriguez, et al. (200: 7) migration was organized through institutionalized machinery and the British Migration Office in Barbados. Thousands from non-independent territories were recruited because of the high demand for labour after the Second World War and some went as legal citizens. Many were attracted by access to welfare-state policies and social rights and the migrants were largely from lower classes. Finally, “. . . despite their legal status as metropolitan Citizens, Caribbean colonial migrants experienced racist discrimination, creating what is usually regarded as “Second-class citizenship” inside the

metropolises" (Cervantes-Rodriguez, et al : 7). The apparently attractive pull factors occasioned a large influx of the now Black Britons into England. In spite of the British Nationality Act of 1948 and its supposed advantages to migrants, "The problem, however lay in the fact that a considerable number of White Britons were to put it bluntly, racist" (Bradford: 192).

This state of affairs, evidently only leads even the most determined, brave and ambitious in fact altruistic person to be disillusioned, frustrated, bitter and above all lose self confidence and personality dynamism. As Caryl Phillips portrays in his novel, an individual who reaches this point, experiences what I here refer to as personality disintegration. Which, according to Freud, is " a swift breakdown in character, generally due to specifically distressing life scenarios. This situation is made worse when some, despite the wish and opportunity to reconnect with "home" cannot for as Paul Edwards and David Dabydeen (1991 : 51) have remarked, were like ". . . a burnt child [who] dreads the fire". The impact of the geopolitical and economic space occupied by Phillips' protagonist and especially his father gives relevance to the New historicist perspective that "... from a materialist perspective, literature is a product of the society in which it is produced, arising from and dependent on the material conditions of the society" (Doreathea Mbalia : 19) year of publication. Consequences of lived traumatic experiences [occasioned of course by the material as well as the social conditions of the environment] on the individual give us recourse to interpretive perspectives of some principles of the Trauma Theory; developed from the work of Sigmund Freud and Pierre Janet (Malpas & Wake 2006: 262-263).

Emigration and migration discourses are not new in the study of Literature and especially Black British literature occasioned by migration (Kermode, 2009). The Essays presented in different volumes and journals by critics such as Thomas Bonnici (2010), Ramon Grosfoguel et al 2009), Eric Mielants (2009), Elizabeth Aranda (2009), Mary Chamberlain (2009), Richard Bradford (2007), Alexis Somerville, (2007), Anne Kelly (2004), Judith Bryan (2004), Chris Weedon (2004), Paul Edwards and David Dabydeen (1991) have theorized, analyzed and portrayed the processes, socio-cultural, artistic and geopolitical impacts of migration; incorporation, ethnicity/identity and racial dispositions, internationalism and bi-cultural developments. The interest of this paper is not therefore to reiterate issues that have been sufficiently illuminated by these authors or to overstate the problem of foreignness which is a recurrent preoccupation in his writings and discussions. Phillips expresses the unusual feeling of not belonging or the expected effort to integrate in Britain saying: "When I'm in America I don't have an expectation to fit in, but England is the place where you most expect to feel at home; the place which you should understand intimately" (Phillips qtd in Somerville: 2007). My focus is to analyze Phillips' *In the Falling Snow*, (hence forth, *Falling Snow*) in terms of his portrayal of the paradox of dislocation/or translocation and the consequences thereafter on the personality of the individual. Phillips has shown that migration, rather than fulfill the aspirations of those, like Earl Gordon, who embark on the

hopeful journey "[. . .] towards social integration and advancement", instead leads them to 'relative degradation and marginalisation'" (Giraud, 43). A situation in which they suffer personal and cultural disintegration. Personality disintegration of Phillips' protagonists is therefore seen not in the light of Dabrowski's Theory of Positive Disintegration; but rather as a state of being wherein the individual with exceptional potentials and performance degenerates, loses his sense of being, of belonging and usefulness, resulting to «negative positive personality disintegration» (Mendaglio, 2002: 14-22). Phillips portrays that when there is no possibility to "Working through" traumatic experiences, the individual loses a measure of "critical control over behaviour and an opening to possible future". Gordon cannot be salvaged because throughout his post-traumatic state, he relives only the past. As far as he is concerned, nothing, not even the existence and efforts of his son, Keith, can save him. The future is blocked and all he needs is "act out", go home, an impossible wish because for him, there is no "home". On the other hand, although Keith suffers more of the "Trans-generational transmission of trauma" (Malpas & Wake: 263), he manages to distinguish his past from present situation and resists "working out" by surrendering to the caring attitude of his ex-wife, Annabelle. Frightened by the death of Ralph, shocked by the Professor's reaction to his quest for education, the difficulty of getting a decent house and the supposed betrayal by Brenda all culminate to loss of dignity, lack of self esteem and inferiority complex. Whatever the degree of the effect of trauma, Phillips' major characters experience both psychological and physical disintegration as a result of the socio-economic and geopolitical space in which they find themselves.

The Pull Factors for Dislocation: One disconcertingly resonant theme is the tragic waste of potential in each of these men. Three men whose talent goes unfulfilled³ - and whose hopes turn to anger and frustration. In a year in which gun and knife crime has claimed the lives of at least 10 young people in London alone, some poignant questions are raised about the relationship between young people, particularly young men, and their peers. Phillips raises issues that are all too pertinent today. (Harvill Secker, Summary of the *Foreigners*, par. 2)

The overwhelming and appropriate description of the thematic concern in *Foreigners: Three English Lives*, could simply be transposed to *Falling Snow* or rather than talk of the lives of three foreigners, Earl Gordon could just make a suitable fourth personality in that novel. This is for the simple reason that his concern with immigration is evident in almost all his novels. Speaking to an interviewer, he described *The Distant Shore* as "part of a continuum." In *Falling Snow*, "Phillips returns to the Caribbean experience of Britain, and brings it up to date by including that of the third generation" (Kasia Boddy, 2009). The feelings of unfulfilment, hopelessness, anger and frustration experienced by Turpin, Randolph and Oluwale in *Foreigners: Three English Lives* are expressions of the feeling of failure in attaining motivational factors for migration for these now 'British', men irrespective of the periods, style or character. It is this same kind of quest for economic advancement and personal development, spurred by self confidence in physical and mental abilities that the young

Gordon, in spite of his vague knowledge about the fate of those who go away like his brother, heeds to his sister's advice to travel to London. Through the brilliant use of the first person narrative voice and the historical touch, interracial and sexual relationships in *Falling Snow*, Phillips “. . . leave [s] an open space for the reader to feel outraged. [I] want them to fill in the emotional gaps” he remarks. (*Somerville* 2011 : 8)” Such emotional gaps are aptly filled when one listens to Gordon's account of his experiences in the Caribbean and then in London. In the account of his life to his son, Keith, the reader is truly outraged and feels empathy for what has become the life of the young ambitious Earl. After the death of their father, his sister, Leona tells him:

You planning on staying here and growing old in this house? I look round and realize that the house have nothing for me except bad memories. 'Look,' say Leona, 'why you don't take yourself and your books to England. I can sell the house and send you the money to pay back the price of the boat ticket. No point you staying here and feeling miserable. Me, I can't go no place with two children because England is for people without no obligations, but if you stay here then you just going get catch by Myrna or some other woman and then what will become of you? Think about yourself Earl? Think about what you can do that will improve your situation'. (263-264)

England, to Leona, is the epitome of hope, freedom and personal development. She imagines her brother freeing himself from misery, stagnation and 'bad memories' of Desmond's departure, his parents' death, tedious work and very little wage at the sugar factory. England, to most young Caribbean at this time was the quintessence of existence. It is this assurance that spurs the young Earl Gordon to embark on the journey that turns out to be a nightmare. A year before he leaves 'home', his friend, Ralph had left to England. The same anxiety, determination and faith in all that the “wonderful” country can offer a West Indian consume Gordon. Ralph's certainty for prosperity is reported by Phillips in these words:

According to Ralph, once he make it to England he say he will travel to the north of the country because some friend of his godfather promise to find him a job in a factory casting iron and the man claim a West Indian can make big money doing this kind of work. However, Ralph say that five years he coming back home to open up a garage and establish himself in business as a mechanic. He already have a slogan for the advertisement that he say he going to put in the news paper: 'Bring your auto to the Car Doctor Ralph for he going fix it up nice, nice' (256)

Such is the confidence that characterizes the reasons for Phillips' protagonists' migration to the metropole. Ralph's assurance of success is founded on his physical strength to brace work in an iron factory, his dream for national development and above all, for self improvement. To the ignorant West Indians, who do not know the realities about their new destination, England, is where dreams come true, where 'a West Indian can make big money'. In spite of his misgivings about the return of those who go to London or America, Gordon does not resist the temptation when his sister suggests he goes to England. Recounting his life to Keith, father remembers the farewell scene with Ralph at the harbour: “I cross at

Ralph I wonder if I ever going see my friend again, because inside of me I know that Ralph don't be coming back to this small island in five years, or ten years, or one hundred and ten years because we both know that Ralph and the cardboard suitcase leaving the island forever" (258). One year later, this knowledge eludes Gordon because he too has dreams. As he contemplates about his family's precarious situation and about his friend's departure, he tells himself: "Even though I don't have no plans, I still have my dreams, and my dreams all locked up in the law book and the dictionary that I used to carry everywhere" (256). For those dreams to be realized, migration to London, the place of possibilities, is the key. But as will be demonstrated later on in this paper, all this turns to be an illusion, for Ralph, Gordon and, in the most part, for most of "The Sons of Empire" (184). As revealed by Cervantes et al (2009: 2) although migrants come from a geopolitically strategic zone,³ it remains subordinated and the facts of Britain's superiority and cultural discrimination engulf the physical, mental and economic push factors of the like of Ralph, Gordon and Keith, be they from West Indies or 'Jamaica' (272).

Away from far off Caribbean islands and in the heart of the metropole, the likes of Earl Gordon still believe and hope for a better livelihood. Their quest for intellectual and economic success once more blindfolds them to the realities of relocation⁴. Realities about who they are and how they, 'black Britons' are seen by Whites eventually cause them to suffer "breaking of the skin" and "breaking of the psyche's protective shield" (Malpas & Wake: 262). Migration, for whatever reason, supposes moving from one place or environment, with its specificities to another; encountering new and different cultural values, habits, atmospheric conditions and belief systems. It supposes the readiness to integrate, tolerate and surmount obstacles in order to succeed. Apparently, Phillips' 'British Caribbean' characters come to the mainland ignoring these facts especially as they consider themselves 'Britons' with Citizenship rights⁵. Beyond this, Gordon, Baron and later Keith, remain tenacious to the attainment of their goals. They try to surmount harsh weather, discrimination, miserable living conditions, and low wages.

The weather during the two weeks of sea journey to London does not impinge on his perception about England. Gordon's description of his on the edge trip and encounter with England foreshadows everything but success and home, if "Home is where you feel a welcome" (Phillips qtd in Weedon 2004: 79). Phillips' choice of personal narrative is apt. Gordon finally decides to talk to his son. Through historical narrative, he recounts the events that led to his loss of hope, and faith in himself, Brenda and the British society. The first sentence that unveils the history of his 'tragic' life is symbolic: "I land in England on a cold Friday morning" (252). 'Cold', paints an image of unfriendliness, a weapon. Gordon's traumatizing and disillusioning first encounter with England merits repeating here:

It seem to take forever to pass through the bay of Biscay with its rough, rough sea that is so bad that at night not a single person want to play dominoes, or organize a dance, or any of that kind of thing for everybody is suffering hard, but then eventually all the pitching and rolling and

vomiting come to an end and suddenly the sea is smooth like a slack water pond, and I find myself gawping upon land. But even before I get off the boat, England deliver a big shock to my system. Looking down from the deck, I see plenty of white men in dirty clothes hurrying this way and that way up and down the deck, pushing wheelbarrows, and spitting on the ground and shouting at each other. These people don't look like the kind of white men I used to seeing back home wearing club blazer and tie and walking about the place ramrod straight. Jesus Christ, I don't know England have such poor white men. . . . I feel cold invading my body like it don't care if it throw me down and finish me off right there and then on day number one, so even before I get off the damn boat England punishing my mind and my body and teaching me a hard lesson about what kind of place it is. (252)

The discovery that England may not after all be the land of plenty and perfection, where he will be at home though far away from home; does not for one moment make him think of returning to the West Indies, at least, not until he loses even the physical and mental abilities and is at the mercy of the social security system. As 'the pitching and rolling and vomiting' end, he meets a different kind of 'white men in dirty clothes' 'pushing wheelbarrows'. Climatic as well as cultural shock is not enough to deter the twenty- two year old young man. At the end of his life, we hear old Gordon tell his Son, "I want to go home, Keith. I don't mean to some stupid English house. I mean home" (252). This declaration is an acknowledgement of defeat, an expression of despair, of disappointment and loss of hope and above all an expression of nostalgia and a quest for cultural and personal identity. His return to the hospital only helps him relive the bitter past. Gordon cannot separate his past from the present. As for him, there is no worthwhile future, neither for him nor for Keith. It took Gordon his life time to accept the lesson England presents to him on his very first day. The weather, the people, warn him both mentally and physically of 'what kind of place [England] is. Gordon's unprocessed emotions' caused by his experience and especially the death of his friend, Ralph 'shock him into a condition of numbness' hence his silence until he bursts out about going home. His death at the clinic is symbolic of the nature of the English society at the time. Such a society does not only destroy the individual who does not "belong", it informs and gives literature the impulsion, the form and sometimes orientates even the writer's focus of concern by social, political and economic forces. Be it psychological or physical disintegration therefore, the society, and specifically that of *Falling Snow* is responsible for Phillips' protagonists' predicament.

Gordon's consciousness of the nature of migration from a sub-continent to the "centre" is not abrupt. It is his determination and will to achieve success, to become a lawyer, to return home after five years and improve on the family situation, and not be like his brother Desmond⁶; that blindfolds him about the realities of dislocation. The negative result of such misjudgment eventually leads to self resignation. From day one, he refuses to be frightened by the warnings about the weather, about the indifferent attitude of the whites towards blacks, who "...the one thing they all know is they don't care much for the foreigner ..." (253), yet

concern when young black men "... take liberties [with their girls] and it does stir up bad feelings" (270). The deplorable condition of Ralph's 'room', his encounter with the foreman the next day and the feeling he leaves him with, his fruitless discussion with Dr. Davies about his enrolment as a law student; are clear indicators to the fact that nothing of all he has dreamt of will be realized, instead "... serious pressure that reach his head ... and the hurting in my head begin right there" because Gordon can neither understand all he is witnessing nor does any of it make sense to him (297). These early traumatizing events are repressed with the hope to succeed eventually. Phillips seems to question why Gordon had to stay on in spite of such overwhelming evidence of unfriendliness, difficulty, name calling and apparent poverty. The answer for most migrants as well as for Gordon is found in Dr. Davies' question to him. Why do many Caribbeans come to London? "Opportunity or adventure, or a combination of both?" (279). The response for Gordon as for any "son of the Empire" is 'opportunity'. However, to the dismay of his lot, it ends up, often a time, in a nightmarish adventure. Gordon's personality disintegration begins from day one of his stay in England, a postcolonial territory. His individuality and life, full of energy and hope is compromised with unfulfilled confidence in the quest and determination to improve on the self as well as the nation. Illusive ambition, confidence and trust in impressionistic images of and about the mainland and British migrants Citizenship rights; "... the migrants' otherness, [that] emanated from their coming to England and searching for a particular kind of perceived Britishness that did not necessarily exist" (Weedon 2004: 107), blurred the realities of Cultural, racial and environmental differences; resulting to traumatic and post-traumatic experiences where the individuals notion of self is diluted by prejudice.

The Paradox of Migration: Postwar migration from the Caribbean islands to Western Europe and especially to England was generally encouraged by the state institutions like "The British Migration Office in Barbados"⁷ and corporations that were in dire need for cheap labour to feed the high demand in factories (Cervantes et al 2009: 4-5). Systematically, strategies were therefore implanted to entice young migrants to migrate to the metropolitan cities. On the other hand, young Caribbeans, especially from the lower class, saw this as a golden opportunity, not just to work money and be educated, but most importantly, becoming part of that prestigious national and cultural identity. Paradoxically, as Phillips exposes in *Falling Snow*, even postwar migration, leaves little or nothing to be admired by Gordon and his descendants. Although this opinion has been viewed from a more positive perspective by Edward Said, Phillips' narrative demonstrates that at the personal level, the fate of migrants who are neither "counted" or "measured" "is consigned to the background". Phillips's protagonist does not experience any positive aspects of migration. Globalization and explosion of communication technology that enable the migrant to discover in his marginality "... a gaze averted from the beaten track, a hatred of brutality, a search for fresh concepts not yet encompassed by the general patterns, is the last hope for thought" (Adorno qtd in Said 1993 :

333). Earl and Gordon unfortunately do not have such opportunities. Their fates remain therefore, disenabling. Through inter-racial relationships, white prejudice, pictures and music, Phillips demonstrates the disillusionment and the state of 'acting out' and "working through"⁸ (Malpas & Wake, 262) experienced by his black British characters. The nature of such paradox is evident in the life of Ralph, Earl Gordon and to an extent, his son and grandson.

Instead of personal and national development, migration becomes both a process of breaking of the skin and breaking of the 'psyche's protective shield'⁹ and in Gordon's case, with no possibility of "acting out" the output is frustration. This process eventually results to loss of personality and cultural identity. This contention differs with earlier discussions on the nature of migrants' relationship with family members back in the Caribbean in the 19th and 20th Centuries¹⁰. Contrary to Chamberlain's assessment that "As a result [of different means of communication], the Caribbean remained a constant feature in the lives of migrants, while for those who remained in the region, migration was seen as a link with "foreign," not a severance from home; an opportunity to extend, not disrupt, the family links" (Chamberlain 2009: 234), Phillips, through his protagonist, perceives it differently. This situation might have been true for migrants of the 1980s and 90s but not for Gordon whose brother never contacts the family except for an empty postcard, nor Ralph or Gordon and Keith who in turn never succeed to go back home. The inability to connect with home, for Phillips characters, is not voluntary. It is evidence of the disruptive nature, not just of family, but rather and more significantly, of the individual's personal and cultural identity.

The ease with which Ralph and later Gordon take the decision to leave the homeland, the rapidity with which documents are processed and travelling arrangements made, the confidence and enthusiasm that propel them to the bay of Biscay; all point to the positive and hopeful conviction, held by these young men about their future in their new destination, and perception of critics like Chamberlain. Ralph is very sure of what he will achieve in five years, for himself and his whole community. The narrator tells us that he is going to "... make big money [and] after five years he coming back home to open up a garage and to establish himself in the business as a mechanic". Ralph does not see himself simply as an ordinary mechanic. Rather, with the facilities, and advance technology he is going to explore, he is coming back as a "... Car Doctor" (256). In spite of the fact that he has no intentions yet of going away, Gordon cannot but "... feel a little jealous toward Ralph because the man talk about his plans with such confidence and I sure he can make anything happen" (256). The enthusiasm, the assurance and confidence on both parts is indicative of the impression and expectations of Ralph and his friend, about England and the opportunities therein. It equally exposes the ignorance of the cultural and geopolitical space and myths of departure. The urge and hope for a better future is even made more imperative looking at their living conditions back home. This deceptive collective consciousness, at least for Gordon and his contemporaries is also responsible for the traumatic disillusionment; a feeling felt even by Keith who by the end of

the novel “... has a desperate feeling that his work—even his life—is no longer relevant” (blurb).

Ralph and Gordon work in a sugar factory where their meager wages barely support them to survive. The two friends have longed to rent a room for themselves unsuccessfully due to family responsibilities. It is for fear that Earl might follow the parents' history of misery that the older sister advises him to leave the Island. After the death of their father, Leona admonishes him: “You want to live your life just dreaming and growing old in this two room house and eventually dying on the same bed that take both our parents?” (264). Earl's ambition is to be educated. There are very few opportunities for sponsorship to study abroad; reserved for those whose parents have means to pay for extra lessons and buy text books. (250). No young man in such condition will resist the “platter of gold” offered by the propaganda of immigration policies and Britons' migrant status carried out in the West Indies in the 1960s. It is therefore, with a deceptive and illusory enthusiasm that Ralph, and one year later, Earl leaves the island to seek for brighter future. The process of disintegration of personality therefore begins with the lack of opportunities for young men at home and ignorance of the realities about the British socio-cultural values and politics of immigration laws. *Falling Snow* is therefore read against the New historicist view of inter-dependence between literature and society. *Falling snow* could be classified as a historical novel. Sources of material and inspiration, in terms of setting, character types, experiences and issues raised, are traceable in both societies, the West Indies and Britain. The economic, political and social activities of the two worlds that constitute the setting have had significant influence in the making of the novel by Phillips. Equally, the Psycho-traumatic process of migration defines the British and Caribbean societies and exposes the consequences on the human nature in time and space.

The above condition initiates the decision to travel, in other words, to dislodge and distort ones' physical and mental self from his or her habitual environment to the unknown universe. Such a decision becomes to the individual, an act of physical and psychological disintegration due to the fact that to concretize the move, one must part with the little property you could ever be identified with and all that gives a sense of wholeness. To an African, a house is a symbol of manhood; it traces one's roots, one's lineage. Leona's decision to « sell the house» in order to enable her brother pay the cost of the boat and other travelling charges, is symbolically selling Gordon's root, his identity (263). With Leona married off in another village with two children, Desmond gone with no information about him but that he is “just fine”; all Gordon has left are old pictures. Phillips uses pictures as the only relic through which Gordon can reconnect with his roots and have a sense of being, though even that brings only painful memories. The physical and psychological effect of the act of dislocation is extended, two generations after. Keith and Laurie, though born in London feel a sense of loss, frustration and failure. His curiosity and inexplicable attachment to the photographs which “... unlike the pots and dishes [...] have considerable weight [, and] He can't bring himself to pick them up, or even touch them” (267); insinuate the unconscious longing to

connect with his root, his people and home. Like his father who refuses to talk about the pictures, because he does not want to remember the past, Keith is attracted to them because they are the only relics that unconsciously connect him to his past, to his identity. It even becomes more devastating for Keith, who unlike Chamberlain's case study, has never taken Laurie to visit home, keep contact with relations and culture and therefore become "... a better individual" (235). Absence of this knowledge results to frustration and psychological breakdown. The urge to connect to his past is revealed in his effort and desire to take Laurie to the West Indies for holiday.

Inter-racial sexual relationships are other dimensions that Phillips uses to demonstrate the process and nature of personality degeneration in *Falling Snow*. Even before Gordon touches the soils of London, "... an English man in a grey suit sitting opposite..." in the train to London warns him against sexual relationships with white girls and preempts what that could result to. In a conversational mode he questions:

'Do you have a wife or a girlfriend?' Again I shake my head? I imagine you'll be quite popular with some of our girls, but a word of advice. Don't be getting too saucy. Some of you boys do take liberties and it does stir up bad feelings. I mean, there's no reason for you to be giving white girls babies, is there? Or tapping them on the shoulder at 'Excuse me' dances. (269:70)

Racial prejudices and colour superiority are expressed through inter-racial relations. The seriousness and depth of the English man's discriminatory feeling is evident in the death of Ralph, the result of Gordon's marriage to Brenda, Annabelle's father's bitter feeling about his daughter's marriage to Keith, and Chantelle's parents' disapproval of their daughter's pregnancy with Laurie.

Ralph is lynched by Doreen's brother and friends and bleeds to death. The White boys refuse to accept that black Britons walk the streets with their sisters. But people like Ralph who cannot understand this kind of discrimination and hypocrisy, and who think their personality is challenged, become victims of brutal aggression. In frustration and drunkenness, he laments to his friend: "They seriously think they can lynch me? They think they can do me like little Rock? Don't make me laugh. I know them, smiling at us at work and then ignoring us when they see us in the street. Man, I know them, I know them good, and if I can't walk home a decent girl like Doreen in peace and quiet then what the hell is going on, you tell me that? Man, this place is a joke" (282). Ralph's talk that may at face context sound like a show of courage and strength is in effect expiation of frustration, and of the fear to lose his manhood and personality. It equally reveals that sense of disillusionment about their immigrant status as 'Britons' with Citizenship rights. Earlier in a conversation with Gordon on the very first night, Ralph laments on the sacrifice and loss endured just to get to England. The paradox of a second home in England is re-sounding in the phrase, 'this place is a joke'. Such moments bring back memories of 'home' and it is nostalgic feeling that occasions pressure in the head, resignation and bitterness against the other and against oneself.

Gordon's whole being is shattered with the death of his friend. Truth, about the metropolis, the land where opportunity supposedly knocks at ones door every morning, about the dream of making big money, becoming a lawyer, growing into a decent man and going home in dignity; vanish into thin air. He cannot get a decent room because they are for "European Only" (283). Because he does not have a house he cannot bring a wife. To satisfy his sexual urge with a white girl, he must "pay a coloured tax" (284), three months after the death of Ralph, his sister, Shirley announces she is pregnant. He cannot feel free in a restaurant because he is looked down on. All this causes enormous pressure on and traumatizes Gordon. He is sick in the head. He tries "to think about [his situation and all that has happened since his arrival] but it no use for the people in my head still talking. A week now I been hearing these blasted people in my head, but nothing they say make any sense and I can't seem to make them stop" (291). Gordon is gradually drifting to a state of schizophrenia. He becomes temperamental, aggressive, susceptible to anger and bitter with life. This early stage of psychological trauma evident in "unprocessed emotion" gravely affects his marriage relationship with Brenda who in spite of the love she has for him and his son, Keith, is forced to send him to the psychiatric hospital particularly when he "... gave up on books and began to conclude arguments with Brenda by stripping off his shirt and shouting at nobody in particular ..." (81). All this eventually leads to a "condition of numbness" and silence (Malpas & Wake: 262). This explains why Gordon until a few days to his death, could not talk to his son or friends about his feelings and worries.

The evolution of Gordon's life, from the moment he arrives London through his death, shows a forced degradation and disintegration of both the physical and mental abilities of an individual. As he lies sick again in the hospital, Baron tells his son, "Your father is a proud man but he has a lot of pressure on his soul". A proud and dignified man who has been forced by deceptive migrant status and racial dispositions to live a life he had run away from, frightened by the responsibility of taking care of a child, forced to live with a feeling of deception by a white wife, Brenda, and the memories and experience of incarceration in the psychiatric hospital; the consequence is mental breakdown. He withdraws into himself and silence is the best option. His friend tells us "The man's head is hurting bad from two times in hospital [in order to be cured of this psychological trauma] "He needs to be among his own people" (247-248). But the question one poses is who his people are? Where is his home? Why could London not be his home after more than forty years of his life there? These questions are answered by Gordon himself. While in hospital before he dies, and the only time he breaks the silence and reveals his heart to Keith, he tells him: "I just don't want this life, because England already hurt me enough as it is. ... A part of me want to turn back the clock and find myself in the Harbour Lights bar with Ralph, and I want somebody to give me back my law book and dictionary, and I want back my mother and my father and Desmond and Leona" (297). Gordon has been destroyed by the turn of events. He has lost all that he cherished and in return all he is left with is a "hurting head", oblivion to the effects

of excessive drinking, to dirty environment. If according to Caryl Phillips, "Home is where you feel a welcome", then Gordon and Keith have no home. There is nobody in the island to welcome him, no house, and no family (Weedon: 79). Nostalgia of the past is all he has left, nothing to offer his son or grandson. Nothing but a physically and mentally distraught man; nothing they do seem relevant anymore. His life is an incarnation of the process and nature, and consequence of migration as painted by Phillips.

Second and third generation migrants after the likes of Gordon and Ralph might not have experienced racial prejudices in the same degree, may have equally had better social amenities, educational facilities and job opportunities. However, the feeling of loss, of unfulfilment and the sense of loneliness that loomed over the lives of their ancestors is still very evident with Keith and his son, Laurie. The same silence that characterizes Gordon's life after the death of his friend is enveloping Keith at the death of his father. Like his father's, his is equally not sudden. It comes as a result of traumatic lifelong experiences and effort. In spite of the fact that he is born in England, and is supposedly not in the same situation like early immigrants, the very fact of being Black, is at the center of his life: education, work and marriage. His relationship with Annabelle and the death of his father, a father he has never really had, culminate to his sense of vulnerability at the close of the novel (304).

Annabelle's relationship and eventual marriage with Keith exposes him to the dehumanizing nature of racial discrimination. Phillips' delineation of Mr. Johnson, Annabelle's father, reveals the attitude/perception of a typical British vis à vis a black Briton. Johnson's response to the daughter's affair with Keith gives credence to the statement that "Being 'Black' in Britain is a state of "becoming" (racialized); a process of consciousness when colour becomes the defining factor about who you are ..." (Chris Weedon: 73). As a child, Keith could stand up against school friends who tried to disrespect him by calling him names in school. He could escape the embarrassment about his background by telling friends that his parents have gone back to the West Indies. Brenda's insistence that Keith be presentable and polite is all in the consciousness of personality building. She cautions him: "There's people out there, Keith, who think they're better than you, but never mind what they say, they're not. However, I am not having you giving them some reason to think they are ..." (15). However, as an adult, Keith must face the reality of being black. That "process of consciousness" about his identity reaches its peak in his encounter with Annabelle's parents. As Phillips has portrayed severally in the novel, Mr. Johnson does not couch his feeling about a black migrant or the effects of migration in his society. He disowns his daughter rather than welcome a Caribbean migrant into his home. Mr. Johnson is not interested to know about the positive qualities and abilities Keith might possess as a husband.

His colour defines who he is; his place in the British society, a sub-human from the "sub-continent" should have nothing to do with the daughter of a senior British citizen. Apart from referring to his grandson, yet to be born, the progeny of a black, as 'it', William paints the atmosphere and

disgraceful image her daughter has imposed onto him by marrying Keith. During her visit to Wiltshire after ten years, Father expresses to daughter how he, as well as the entire community feels about her marriage:

“You see, Annabelle, I received a note, anonymous of course, shortly after we last saw you in Bristol. In your salad days, as it were. Your mother may have mentioned something to somebody at bridge, or perhaps I blabbed to Walter or Barry in the pub, but some chap, or woman for that matter, wanted to know what it was like to have a 'nigger-lover' for a daughter. He wrote that he hoped I would never have the ill manners to pollute our village with my mongrel family. Now then, what do you make of that?” (25)

As Phillips has shown elsewhere in his novels, the “notion of self is undermined by racism” (Weedon: 76-77). Like Leila's mother in *The Final Passage*¹¹ Annabelle and Keith suffer racism and social exclusion. She is excluded from her own community since she has chosen to condescend too low with a “nigger-lover”. The black colour is synonymous to a disease that can contaminate or “pollute” the privileged white environment. To condone with such relationship is to demonstrate the lack of etiquette and to Mr. Johnson this is a terrible insult to his personality. It is for this reason that Annabelle's mother cries when she announces her pregnancy to her and ten years after, her husband only imagines the trace of blackness in the name of his grandson, Laurie, “Was he a chum?” he asks (29). The image of pollution carries with it all that is poisonous, uncultured, ill mannered, and in fact dangerous, it imputes the notion of contamination. This is what being black in the postwar Britain means.

Keith's anger with his wife when she secretly visits her parents is evidence of the impact of racist attitude on his person and development and the protest against such white prejudice. Referring to his family as a dog of mixed breed is traumatizing and dehumanizing. Keith is married to Annabelle but has no link with her English family. He is rejected by the society into which he is born. He is a man without roots. If as aptly stated by Weedon “Our culture shapes and determines our identity” (2004: 73); who then is Keith? How does he convey a sense of self, first as an individual and secondly as a black when he has no notion of his root? All that he knows or sees of it is in old pictures in the small box, and a vague image of his mother as a sick and miserable woman.

Keith has tried so hard to integrate into the English society by his behavior and educational achievement. But like “His generation of kids, who were born in Britain and who had no memory of any kind of tropical life before England were clearly trying hard to make a space for themselves in a not always welcoming country” (38). He is frustrated by the fact that his intellectual achievement is not helping other deprived and brutalized “mixed breeds” like him. In his crammed office could be found “. . . countless quickly forgotten initiatives, he has no appetite left for reading, let alone producing these meaningless policy reports” (38). Keith's sense of hopelessness is aggravated by the actions of people like Mr. Johnson who will quit his job because he cannot work with colleagues he considers as “. . . cut below by birth but who behaved as though they

were a cut above by divine right" (39); women, like Yvette who took advantage of his colour and sex to claim sexual harassment, or hypocrites like his boss Clive, who use opportunities to keep him out of his job.

The herculean process of self consciousness as the "other", the mis-fit, gradually leads to withdrawal of the individual into self pity and eventually to personality degeneration. The events of his life culminating to the death of his father leave him no choice but to be forgetful, feel lost, lonely and vulnerable. His journey back to London after burying his father portrays Keith as destabilized both mentally and physically. He is afraid, sees himself as small, weak and helpless with no father, no older brother or sister, no future; with Laurie getting into the same history. Anguished, he meditates: "Small. That's it. Small. So that's it then?" (304). His inability to tell Annabelle that his home is at Wilton Road and to get up and leave the room is perhaps Phillips' insinuation that the only home where he is welcome is by his son and wife. Earl's deathbed tale shocks Keith. His father's silence had meant that he had "never been able to properly explain himself to anybody". Now dead, Keith could begin to "find the words". Returning to his wife and son, he shows the first signs of relinquishing his controlled self-sufficiency. The vibrant enthusiastic and positive mind dwindles into oblivion, uncertainty and self pity.

Conclusion: The argument has principally attempted to demonstrate that migration, irrespective of the time and space, is usually motivated by "Edenian vision" though the end is most often a sad disillusionment. This is because the realities of a geopolitically occupied space often prove the contrary. Socio-cultural, political and economic conditions in main land Britain leave the migrants perplexed, defeated and overall, traumatized. As evident in literary history and intellectual literatures, the nature and process of migration disintegrates the concern physically and psychologically. The degree of trauma results from the motivational as well as pull factors. The strong desire to go out for greener pastures is met with a powerful traumatizing reality of indifference, discrimination, racism and pitiable human conditions. This, as illustrated in the preceding paragraphs only leads the new and hopeful Britons to a state of harrowing disenchantment. Gordon's life and death is symbolic of the consequences of elusive *Edenian dream* in the book of "Genesis", typical to most, if not all, migrants. His experience also exposes the impressionistic, racist and cultural and ethnic superiority and sensitivity of the white. Gordon, Keith and Laurie in varying degrees, suffer personality disintegration. With the absence of "home", difficulty of belonging and fact of being black immigrants, Phillips' characters lose both cultural and personal identity. The issues of race and identity may not be Phillips' *raison d'être* for the writing of his novel. Notwithstanding, the psychological and physical effect on the lives of his protagonists cannot be overstated or ignored. The narrative of *Falling Snow* reveals that irrespective of one's ambition, talents and ability, being a migrant, a descendant of a migrant, being black already builds an obstacle for integration, belonging and accomplishment.

Endnotes:

1. The term 'pathography' can For further details about the struggles and conditions of slaves under slave owners and survival strategies adopted by the blacks 'free slaves' in the British metropolitan cities, consult Judith Bryan.
2. The three men refer to Francis Barber, Randolph Turpin and David Oluwale. Main characters in Caryl Phillips' novel, *The Foreigner*.
3. The Caribbean Islands, like many other zones that served as major ports for immigration were, in the 1950s and 60s very strategic in the geopolitics and economic situation of the West, especially Britain because of the highly needed human labour that was urgently needed for the growing industries after the Wars.
4. The myth of departure is what guided many migrants' excited decision to leave. Ralph and Gordon are spurred by the desire for professional and academic development. Neither of them really understands the implications of moving out to the socially, culturally different and unknown environment.
5. Cervantes et al have examined the reasons and legal procedures, status that immigration to the Metropolitan centers, especially Britain had during the postwar period. One of these was the right to British Citizenship and social status.
6. In the novel, we are told that Gordon's older brother, Desmond, left for America, ten years ago. He has never returned and nobody knows his whereabouts. It is suspected that their father died out of frustration and disappointment for he had hoped that Desmond will come back and improve on the family economic situation.
7. The British Migration Office in Barbados is an institutional structure that served as a base for propaganda and mass recruitment of labour from the Caribbean by the British government in the 1950s and 1960s.
8. "Working through" is a phrase used by Trauma theorists to describe a trauma condition whereby a traumatized person is able to remember his experiences and distinguish them from his actual situation. This attitude is oppositional to that of one who "acts-out". Such a traumatized individual has the tendency of reliving the past and sees no positive outcome for the future. Phillips' major characters show signs of both behavioural patterns.
9. Sigmund Freud and Pierre Janet in their explanation of the concept of 'personality disintegration' in the Trauma Theory, use these terms to refer to psychological and physical trauma. The theory holds that a psychologically traumatized person, overwhelmed by uncontrolled emotions, may slip into a condition of numbness.
10. In her article "Identity and Kinship: Caribbean Transnational Narratives", Chamberlain locates major features that became evident with Caribbean migrants in the 19th and 20th Centuries. One of these is the 'close-links across the Oceans' that migrants maintained through various forms of communication and physical communion back home.
11. In her essay, "Identity and Belonging in Contemporary British Writing" Weedon examines the experience of African-Caribbean migration to Britain during the post World War II Britain. In her analysis of Phillips' novel, *The final Passage*, She demonstrates that migration did not only affect the first-generation migrants but also the lives and identities of their children, and because Leila's mother concedes the truth about her living condition in Britain, she too becomes a victim of social exclusion.

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