"The Happy Family Is a Myth for Many": Dysfunctional Families and Literary Parentage in Caryl Phillips' The Lost Child

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Année académique : 2018-2019
URI/URL : http://hdl.handle.net/2268.2/6647

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"The Happy Family Is a Myth for Many":
Dysfunctional Families and Literary Parentage
in Caryl Phillips' *The Lost Child*

Mémoire présenté par LECLERCQ Emma,
en vue de l'obtention du grade de Master en
Langues et Lettres Modernes, orientation
générale.

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Année académique 2018/2019

<u>Introduction</u>

Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847) has been fascinating readers all around the world and continues to do so. Regarded as a literary classic of the nineteenth century, it has inspired movies - British, American, Mexican, French and even Japanese interpretations - television series, operas, ballets, comics and novels through the centuries. *Wuthering Heights* is still a subject of interest today as scholars keep discovering new elements hidden in its syntax. Thanks to those studies, the colonial context in *Wuthering Heights* can now be more clearly noticed and analysed. In Emily Brontë's novel, Mr. Earnshaw describes Heathcliff as a "dark" figure, "almost as if it came from the devil."[1] When the orphan first arrives at Wuthering Heights, brought back from Liverpool by Mr. Earnshaw, Nelly Dean, the family maid, describes it (for she will not use the "him" pronoun until the child has been christened) as a "dirty, ragged, black-haired child"[2] repeating some "gibberish that nobody could understand."[3] The maid's words - coupled with Mrs. Earnshaw calling him a "gipsy brat"[4] - describe a child apparently "different", "other". This idea is confirmed by Nelly when she talks about Heathcliff's possible "foreign lineage" as she explains that he may be a "prince in disguise", son of the "Emperor of China" and of an "Indian queen".[5] Heathcliff is thus described as having a "foreign" look, even the novel's first narrator associates him with a "gipsy" because of his "dark-skinned" aspect.[6] However, although these clues seem to make of Heathcliff a black child, Nelly's words indicates that he is not a "regular black"[7], but rather a mixed-race child.

Bearing this in mind, Andrea Arnold decided to cast a mixed-race child as Heathcliff in her movie adaptation (2011), and many have since followed this theory, among them British author Caryl Phillips. In his novel, *The Lost Child* (2015), Phillips uses these clues to reveal the colonial context hidden in Emily Brontë's novel as he tells the story of Heathcliff before he arrives at Wuthering Heights. In *The Lost Child*, the boy is identified as the son of Mr. Earnshaw and a former black slave brought to Liverpool, a major slave port through which goods were brought to England

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[1] Emily Brontë. *Wuthering Heights*. Penguin Classics, England, 2003, p. 37.

[2] *Wuthering Heights*. pp. 36-37.

[3] *Idem.*

[4] *Wuthering Heights*. pp. 36-37.

[5] *Wuthering Heights*. p. 58.

[6] *Wuthering Heights*. p. 5.

[7] *Wuthering Heights*. p. 58.

from the colonies during the colonial era. Phillips retells the story of Heathcliff in this prequel, but he also tells the story of two other families, the Wilsons and the Brontës as Phillips imagines them. The various families represented in the novel reminded me of Carolyn Spring's words, "the happy family is a myth for many"[8] as they all seemed dysfunctional[9] to me. This immediately fascinated me, and I wanted to analyse these families and how they possibly relate to the intertextual dimension of the novel.

Since my father is a psychoanalyst himself, I was raised in an environment encouraging analysis and therefore people's psychology has always interested me, both that of real people and that of fictional characters. When I decided to work on Phillips' novel, I immediately wanted to analyse the family patterns represented in *The Lost Child* using the theories of various psychoanalysts. Although it is not what is usually expected from fiction, I wanted to see how close Phillips' descriptions were to reality and if psychoanalytical theories could help me analyse the behaviour of the characters. Therefore, my paper's first purpose is to answer the following research question: how are families represented in Caryl Phillips' *The Lost Child*?

Although I knew Phillips told this story to challenge collective amnesia concerning both colonialism and racism - as Bénédicte Ledent and Evelyn O'Callaghan note[10] - while I was reading articles analysing *The Lost Child*, I began to wonder if the dysfunctional family patterns could not have another meaning. In the light of Justin D. Edwards' *Postcolonial Literature*[11] and by taking into account a personal communication with Caryl Phillips himself on 22nd October 2018, when he read at the University of Liège, the last chapter shows how the dysfunctional relationships between the family members in his novel actually echo the problematic relationship between the literary "classics" and their postcolonial rewritings. According to Edwards, this literary relationship could indeed be genealogical[12] and I will develop this hypothesis in the final chapter of this research paper. Therefore, this paper will answer an improved version of my research question: how are families represented in Caryl Phillips' *The Lost Child*, and do the problematic relationships between their members echo the literary and genealogical relationship between the British literary "classics" and their postcolonial rewritings?

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[8] Carolyn Spring, "Can We Heal?" March 2016, https://www.carolynspring.com/blog/can-we-heal/

[9] In this paper, I will use the term "dysfunctional" as a synonym of "problematic".

[10] Bénédicte Ledent and Evelyn O'Callaghan, "Caryl Phillips' *The Lost Child*: A Story of Loss and Connection." *Ariel: a review of international English literature*, 48.3&4, 2017, p. 229.

[11] Justin D. Edwards, *Postcolonial Literature.* London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008, pp. 51-61.

[12] Edwards, *Postcolonial Literature*. p. 60.

This research paper will start with a chapter focusing on theoretical literary notions - taken from articles by John McLeod[13] and Justin D. Edwards[14] - that will be used in the following chapters. I will discuss notions of postcolonialism and of rewriting and then focus on *The Lost Child* and Phillips' purpose(s) in writing this novel. The various family patterns will then be analysed employing psychoanalytical theories in order to understand the characters better. I decided to focus first on fathers projecting onto their children in the light of the theories of Murray Bowen[15] Alain Ackermans[16] Paola di Blasi and Stefano Cirillo.[17] The third chapter will focus on absent parent figures and on the parentification process as described by Luc Roegiers.[18] I will then focus on family secrets in the novel and analyse their consequences on three families using Guy Ausloos' theory.[19] The fifth chapter will focus on how the characters of Ben and Heathcliff go through loss in the light of Cédric Leclercq and Jean-Yves Hayez's article.[20] Finally, the last chapter will focus on the family metaphor and how it can apply to the problematic relationship between literary "classics" and their rewritings, using Edwards' theory.[21] This chapter will also develop the notion of identity and the problematic relationship between people born in the Caribbean and raised in Britain - for instance - and the British "mother country".

But for now, I will first focus on the theoretical notions that can be regarded as essential to the analysis of the novel.

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[13] John McLeod, *Beginning Postcolonialism*. Manchester: Manchester University press, 2000 pp. 139-169.

[14] Justin D. Edwards, *Postcolonial Literature*. pp. 51-61.

[15] Murray Bowen, "À propos de la différenciation de soi à l'intérieur de sa propre famille." *Thérapie Familiale Genève*, 11, 2, 1993, pp. 99-148.

[16] Alain Ackermans, "Les loyautés invisibles." *Formation à la thérapie familiale*, E.S.F, 1998, pp. 89-96.

[17] Stefano Cirillo and Paola di Blasio, "Les jeux familiaux typiques des familles maltraitantes." *La famille maltraitante*, Paris, Fabert, 2005, pp. 89-118.

[18] Luc Roegiers, *Les cigognes en crise*. Paris: De Boek, 1994, pp. 115-160.

[19] Guy Ausloos, "Secrets de famille." In *Changements systémiques en thérapie familiale*, E.S.F, 1984, pp. 62-80.

[20] Cédric Leclercq and Jean-Yves Hayez, "Le deuil compliqué et pathologique chez l'enfant." *Louvain Médecine*, 117, 1998, pp. 293-307.

[21] Edwards, *Postcolonial Literature.*

1. <u>**Theoretical notions**</u>

Before analysing the various family patterns represented in *The Lost Child* (2015), this first chapter will focus on a historical reminder of colonial Britain, on the notion of "postcolonial rewriting" and on the postcolonial literary context. The next part of the chapter will focus on Caryl Phillips as a postcolonial writer after a brief biography in order to show how his "displacement" from St. Kitts to Leeds influenced his writings. The last part of this first chapter will be made of a summary of *The Lost Child*, the novel to which this paper is devoted. I will introduce the author's intentions in writing this novel and will concentrate on the main themes of *The Lost Child*: the colonial past, the amnesia that surrounds it and the family, a theme that will be analysed in the following chapters.

1.1 <u>**Slavery and the colonies**</u>

The first step towards the British Empire was the establishment of settlements in North America and in the Caribbean. Their purpose was the administratively management of the colonies and the development of commercial trade with the mother country. Many treasures of the colonies were subsequently brought to England, treasures such as sugar and tobacco, but also slaves who were uprooted and sold in what was called the "trans-Atlantic triangular slave-trade".[22] In her article about *Cambridge* (1991), another novel by Caryl Phillips, Shramana Das Purkayastha explains how the slave trade worked:

> The [African] slaves were […] uprooted […] to be sold […] in the European sugar plantations of the Caribbean. […] European cargos, loaded with Western […] commodities, […] set sails for the West African coastline. In exchange for those goods, the European traders […] collected slaves, whom they then sold to the European-run sugar plantations of the Caribbean and of the North and South Americas. Such a transaction […] allowed the slave ships to export […] cotton, tobacco, sugar and rhum - the produce of plantations settlements - to Europe.[23]

John McLeod explains that, in order to "educate" and "civilize" the people of the colonies, the British literary "classics" - chosen for their aesthetic beauty and for their moral western

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[22] The slaves were mostly taken from Africa to the Americas. Some of them came to Europe as well but they represent a minority.

[23] Shramana Das Purkayastha, "A 'Passage of Loss': Rootless Exile and Frustrated Empowerment in Caryl Phillips' *Cambridge*." *New Academia*, 1.4, 2012, p.93.

Christian values - played an important role in this colonisation process.[24] John McLeod defines these "classics" of English literature as "old canonical texts" or simply as the "canon".[25] Following McLeod's reasoning, the quotation marks will be kept in this paper when using terms like "canon" or "classics" since "it is a matter for debate whether or not texts are *inherently* valuable or worthy. Hence, the literary value of a text is open to disagreement and change."[26] Therefore, every reader will have a different interpretation and even a different definition of what literary "classics" according to individual references and tastes. Moreover, the notion of "classics" varies according to the era in which the term is used: for instance, some literary texts are regarded as "classics" nowadays although they were not labelled as such in the past centuries or even years.

According to McLeod, literature was subsequently used in the colonies as a tool of imperial control to send a message about civilized life and morality.[27] In other words, the "classics" were used to serve colonial and imperial interests.[28] Through them, the colonizers could give a "proper English education" to those "pagan others" but also mainly maintain and develop colonial power.[29] Although they imposed their culture and refuted the traditions of the people of the colonies, the colonizers saw their educating purpose as laudable. In this respect, following McLeod's article, the colonial teaching of English literature was "another way for the Western colonial powers to assert their cultural and moral superiority while devaluing indigenous cultural products."[30] In this piece about postcolonialism, McLeod focuses on colonial India, quoting Lord Thomas Babington Macaulay - the president of the Council on Education in India from 1832 to 1833 - and reminds the reader of his declaration in his "Minute on Indian Education"[31] in 1835:

> It is impossible for us to […] attempt to educate the body of the people. We must […] do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect.[32]

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[24] John McLeod, *Beginning Postcolonialism*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000, p.140.

[25] *Idem.*

[26] *Idem.*

[27] *Idem.*

[28] *Idem.*

[29] *Idem.*

[30] *Idem.*

[31] McLeod, *Beginning Postcolonialism*. p. 141.

[32] *Idem.*

This declaration echoes Justin D. Edwards' *Postcolonial Literature*.[33] He explains that colonisation relied on a hierarchy - the civilized, educated West above the pagan, ignorant and savage East - confirmed by the literary "classics".[34] The people of the colonies were taught about the civilized, educated, Christian and enlightened West, the mother country to which they belonged to even though they had never seen it and were almost considered as subhumans. They had to reject their ancestral beliefs and cultures to adopt the new English rules and "true values" of the one and only civilized world, England, forced into their minds by the literary "canon". Therefore, the references used in the colonies did not echo colonised people's experiences. As McLeod states it, the natives were "asked to perceive Western nations as places where the very best in art and learning were [*sic*] produced, the lasting values of which could survive in locations far removed from the texts' point of origin."[35] For instance, they might have been asked to learn a poem about snow and winter although they had never seen any trace of snow in their native country.

1.2 <u>Postcolonialism</u>

McLeod notes that, even centuries after the end of the colonial period, the literary "classics" still have an important impact on many authors born and raised in the ancient colonies or raised in England.[36] These authors - such as Jean Rhys and Caryl Phillips - are referred to as "postcolonial" and so are their novels. However, the term "postcolonial" does not specifically define novels or texts written after the declaration of independence of the colonies. In this research paper, the notion of postcolonial texts and novels will be applied to "any writing affected by colonization in one way or another."[37] According to this definition used by Bénédicte Ledent during a lecture at the University of Liège in February 2018, postcolonial novels could then also be part of the "canon" if they refer in one way or another to the colonies and the colonial situation and context. For example, the colonial subtext in *Wuthering Heights* can be seen through the character of Heathcliff, a "dark" figure found by Mr. Earnshaw in Liverpool, an important eighteenth century port for slave and goods trade with the Caribbean. In Emily Brontë's novel, Heathcliff is described as a "dirty, ragged, black-haired child" who speaks an unknown and incomprehensible language and Mr. Earnshaw

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[33] Justin D. Edwards, *Postcolonial Literature*. London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008, pp. 51-61.

[34] Edwards, *Postcolonial Literature*. pp. 58-59.

[35] McLeod, *Beginning Postcolonialism*. p. 140.

[36] McLeod, *Beginning Postcolonialism*. p.140.

[37] Bénédicte Ledent, February 2018.

explains that "it" is "as dark almost as if it came from the devil."[38] Many readers now believe that Heathcliff could actually be a black child and this physical description motivated Andrea Arnold to cast a mixed-race child as Heathcliff in his 2011 movie adaptation.[39]

According to McLeod, "postcolonial rewritings" are also to be considered as postcolonial texts.[40] In his article, he explains that "the re-interpretation of 'classic' English literary works has become an important area of post-colonialism and has impacted upon all kinds of literary debates, in particular the ongoing disputes about which texts can be considered as possessing 'literary values' and the criteria we use to measure it."[41] Therefore, many postcolonial writers use English literary "classics" as a base for their novels as they write back to them and as they "rewrite the 'classics' of English literature."[42]

1.3 <u>Postcolonial rewriting</u>

According to Edwards, rewriting the literary "canon" is a common practice, especially in the postcolonial world, and many "classics" were rewritten according to various approaches.[43] Some postcolonial writers choose to keep the same characters - or at least one character - from the "canonical" novel they rewrite, some keep the same plot, the same form, and some simply make allusions and subtle references.[44] For example, the postcolonial author Jean Rhys based her novel *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) on Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* and told the story of a mysterious character in the original novel - Bertha Mason - in order to give her a voice and a past.[45]

As Edwards notices, the notion of "rewriting" is often linked to terms such as "opposition", "criticism", "challenge", "adversarial" or even "subversive" - such postcolonial novels then go against the "classics" and against the established order they refer to.[46] Therefore, the notion of

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[38] Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*, p. 77

[39] Many have since followed this theory of a hidden colonial context in *Wuthering Heights* such as Caryl Phillips as this paper will show.

[40] McLeod, *Beginning Postcolonialism*. p. 139.

[41] *Idem.*

[42] *Idem.*

[43] Edwards, *Postcolonial Literature*. p. 52.

[44] Edwards, *Postcolonial Literature*. pp. 54-57.

[45] *Idem.*

[46] Edwards, *Postcolonial Literature*. p. 53.

"rewriting" is mainly understood as contesting the authority of the "canon" by re-imagining it. However, Edwards explains that this practice is subtler than it primarily seems since postcolonial authors can have various reasons for writing back to the literary centre.[47] By rewriting the "canon", some postcolonial authors want to focus on some facts from the original "classic" and to bring them to light. They also want to give a voice to the originally voiceless characters of the original novels by telling their story, give a new point of view on the original story, raise new questions - such as those linked to representation, race, gender - and create somehow a dialogue between the "classics" and their rewritings.[48] Some authors also choose to write back to show their belonging to a literary tradition by rewriting the "classics" that they had been read as children.[49]

However, although the rewriting process is not always intended to be subversive and challenging purpose, it can be a risky one when applied to a "classic". Indeed, rewriting is an ambivalent practice and it is more complicated than it might seem. Therefore, a content-challenging rewriting of a "classical novel" can sometimes reach the complete opposite by giving more authority to the rewritten "classic", as McLeod notes.[50] Another danger of this practice is the misinterpretation of the rewriting by the reader getting the idea that postcolonial authors are only copying British literary "classics" without originality.[51] However, McLeod explains that postcolonial writers are being inventive as they try to make us - readers - look at the original "classics" from another point of view and to read them by paying more attention to their colonial context.[52] As McLeod explains by quoting Meenakshi Mukherjee, postcolonialism is an "emancipatory concept […] [as] it 'makes us interrogate many aspects of the study of literature that we were made to take for granted, enabling us […] to re-interpret some of the old canonical texts from Europe from the perspective of our specific historical and geographical location.'"[53]

McLeod notes that some critics believe that rewriting is an elitist genre as they imply a previous reading of the "classics" they are based on.[54] Although it may be true for some

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[47] Edwards, *Postcolonial Literature*. pp. 53-54.

[48] *Idem.*

[49] Edwards, *Postcolonial Literature*. p. 52.

[50] McLeod, *Beginning Postcolonialism*. p. 169.

[51] McLeod, *Beginning Postcolonialism*. p. 145.

[52] *Idem.*

[53] McLeod, *Beginning Postcolonialism*. p. 139.

[54] McLeod, *Beginning Postcolonialism*. p. 169.

postcolonial rewritings, McLeod believes it is not always the case.[55] Rewritings may be appreciated without pre-reading but the knowledge of the classics may be of some help to understand the author's questioning those "classics" and its intention to challenge the reader.[56] In the following extract, McLeod explains that knowing the context of postcolonial rewritings is maybe even more important than having read the "classics" they are based on:

> Postcolonial literary criticism has affinities with other kinds of study […] concerned with reading literary texts in relation to their historical, social and cultural contexts, rather than timeless expressions of universally acknowledged moral values. "Context" refers to something more dynamic and less unified than "historical background".[57]

As mentioned before, postcolonial rewriting is practiced by many authors, such as Caryl Phillips. Bénédicte Ledent notices that, like many others, Phillips has "engaged with the (historical and literary) colonial archive of this world-changing contact and clash of cultures and races"[58] and he does so in his novels, confronting the present world with a colonial past and inheritance many would rather forget.

1.4 <u>The author: Caryl Phillips</u>

Phillips was born in St. Kitts on 13th of March 1958 and his family left the Caribbean for Leeds, Yorkshire, when he was four months old. As Allen Jeffery Renard notes, this departure to and his life in England as a Caribbean-born British child influenced his novels as well as his desire to write novels.[59] Phillips explains that he decided to go back to the Caribbean when he was twenty-two because "it became increasingly clear to [him] that if [he] was going to write [he] needed to know who [he] was. [He] needed to know where [he] came from. […] A part of [him] was beneath the surface and [he] had to discover it if [he] wanted to write with any degree of clarity about

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[55] *Idem.*

[56] *Idem.*

[57] McLeod, *Beginning Postcolonialism*. p. 144.

[58] Bénédicte Ledent and Evelyn O'Callaghan, "Caryl Phillips' *The Lost Child*: A Story of Loss and Connection." *Ariel: A Review of International English Literature*, 48.3&4 (2017), p. 229.

[59] Allen Jeffery Renard, "*The Lost Child*, by Caryl Phillips." *The New York Times*, May 2015, https://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/10/books/review/the-lost-child-by-caryl-phillips.html

[himself].”[60] This idea of looking for one's own self and to know where one comes from are themes that can be found in *The Lost Child* as well as in many other novels by Phillips, as Carol Margaret Davidson says in her introduction to her interview with Phillips in October 1994.[61] She explains that his fiction focuses on the theme of displacement: for Phillips, it is a complicated condition that leads to "a great deal of suffering, […] of confusion, […] of soul searching."[62]

1.5 *The Lost Child*

a) Summary of the novel

Phillips' tenth novel, *The Lost Child* (2015), tells three stories that share many common points. The main story focuses of Monica Johnson, a young woman who marries a black student - Julius Wilson - and who has to live alone with her two mixed-race children, Benjamin (Ben) and Thomas (Tommy) in Northern England when her husband returns to his homeland. Having to raise her two children alone because of his departure and because her parents shunned her when she married against their will, Monica slowly begins to fall into depressive madness, and the situation deteriorates after the loss of her second child, Tommy. The narrative also shares with the reader Ben's point of view about his younger brother, his mother, but also his status as a mixed-race child in England which to some extent might echo Phillips' own experience. A central chapter tells another story by focusing on Emily Brontë's last days as the reader learns about the Brontë family through her point of view. Finally, the novel's first, ninth and tenth chapters tell the story of a young mixed-race boy, whose mother - a former slave - dies in eighteenth-century Liverpool, and who is found by a gentleman - who is actually his own father - who brings the child back to his home in the Yorkshire moors.

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[60] Caryl Phillips in author interviews, "*The Lost Child* Author Caryl Phillips: 'I Needed to Know Where I Came From.'" In *National Public Radio*, March 21, 2015, 7:11 AM, heard on *Weekend Edition Saturday*, https://www.npr.org/2015/03/21/394127475/lost-child-author-caryl-phillips-i-needed-to-know-where-i-came-from?t=1537862893363

[61] Carol Margaret Davidson, "Crisscrossing the River: An Interview with Caryl Phillips." *Ariel: A Review of International English Literature*, 25:4, October 1994, p. 91.

[62] *Idem.*

b) <u>Phillips' intentions</u>

b.1) <u>The "Brontë factor"</u>

An attentive reader will recognize in the aforementioned three chapters the reinvented story of Heathcliff and Mr. Earnshaw, two characters from *Wuthering Heights*. As Caryl Phillips explained in an interview, he decided to "rewrite" Emily Brontë's novel transposing it into Monica's story especially because of what he calls the "Brontë factor"[63]:

> […] [T]here has always been a mystery about the relationship of […] Heathcliff to the family that eventually took him in. So the question of parentage, […] of belonging is very central to *Wuthering Heights* and some of those echoes in that novel […] began to resonate with me when I was thinking about the more contemporary story.[64]

As Ledent and O'Callaghan note, Caryl Phillips has always been fascinated by Heathcliff, this "seven-year-old dark stranger […] 'rescued' from the streets of Liverpool in 1771" who was one of the first characters to captivate his imagination.[65] The mystery of Heathcliff's origins never ceased to haunt Phillips, and they believe that the three chapters of *The Lost Child* focusing on Heathcliff's life before he was brought to Wuthering Heights by Mr. Earnshaw are "an attempt to solve the puzzle of Heathcliff's backstory".[66] In the novel, Heathcliff is presented as the mixed-race son of Mr. Earnshaw and a former slave. By giving the boy such a past, Phillips immediately provides the reader with an insight into the reality of colonial England, revealing his first intention in writing the novel: countering the amnesia surrounding the slave-trade.

b.2) <u>Preventing amnesia: giving a voice to the voiceless</u>

The chapters focusing on Heathcliff's past raise the aforementioned trans-Atlantic triangular slave-trade topic as they tell child's the story but also his mother's. She - for the woman does not have a proper name in the novel apart from "the Crazy Woman" - is uprooted from Africa to work on sugar

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[63] Caryl Phillips in author interviews, "*The Lost Child* Author Caryl Phillips: 'I Needed to Know Where I Came From.'"

[64] *Idem.*

[65] Ledent and O'Callaghan, "Caryl Phillips' *The Lost Child*: A Story of Loss and Connection." p. 230.

[66] Ledent and O'Callaghan, "Caryl Phillips' *The Lost Child*: A Story of Loss and Connection." pp. 230-231.

cane plantations in the Caribbean before she is brought to Liverpool where she ends up dying.[67] According to Bénédicte Ledent, Phillips is fascinated with "solitary, suffering individuals whose lost dignity the text attempts to restore"[68] and she develops this point as follows:

> The possibility of glorifying such ordinary individuals […] is linked to Phillips' […] vision of the literary text as able to understand any characters […] - probably an inheritance from his native Caribbean, a region that was denied local heroes for historical reasons and has […] always paid […] attention to the hardships of the common man.[69]

The quotation's last part echoes Virginia Woolf's theory about "the obscure". Louise Yelin also develops the similarities between this idea and Phillips' desire to tell the stories of "common" people. According to Woolf, "recover[ing] the voices rendered mute or unintelligible in traditional histories and biographies"[70] should be the actual purpose of biographers and novelists.[71] According to Yelin, Caryl Phillips precisely makes the reader hear those voices.[72] Polatti shares the same point of view as she notices that the novel's lost children are "seen as the product of mixed relationships and as people without history […]."[73] In their piece, Ledent and O'Callaghan also note that the novel focuses on "the narrative reclamation/adoption of absent stories, the unvoiced accounts of orphans and stolen or denied children of Empire who are missing from, or only shadowy figures within, official records."[74] This practice of telling the past through forgotten characters echoes a central theme in Phillips' novels: memory.[75] Bénédicte Ledent and Evelyn O'Callaghan explain that *The Lost Child* "is framed by the dialogue between two literary traditions, that of the British canon and that of the tropical south, which revisits and rewrites the narrative of the former, thereby claiming those lost, silenced, and invisible children of Empire whose presence (or absence) haunts

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[67] *The Lost Child.* p. 1-12.

[68] Bénédicte Ledent, "Introduction: Thinking Caryl Phillips Out of the Box." *Ariel: A Review of International English Literature*, 48,3&4, 2017, pp. 4.

[69] *Idem.*

[70] Louise Yelin, "Migrants Subjects, Invisible Presences: Biography in the Writings of Caryl Phillips." *Ariel: A Review of International English Literature*, 48,3&4, 2017, pp. 103.

[71] *Idem.*

[72] Seeing the case of Heathcliff's mother in *The Lost Child*, one can only agree with her idea.

[73] *Idem.*

[74] Ledent and O'Callaghan, "Caryl Phillips' *The Lost Child*: A Story of Loss and Connection." pp. 229-230.

[75] Ledent and O'Callaghan, "Caryl Phillips' *The Lost Child*: A Story of Loss and Connection." p. 229.

the pages of British fiction."[76] Ledent and O'Callaghan believe that, by telling the story of Heathcliff's mother in the opening chapter, using the present tense, Phillips begins a "remembering process that her lost child and all those who come after are encouraged to dismiss."[77] In her analysis of the novel, Alessia Polatti notes how Phillips' retelling of *Wuthering Heights* and of Heathcliff's story tries to uncover the mystery of the latter's origins and to create a dialogue with the former[78]:

> […] [B]y suggesting that Heathcliff is the son of Mr. Earnshaw, Phillips seeks to fill the most important gap in Brontë's novel, that is the question of Heathcliff's origin, […] and he tries to do so by writing a parallel story which is not a mere re-writing […], but a […] comment and a veritable dialogue with nineteenth-century British fiction and history.[79]

Phillips confronts not only Britain's colonial but also literary history in order to challenge the "problematic 'historical nonsense' related to the complex question of belonging that has affected black people throughout the centuries."[80] Polatti quotes Barbara L. Estrin who notices that, for Phillips, "memory involves an understanding that our contemporary experience connects to our mythological past and that such an understanding requires us to read that past from the retrospect of its historical repercussions."[81] Polatti develops Estrin's argument in her article and explains that "chronicling historical events in the present tense and examining the experience of both the Brontë family and Emily's *Wuthering Heights* is for [Phillips] one way of analysing the dynamics of twentieth-century British multiracial families. It is for this reason that Phillips constructs a cyclic narration in which characters repeat patterns from the past."[82] Therefore, she notices that, by telling the story of the voiceless, of a colonial past but also the story of lost children, Phillips investigates the colonial past and gives "a historical background for his novel which suggests the close connection between family conflicts and social and cultural representations."[83]

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[76] *Idem.*

[77] Ledent and O'Callaghan, "Caryl Phillips' *The Lost Child*: A Story of Loss and Connection." p. 232.

[78] Alessia Polatti, "Racial Genealogies and Intertextuality in Contemporary Britain: Caryl Phillips's *The Lost Child*." *Commonwealth Essays and Studies*, 40.1, 2017, p. 112.

[79] *Idem.*

[80] Polatti, "Racial Genealogies and Intertextuality in Contemporary Britain: Caryl Phillips's *The Lost Child*." p. 114.

[81] Polatti, "Racial Genealogies and Intertextuality in Contemporary Britain: Caryl Phillips's *The Lost Child*." p. 107.

[82] *Idem.*

[83] Polatti, "Racial Genealogies and Intertextuality in Contemporary Britain: Caryl Phillips's *The Lost Child*." p. 112.

b.3) <u>The lost children</u>

By telling the story of the forgotten figures of the past, the novel shows that their descendants still suffer - even centuries later - as Ben and Tommy's story echoes Heathcliff's, as Monica echoes Heathcliff's mother and Phillips' Emily Brontë. As Ledent and O'Callaghan explain, the novel "calls attention to the lost children of the first encounter of eighteenth-century northern England and the Black Atlantic, meaning formerly enslaved Caribbean people who […] found themselves in Britain; it also tells the story of their lost children and their children's children."[84] In the novel, each family has one - and sometimes more than one - lost child: Heathcliff, Branwell and Tommy, but also Ben, Monica and Emily Brontë herself. As Polatti notices in her article, the lost child theme is a thematic thread that links the different stories in the novel together.[85] She explains that this theme "narrativizes the complexity and the dramatic nature of those aspects of family relationships which derive from the social and racial dynamics of English society from the nineteenth century to nowadays."[86]

b.4) <u>Family</u>

As Polatti points out, *The Lost Child* tells the story of various families and especially focuses on the parent-child relationship.[87] According to her, Phillips wants to describe and investigate this special connection, the "deepest nature of one of the most archaic human bonds."[88] She also notices that the relationships between children and parents in the novel are "disastrous".[89] *The Lost Child* therefore explores the link between a parental figure - a mother and/or a father - and a (often lost) child.[90] As this research paper will try to demonstrate, every family presented in the novel is dysfunctional. While reading the novel, I wondered if these problematic relationships could echo something more, for instance the link between literary "classics" and their postcolonial rewritings. Ledent and

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[84] Ledent and O'Callaghan, "Caryl Phillips' *The Lost Child*: A Story of Loss and Connection." pp. 229-230.

[85] Polatti, "Racial Genealogies and Intertextuality in Contemporary Britain: Caryl Phillips's *The Lost Child*." p. 107.

[86] *Idem.*

[87] Polatti, "Racial Genealogies and Intertextuality in Contemporary Britain: Caryl Phillips's *The Lost Child*." p. 105.

[88] *Idem.*

[89] Polatti, "Racial Genealogies and Intertextuality in Contemporary Britain: Caryl Phillips's *The Lost Child*." p. 108.

[90] *Idem.*

O'Callaghan develop this idea and they explain that *The Lost Child* is "deeply invested in literary parenthood"[91] as it recalls the "absent stories […] of denied children of Empire."[92]

In a way, this reflection about dysfunctional families echoes Edwards' understanding of postcolonial rewritings. According to him, rewritings could be seen and read as if they were in a literary - almost familial as the following lines will show - relationship with the "classics" they refer to. In this way, postcolonial rewritings are not totally independent texts and they have to be read in relation with their "classic" inspirations. This relationship between the "classics" and their rewritings is a hierachical relationship that echoes not only the relationship between English colonizers and the people of the colonies, but also between parents and children. This situation is often reflected in postcolonial rewritings with themes such as dysfunctional family patterns and complicated familial relationships. One could say that there is a real notion of literary parentage between the "classics" and their postcolonial rewritings. There is almost a "family" link between the original texts and their rewritings, such as in Caryl Phillips' *The Lost Child* and in many other novels. Therefore, as this research paper will demonstrate in the following chapters based on Edwards's theory, the postcolonial rewritings have to be read bearing in mind their genealogy, literary parentage and have to be regarded as an answer to the "canon".[93]

Parallels may be drawn between the various families presented in *The Lost Child*, such as the absent father figure or the patriarchal and possessive father, the lost/insane mother, and of course, the lost child(ren). These dysfunctional families will be the main focus of this research paper as four family patterns will be analysed by using various psychoanalytical theories, beginning with fathers projecting their hopes and desires onto their children based on articles written by Muray Bowen[94], Alain Ackermans[95] and Stefano Cirillo and Paola di Blasi.[96]

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[91] Ledent and O'Callaghan, "Caryl Phillips' *The Lost Child*: A Story of Loss and Connection." pp. 229-230.

[92] *Idem.*

[93] Edwards, *Postcolonial Literature.* p. 60.

[94] Murray Bowen, "À propos de la différenciation de soi à l'intérieur de sa propre famille." *Thérapie Familiale Genève*, 11, 2, 1993, pp. 99-148.

[95] Alain Ackermans, "Les loyautés invisibles." *Formation à la thérapie familiale*, E.S.F, 1998, pp. 89-96.

[96] Stefano Cirillo and Paola di Blasio, "Les jeux familiaux typiques des familles maltraitantes." *La famille maltraitante*, Paris, Fabert, 2005, pp. 89-118.

2. **Fathers projecting onto their children**

This second chapter focuses on two father figures projecting their desires onto their children: Ronald Johnson and Patrick Brontë as Phillips imagined him in *The Lost Child*. For Murray Bowen, the projection process consists in "parents project[ing] a part of their immaturity on one or several of their children."[97] For example, it can happen with fathers projecting their hopes and unfulfilled desires on their children.[98] In order to analyse the two fathers' behaviour towards their children and the consequences of the projection process, this chapter will be based on Alain Ackermans' summary of Boszormenyi-Nagy's theory[99] as well as those of Stefano Cirillo and Paola di Blasi.[100] The two pieces are written in French and I translated the extracts used in this paper.

2.1 **The Johnson family pattern**

I will first focus on the Johnson family pattern, especially on Ronald Johnson's behaviour towards his daughter, Monica. In the novel, the Johnson family - Ronald, his wife Ruth and their daughter Monica - can be regarded as dysfunctional as will be shown in the following chapter. It actually shares the same family pattern as the Brontës' with a problematic father figure, a silent/absent mother and a lost child.[101] The analysis of the Johnson family will help us understand Monica's choices and what will lead her to develop her own dysfunctional family pattern.

a) Paternalism and patriarchal society

At the beginning of *The Lost Child'*s second chapter, we are introduced to the Johnson family with a brief sentence:

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[97] Murray Bowen, "À propos de la différenciation de soi à l'intérieur de sa propre famille." *Thérapie Familiale Genève*, 11, 2, p. 108.

[98] *Idem.*

[99] Alain Ackermans, "Les loyautés invisibles." *Formation à la thérapie familiale*, E.S.F, 1998, pp. 89-96.

[100] Stefano Cirillo and Paola di Blasio, "Les jeux familiaux typiques des familles maltraitantes." *La famille maltraitante*, Paris, Fabert, 2005, pp. 89-118.

[101] Note that there are two lost children in the Brontë family pattern, Branwell and Emily.

> Towards the end of her second year at university, Monica Johnson listened as her father told her that he had given the matter a great deal of thought, but sadly he couldn't be expected to tolerate her behaviour for a moment longer.[102]

The tone is immediately set and we can deduce that the father rules this family, making all the choices he regards as the good ones. The first sentence highlights an important aspect of Ronald Johnson: when he makes a decision, discussing it is out of question.[103] The following extract also shows that the father is a dominant figure, representative of a paternalistic society and of paternalism itself:

> At a time when the duties and obligation of war were causing many families to temporarily break apart and accustom themselves to the novelty of female leadership, Ronald Johnson was able to continue to exercise a benevolent patriarchal authority over his household and therefore take a keen interest in the development of his daughter.[104]

Born and raised in England where the society was mostly patriarchal for centuries, Ronald never questions his position as a leader in his family. As Anne Garrait-Bourrier explains in her piece[105], the father figure in Western culture has always been associated to notions such as virility, "physical strength, authority, control and discipline as well as responsibility."[106] All those characteristics are what makes a "real man."[107] The character of Ronald can be seen as a personification of this patriarchal image of "father" and "man" as the Western world imagines it. He even characterizes his patriarchal role as "benevolent".[108] From his point of view, ruling his family is a positive thing to do in order to protect it and to maintain order.[109] Therefore, he does not understand that his patriarchal behaviour is harmful for both his daughter and his wife. Later on, we learn that his rather absent wife does not often speak. Monica herself describes her mother as being in a "near-mute

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[102] *The Lost Child.* p. 15.

[103] *Idem.*

[104] *The Lost Child.* p. 19.

[105] Anne Garrait-Bourrier, "The Destruction and Impossible Reconstruction of Family Links in *Crossing the River* by Caryl Phillips." *Commonwealth Essays and Studies*, 40., 2017, pp. 45-58.

[106] Garrait-Bourrier, "The Destruction and Impossible Reconstruction of Family Links." p. 46.

[107] *Idem.*

[108] *The Lost Child.* p. 19.

[109] *Idem.*

submission"[110] state because of her husband's actions.[111] It is said that Ruth Johnson never argues with her husband as she "lock[s] away all her talk inside of herself."[112] Ronald barely mentions his wife, and when he does it is only to show that he made a decision and that she does not have a word to say about it:

> Naturally, he had little choice but to share the disconcerting information with his wife, and then he began to make plans to undertake the four-hour drive sometime in the next few days in order that he might lay down the law.[113]

In this view, the law dictated by the patriarchal figure cannot be subjected to discussion. The only other time Ronald mentions his wife is when he has to get calmer in order to tell her that Monica will not be coming back. He is supposed to do so with a minimum of emotion since men do not cry nor show emotion in Western ideology.[114] Ronald Johnson is, and wants to be, a "real man" who shows no weaknesses. However, separating Monica from the family and especially from him is a difficult thing to do. Thus, after telling his daughter that she no longer belongs to the family, he cannot help but "sob".[115]

b) A problematic form of paternal love

Even though Ronald is a dominant figure, he loves his daughter. However, according to Alessia Polatti, Ronald's affection towards Monica is a problematic kind of parental love since it is "invasive and patriarchal."[116] It represents a "wrong form of love" that can only shape children who will end "deprived of both a history and a future."[117] As Polatti argues, Ronald Johnson is a "suffocating patriarchal figure who has always tried to control and impose his own desires on his

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[110] *The Lost Child.* p. 16.

[111] Bénédicte Ledent and Evelyn O'Callaghan, "Caryl Phillips' *The Lost Child*: A Story of Loss and Connection." *Ariel: a review of international english literature*, 48.3&4 (2017), p. 237.

[112] *The Lost Child.* p. 58.

[113] Ledent and O'Callaghan, "Caryl Phillips' *The Lost Child*: A Story of Loss and Connection." p. 237.

[114] Garrait-Bourrier, "The Destruction and Impossible Reconstruction of Family Links." pp. 46.

[115] *The Lost Child.* p. 24.

[116] Alessia Polatti, "Racial Genealogies and Intertextuality in Contemporary Britain: Caryl Phillips's *The Lost Child*." *Commonwealth Essays and Studies*, 40.1, 2017, pp. 107-108.

[117] *Idem.*

daughter."[118] This echoes Ronald's pride about his daughter. He has always taken great satisfaction from Monica's achievements as if they were his own. For example, Monica was a really talented pianist as a child (she even won prizes in various festivals[119]).[120] His feeling of pride is clearly expressed in the novel when Ronald learns that Monica has been selected by the headmistress to have music lessons.[121] However, the prouder and the more invested in Monica's hobby he is, the less implicated she gets. She eventually stops piano lessons as if her father's pride had ruined them for her and even the music itself, as Giulia Mascoli notices in her piece.[122] Ronald also shows his pride when his daughter is accepted at Oxford university, as the following extract shows:

> [He] drove to work […] and he utilized the whole journey planning how he might break his news to the staff room in a casual manner […]. However, […] it was going to be impossible to contain himself. […] [H]e just blurted it out: 'Our Monica's going to Oxford.'[…] 'Well, Mr. Johnson, that's marvellous news. Just marvellous. Congratulations.'[123]

He is the one who cannot wait to tell his colleagues the news just as if it was his own achievement and he is the one who receives congratulations, not Monica. And although it is quite normal in informal and colloquial English, we can notice that when Ronald talks about Monica he uses a possessive determiner that may be less innocent than it seems. As Anne Garrait-Bourrier notices concerning other father figures in Caryl Phillips' novels, Ronald "assimilates possession with love."[124] Therefore, it is not simply Monica who goes to Oxford, it is "his" Monica, "his" projection.

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[118] Polatti, "Racial Genealogies and Intertextuality in Contemporary Britain." pp. 108.

[119] *The Lost Child.* pp. 20, 40-41.

[120] *The Lost Child.* p. 20.

[121] *The Lost Child.* p. 20.

[122] Giulia Mascoli, " 'The River That Does Not Know Its Own Source Will Dry Up' : Caryl Phillips's Musicalized Fiction." *Commonwealth Essays and Studies*, 40., 2017, p. 84.

[123] *The Lost Child.* pp. 21-22.

[124] Garrait-Bourrier, "The Destruction and Impossible Reconstruction of Family Links." p. 47.

c) <u>The projection process</u>

Fathers being proud of their children is a normal thing. However this particular type of pride can be coded as pride coming from a projection process as Murray Bowen calls this phenomenon.[125] He defines it as "a process through which parents project a part of their immaturity on one or several of their children."[126] Bowen explains that this process can happen with fathers projecting their unfulfilled hopes and desires on their children, as Ronald Johnson on Monica.[127] He projects himself and his own desires onto her and takes great satisfaction from her achievements, just as if they were his own.[128]

d) <u>The daughter's rebellion</u>

When Monica is accepted in Oxford university, her attitude contrasts with her father's, as shown in the novel:

> On the morning she received the letter announcing her acceptance, Monica reluctantly shared the news with her parents over tea and toasts and then trotted off to school as though this were just an ordinary day.[129]

Although it is supposed to be her achievement and success, Monica reacts as if it was some banal news, nothing worth being excited about, whereas her father is full of joy and pride. By being accepted in Oxford university, Monica makes Ronald want even more from her and he feels entitled to keep projecting his desires onto her. However, because of the weight of her father's hopes and desires, Monica distances herself from him and it ruins the communication between them as the following extract shows:

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[125] Bowen, "À propos de la différenciation de soi à l'intérieur de sa propre famille." *Thérapie Familiale Genève*, 11, 2, 1993, pp. 99-148.

[126] Bowen, "À propos de la différenciation de soi à l'intérieur de sa propre famille." p. 108.

[127] *Idem.*

[128] He takes more satisfaction from her achievements than Monica does herself.

[129] *The Lost Child.* p. 21.

> No matter what he did, she seemed set against him. […] [H]is daughter went from diffident to downright disobedient. […] [A]ll communication between the two of them had totally broken down. […] [H]e broached the idea of a walking holiday […] but Monica rolled her eyes and said, 'No thanks.' And […] when he made it clear that he'd love to […] explore the [university] with her, she just laughed and carried on watching a programme on the newly purchased television set.[130]

After having distanced herself, it seems like Monica suddenly wanted to openly provoke Ronald with little things. For example, when she learns that her father is coming to see her, she chooses an outfit totally opposed to his idea of what women should wear and of how they "should present themselves."[131] Her final way of openly provoking her father is her decision to marry Julius Wilson against Ronald's will. McLeod interprets Monica's actions as a way to free herself from her father, to rebel against this embodiment of patriarchal society which wants to control her life.[132] Giovanna Buonnano's analysis confirms the theory developed in the previous paragraphs. According to her, Monica is "initially drawn to Julius as a form of rebellion against her authoritarian father."[133] Basically, she chooses him not only to defy Ronald but also because she hopes that maybe he is a "better kind of man than [her] father."[134]

Anne Garrait-Bourrier shares Buonnano and McLeod's point of view. She explains that this marriage is Monica's way of "fighting against patriarchy and masculine domination."[135] In doing so, Monica "embodies a rebellious spirit."[136] So, when his daughter decides to choose Julius over him, Ronald cannot understand her. As Buonnano explains, "her decision to marry [Julius] is unacceptable to her father."[137] His reaction is detailed in the novel:

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[130] *The Lost Child.* p. 17.

[131] *The Lost Child.* p. 16.

[132] *Idem.*

[133] Giovanna Buonnano, "Exploring Literary Voices in *The Lost Child.*" *Commonwealth Essays and Studies*, 40., 2017, p. 99.

[134] *The Lost Child.* p. 51.

[135] Garrait-Bourrier, "The Destruction and Impossible Reconstruction of Family Links." p. 56.

[136] Buonnano, "Exploring Literary Voices in *The Lost Child.*" p. 99.

[137] *Idem.*

> [I]t made absolutely no sense to him that Monica should be throwing everything away by getting involved with a graduate student […] nearly ten years her senior who originated in a part of the world where decent standards of behaviour and respect for people's families were obviously alien concepts.[138]

Ronald is influenced by racial prejudices, by the postwar "racist background"[139] but also by his desire to keep his daughter for himself. If Monica chooses him over Julius, Ronald can keep projecting onto her, controlling her life and taking pride in her achievements. By confronting her daughter, he is giving her one last opportunity to give up on Julius and to belong to only him. This echoes Ivan Boszormenyi-Nagy's theory about "invisible loyalties", summarized here by Alain Ackermans.[140]

e) Invisible loyalties

In his summary, Ackermans defines loyalty as follows:

> Une loyauté est un déterminant motivationnel, ayant des racines dialectiquement personnelles plutôt qu'individuelles. La véritable essence de la loyauté réside dans l'invisible fabrique des expectatives du groupe, et non en une loi manifeste.[141]

In that sense, "loyalty" means here "belonging to a group."[142] Ackermans explains that the most fundamental loyalty exists in families in order to ensure the survival of the group. If a member threatens this survival and stops respecting the fundamental loyalty of the group, he has to leave in order not to put the others in danger.[143] Therefore, when Monica chooses to have a relationship with Julius, Ronald decides that she has to leave so that he can protect the family.

Ackermans identifies two main types of loyalties in a family: vertical (towards the previous or the following generations[144]) and horizontal (towards people from the same generation, for

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[138] *The Lost Child.* p. 22.

[139] Polatti, "Racial Genealogies and Intertextuality in Contemporary Britain." pp. 108.

[140] Alain Ackermans, "Les loyautés invisibles." In *Formation à la thérapie de famille,* E.S.F, 1999, pp. 89-96.

[141] Ackermans, "Les loyautés invisibles." p. 90.

[142] *Idem.*

[143] *Idem.*

[144] For example the loyalty of a child towards his parents and vice versa.

example siblings or partners). By establishing new relationships, the family members generate new loyalties. However, the more rigid the initial loyalty system is, the more conflictual the creation of new loyalties will be. The individual creating new loyalties will sometimes be asked to choose between one loyalty or another.[145] Thanks to Ackermans' theory, we can see that the very strict loyalty pattern in the Johnson family is controlled by Ronald as he implicitly tries to make Monica choose one last time: either him or Julius. It is Monica's las opportunity to choose between her loyalty towards her father - vertical - or her loyalty towards Julius - horizontal. And since she decides to create a new family system with the latter, she definitely cuts every possible relationship with her father.

Concerning the relationship between two partners, Ackermans explains:

> La formation d'un couple n'est pas seulement la rencontre de deux individus, mais aussi […] la rencontre de deux familles. […] Le mariage est donc une confrontation de deux systèmes familiaux préexistants, avec lesquels il faudra équilibrer le nouveau système de loyauté conjugale.[146]

When two partners get married or choose to live together, their previous loyalty systems confront each other. They thus have to find a balance in order to create a new one. The partners also have to share a desire to create together a familial unity that will be better than their former was. But in the end, this is not what happens in Monica's new family. She realizes that Julius is not like her father, but also not better, as will be discussed in this paper's next chapter.[147] She wants to free herself and to rebel against the patriarchal society embodied by her father by marrying Julius, but she ends up alone.[148]

f) Alternative bonds

Bénédicte Ledent analyses the behaviour of Dorothy, another Caryl Phillips' character, and this analysis can be linked to Monica's.[149] In *A Distant Shore* (2003) Dorothy's "compulsive need to

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[145] Ackermans, "Les loyautés invisibles." p. 90.

[146] Ackermans, "Les loyautés invisibles." p. 91.

[147] *The Lost Child.* p. 51.

[148] *The Lost Child.* p. 27.

[149] Bénédicte Ledent, "Family and Identity in Caryl Phillips's Fiction, in particular *A Distant Shore*." *Commonwealth: Essays and Studies*, 29.2, 2007, pp. 67-73.

seduce men might also be seen as the search on her part for an alternative to the unsatisfying father-daughter relationship of her childhood."[150] Just like Dorothy, Monica wants to free herself from her father, but she is in need of a replacement for the father figure she rejects. Therefore, she chooses Julius. She hopes she can create an alternative bond with him to replace the problematic relationship she has with her father. However, as Ledent explains in the same article, alternative bonds are not a solution since they are often presented in Phillips' novels as "problematic".[151] According to Ledent, it is a way to "suggest that any return towards an original state of togetherness is impossible and that there is no easy way out of family fracture."[152]

The bonds that Monica creates after her divorce will sadly result in her younger son Tommy being abused and murdered by Derek Evans, a man she thought she had seduced, proving her attempt to create alternative bonds to be vain and furthermore destructive for her as well as for her family.

2.2 The Brontë family pattern

The romanticized Brontë family shares many common points with the Johnson family pattern. We are confronted with a new problematic father figure, Patrick Brontë, a deceased mother and two children who will be affected by their father's behaviour. Indeed, another kind of problematic paternal love can be found in the fourth chapter of the novel.

a) The obscure

Before analysing Patrick Brontë's behaviour, another important aspect must be brought to light. With his (re)telling of the Brontë family's story, Caryl Phillips' approach is close to Virginia Woolf's theory on modern biography as Louise Yelin[153] and Bénédicte Ledent[154] observe. Yelin notes that according to Woolf, biography should not only focus on "great men" but also on silenced

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[150] Ledent, "Family and Identity in Caryl Phillips's Fiction, in particular *A Distant Shore*." p. 72.

[151] Ledent, "Family and Identity in Caryl Phillips's Fiction, in particular *A Distant Shore*." p. 71.

[152] *Idem.*

[153] Louise Yelin, "Migrant Subjects, Invisible Presences: Biography in the Writing of Caryl Phillips." *Ariel, a review of international English literature*, 48.3&4, 2007, pp. 103-128.

[154] Bénédicte Ledent, "Thinking Caryl Phillips Out of the Box." *Ariel: a review of international English literature*, 48.3&4, 2017, pp. 1-11.

figures.[155] These unvoiced characters from the past, who Woolf calls "the obscure"[156], can be migrant subjects or even women, as Ledent argues.[157] Indeed, for many centuries, women were not considered important enough to write their biographies or even their stories, and it was also the case for migrants or slaves.[158] Therefore, by telling the story of the Brontë family from a woman's point of view, Phillips engages himself with Woolf's theory on biography and on the "obscures". He gives a voice to these voiceless figures that history wanted to mute, although Emily Brontë managed to leave a trace of her existence through her novel, *Whuthering Heights*. Phillips also follows Woolf's idea about "Granite and Rainbow". From Woolf's point of view, the true purpose of biography is to mix facts and fiction.[159] In this chapter focusing on the Brontë family, Phillips manages to combine truth and imagination by giving his "subjects" an inner life, thoughts, desires and more, as Yelin explains.[160]

b) A problematic father figure

Giovanna Buonnano argues that the novel's central chapter exploits the child-parent relationship by focusing on Patrick Brontë - another authoritarian father - and Branwell's relationship through Emily's eyes.[161] She notes:

> Emily remembers the conflict between father and son […]. As in the Monica-Ronald relationship, Branwell Brontë is bound to introduce 'failure into the world of his father' […] (*The Lost Child*, pp.107). […] Emily mourns her lost brother, and recounts how he […] was finally rejected by their father.[162]

There are similarities between the two family patterns, such as a father projecting his desires onto his child and then excluding the rebellious daughter/son from the family. It also introduces a new theme, a father investing one child over the others. The analysis Buonnano gives of Patrick

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[155] Yelin, "Migrant Subjects, Invisible Presences." p. 103.

[156] *Idem.*

[157] Ledent, "Thinking Caryl Phillips Out of the Box." p. 4.

[158] *Idem.*

[159] Virginia Woolf, "The New Biography." In *Granite and Rainbow*. New York: Harvest, 1958, pp. 149-155.

[160] Yelin, "Migrant Subjects, Invisible Presences: Biography in the Writing of Caryl Phillips." p. 107.

[161] Buonnano, "Exploring Literary Voices in *The Lost Child.*" p. 101.

[162] *Idem.*

Brontë coincides with Alessia Polatti's description of Ronald as a "suffocating patriarchal figure who has always tried to control and impose his own desires on his daughter."[163] However, Polatti adds another characteristic concerning Patrick Brontë: indifference.[164] She develops this notion in her piece:

> Patrick Brontë appears as a paternal archetype, the patriarchal and despotic figure […]. […] [H]is parental inadequacy is confirmed by his strict behaviour towards both the dying Emily and the unruly Branwell. In particular, his paternal rigidity is described through his refusal to take care of his daughter. […] […] [H]is relationship with Branwell is complicated by the lack of communication and reciprocal comprehension.[165]

Polatti describes him as authoritarian, rigid and strict Western patriarchal archetype.[166] Just like Ronald, Patrick Brontë is in control of his family: he decides everything and expects his children to obey and make him proud by succeeding in life.

c) Projection and rebellion

Once again, the lack of communication between a father and his child leads to resentment, anger and a desire to rebel as shown in the novel[167]:

> Papa had sent Branwell to London to study art […] but […] his heir was wasting his gifts and gratifying himself in the taverns of the capital. When Branwell […] returned, the two proud men looked upon each other and knew […] that the time for conversation had passed them by […]. […] [T]he stubborn son understood that […] he might soon be introducing failure into the world of his father. […] Papa made it clear to Branwell that there would be no further sympathy or help, which served only to further stoke the fires of resentment between them.[168]

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[163] Polatti, "Racial Genealogies and Intertextuality in Contemporary Britain." p. 108.

[164] *Idem.*

[165] Polatti, "Racial Genealogies and Intertextuality in Contemporary Britain." p. 111.

[166] *Idem.*

[167] *The Lost Child.* p. 107.

[168] *Idem.*

By reading attentively between the lines, we can notice that the father figure used to project himself but also his hopes and desires onto his son, so that Branwell's success could be his own achievement, as theorized by Bowen.[169] Patrick Brontë expected his son to make him proud and considering his background, this desire is not innocent.

c.1) A way to fit in

The novel presents Patrick Brontë as an Irish man who, even after he changed his name and tried his best to hide his Irish accent, could never really fit in England's society.[170] Therefore, by sending his son to London to study art, it is as if he wanted him to prove people wrong. Branwell's success would prove that they belong there and that their family - and especially Patrick Brontë - deserves respect. Patrick Brontë wants to be accepted and he expects his only son to fulfill his hope of recognition.

c.2) Freedom

Just like Monica, Branwell's life was controlled by his father. When he finally gets a taste of freedom in London, far from his authoritarian and patriarchal father, he decides to take advantage of the opportunity and rebels. Understanding that his father wants to succeed through him, Branwell behaves in such a way that his family can take neither pride nor success from it, only shame and failure.[171] As Emily remembers the conflict between them, she explains that the gap between them had "widened by expectation and disappointment. The one feeding the other."[172] However, Patrick Brontë cannot accept this. Just as Ronald Johnson did with Monica - and because Branwell's behaviour threatens the family and its reputation[173] - he tells his son that "there w[ill] be no further sympathy or help."[174] This last decision only serves to make any type of communication or

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[169] Murray Bowen, "À propos de la différenciation de soi à l'intérieur de sa propre famille." *Thérapie Familiale Genève*, 11, 2, 1993, pp. 99-148.

[170] *The Lost Child.* p. 99.

[171] *Idem.*

[172] *The Lost Child.* p. 105.

[173] Ackermans, "Les loyautés invisibles." p. 90.

[174] *The Lost Child.* p. 107.

forgiveness impossible.[175] Even while Branwell is still alive, talking about him to his father is out of the question. The relationship between Patrick and his son is severed, and since he can no longer project his desires onto him, he has to find a replacement: Emily.

d) The replacement

The idea of finding a "projection replacement" can be developed thanks to Bowen's theory as well as those of Stefano Cirillo and Paola di Blaso. Bowen argues that the particular relationship parents have with their children is a factor in selecting the child who will embody the parent's projection.[176] In this case, the "trauma" of Branwell's disgrace and Patrick Brontë's problematic relationship with his children will influence the father's choice to project his hopes onto Emily. As Bowen explains, the "selected child" is often the one who is the most emotionally attached to his parents.[177] Subsequently, the selected child will be the recipient of his parent's projections whereas the others will be less involved, or even neglected.[178] This can be linked to the theory of Stefano Cirillo and Paola di Blaso according to which the typical abusive family presents one favourite child whereas the others are neglected.[179] That is what Patrick Brontë does when he decides to stop projecting himself onto Branwell. He needs another child to project his desires onto and to make him forget about his disappointment of a son. So he chooses Emily - for instance, he teaches her how to use a pistol - and neglects his other children as the following extract shows:

> [Emily and her father] used to be so close […]. Each morning he would set a mark at the end of the garden […] and then give his lanky girl instruction in how to shoot a pistol. […] Emily brandished the weapon with presumption that almost made her father forget the accident of one son. […] [S]he always hit the mark. How well you have done, my dear Emily. She would smile […] and […] wait until Papa had reset the mark, and reloaded, and was once again ready for her to resume practise.[180]

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[175] *The Lost Child.* p. 105.

[176] Bowen, "À propos de la différenciation de soi à l'intérieur de sa propre famille." p. 108.

[177] *Idem.*

[178] *Idem.*

[179] Stefano Cirillo and di Paola Blasio, "Les jeux familiaux typiques des familles maltraitantes." *La famille maltraitante*, Paris, Fabert, 2005, p. 96.

[180] *The Lost Child.* p. 104.

Teaching her how to use a pistol could be seen as a way of bonding with his daughter. However, teaching a woman how to use a fire weapon in the nineteenth century was neither decent, nor a normal activity between a daughter and her father. This was clearly devoted to men, and only men. So by teaching Emily how to use a pistol, he somehow makes her his son to replace the unruly one he does not want to talk about. Hence, even when he apparently invests in a new favourite child, he actually invests in Branwell through Emily. He is pushing the abusive game further and Emily herself notices it when she remembers the time she spent with her father when he taught her how to use a pistol:

> But what was she supposed to do with this knowledge? *You have a son. I cannot be your son.*[181]

Even while ill and feverish, Emily can clearly understand that her father does not really care about her nor about any of his daughters. The only one on his mind is Branwell, even when he is spending time with Emily. By reading Alessia Polatti's article and by reading the following quotation, a fictionalized Branwell may be recognized in Emily's novel, *Wuthering Heights,* namely in the character of Heathcliff:

> [D]*o you remember when Papa deserted us for Liverpool and returned with the boy? The strange boy with blazing eyes who had lost his place in the world.* […] *As far as Papa is concerned, there was only the boy, and now he is gone, so what is Papa to do?* […] *He unwrapped the boy from his cloak like a gift, a gift he wished to share, and now the boy is gone.* […] *Papa's boy lived with a ferocity that frightened the gods themselves* […].[182]

Even though it seems she has trouble discerning fiction from reality, Emily knows what she means. The only one her "Papa" has always looked at was Branwell, his favourite, the "boy who lived with a ferocity that frightened the gods themselves."[183] He is here described as a "gift", something that Patrick Brontë could show to everyone and, above all, control, a kind of puppet that would fulfill his own desires and hopes. Emily also understands that her father never really cared about her, for when she is lying on her deathbed and waiting for him, he does not visit her.[184] One sentence also

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[181] *The Lost Child.* p. 109.

[182] *The Lost Child.* pp. 110-111.

[183] *Idem.*

[184] *The Lost Child.* p. 110.

shows that he was simply using her to project himself onto her as she mentally begs her father to come and visit her:

> *But dear Papa, it would be so much easier if you would just come to me and allow me to uncouple myself from you and go in peace.*[185]

She wants to "uncouple" herself from her father, as if they have been one for a long time. This sentence could be interpreted in regard to the previous "projection" analysis. Emily knows that her father used her to project his hopes onto her. She is only the receptacle of his unfulfilled desires, just as Branwell was before her. And perhaps was her situation even worse than her brother's since she was a woman invested in by her father, and she was thus pushed to do things judged as "not decent" for a woman in the nineteenth century.

e) A passive rebellion

Women were both submitted to the patriarchal society and were subjected to some social pressure in the nineteenth century. Phillips hints at it when Emily writes in a letter to her sister Anne while in Brussels:

> Monsieur Heger's school is like a prison […]. I feel an iron weight constantly anchoring me to the earth. He […] wishes me to imitate the style of others, thus obscuring my own vision. I […] see no reason to stoop before the tyranny of this senseless man. In this school of learning I learn nothing except how to retreat into myself and survey the world about me with apathy.[186]

The nineteenth-century patriarchal society pushed women to fit a mold, to obey the law dictated by men. However, as Monica did in a more direct way, Emily finds a way to resist this patriarchal oppression and "tyranny". She develops her imagination as she lives and travels in her mind, as stated in the novel:

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[185] *The Lost Child*. p. 106.

[186] *The Lost Child.* p. 100.

> She once again climbed the short, steep staircase of her imagination, and again she found herself dreaming of the boy who came from the moors, […] she turned over and curled up in her mind and began to search for her boy. […] Emily continued to wander in her mind out onto the moors […].[187]

Anne Garrait-Bourrier also notices the importance of imagination to free oneself from oppression or even abandonment.[188] She explains that, in Phillips' novels, some feminine characters "re-invent their lives to the point of denial"[189] when it is no longer possible to physically escape the harsh reality.[190] She notes that the "emphasis placed by Phillips on the relations existing between imagination and feminity in fiction is a way to […] place them on the margins of history, as they seem to be 'acted upon' by men or determined by events."[191] As Bénédicte Ledent notes, Phillips uses "his characters' dreams and memories […] to compensate for the apparent dismantlement of the family"[192] which is occurring in the Brontë family since Branwell started deceiving his father.

2.3 <u>Alternative parental figures</u>

In *The Lost Child*, Monica misses a non-destructive loving parental figure. On the other hand, Emily can count on her sister Charlotte, who is always by her side as Buonnano notices.[193]

In that sense, Charlotte Brontë serves as a mother figure, replacing their absent mother by taking care of her ill sister through what Luc Roegiers calls a "parentification" process.[194] This analysis of Charlotte, Emily, Ben and Heathcliff as parentified characters will be developed in the following chapter of this paper.

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[187] *The Lost Child.* p. 105.

[188] Garrait-Bourrier, "The Destruction and Impossible Reconstruction of Family Links." pp. 45-58.

[189] Garrait-Bourrier, "The Destruction and Impossible Reconstruction of Family Links." p. 52.

[190] *Idem.*

[191] *Idem.*

[192] Ledent, "Family and Identity in Caryl Phillips's Fiction, in particular *A Distant Shore*." p. 70.

[193] Buonnano, "Exploring Literary Voices in *The Lost Child*." p. 101.

[194] Luc Roegiers, *Les cigognes en crise.* Paris: De Boeck, 1994, pp. 115-160. (The article is written in French and I translated the extracts used in this paper.)

3.   Absent parent figures and "parentification" process

This third chapter focuses on the "parentification"[195] process the children will have to go through as a consequence of their parents' absences in the novel. The analysis is specifically based on Luc Roegiers's retelling of Iván Böszörményi-Nagy's theory about parentification, a phenomenon in which children have to act like adults when their parents become physically or mentally absent.[196] The absent parent figure can either be absent physically - like Julius Wilson and Maria Brontë - or mentally and in this case not be able to perform its role as a protective parent - such as Heathcliff's mother or even Monica in the later parts of the novel. This chapter will first provide a theoretical explanation of what parentification is before focusing on the Wilson/Johnson family. An analysis of Julius Wilson's character will show how his departure will lead to Monica Johnson's mental absence and therefore to Ben's parentification. The same analysis will be applied to Heathcliff's mother, whose mental absence induces her son's parentification. Finally, this chapter will analyse Charlotte and Emily Brontë's parentification in the novel.

3.1 The parentification process

a) Theoretical notions

In *Les cigognes en crise* (1994), Luc Roegiers develops Iván Böszörményi-Nagy's theory about the parentification process and he defines it as "an adult's move consisting in transforming a child by making the said child acting like an adult."[197] As Jacques Miermont and Albert Louppe explain, a parentified child becomes his own parent's.[198] In other words, Roegiers notes that parentification appears when an adult gives the child more responsibilities than he should bear at his young age.[199] This process leads to an important relational distortion since the child faces the disappearance of parental support.[200] Worse, the child has to act like an adult without benefiting from the advantages

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[195] Luc Roegiers, *Les cigognes en crise*. Paris: De Boek, 1994, pp. 115-160.

[196] *Idem.*

[197] Roegiers, *Les cigognes en crise*. p. 142.

[198] Jacques Miermont and Albert Louppe, "Parentification." In *Dictionnaire des thérapies familiales. Théories et pratiques*. Paris: Payot, 1987, p. 399.

[199] Roegiers, *Les cigognes en crise*. p. 142.

[200] *Idem.*

this position usually provides.[201] According to Roegiers, children can become parentified because of parental depression as they want to help the depressed parent.[202] This being an overwhelming task, the child's competence is limited to clumsy attempts to take his parent's mind off things, these efforts being often only rewarded by indifference or blame.[203]

b) The consequences

According to Roegiers, the parentification process turns out to be destructive when it "empties the child's reserves of confidence."[204] Similarly, the parentification process becomes negative for the child when there is no recognition on the parents' part.[205] As a result, the child's trust in his parents and in himself declines.[206] Another consequence, noted by Jean-François Le Goff, is that the parentified child can develop "anxiety, guilt, low self-esteem, relational distrust, depression and shame."[207] According to him, the child's parentification is pathological if it is not recognized by the parent figure.[208] It therefore leads to a decline of relational trust.[209]

As the following point will show, Julius Wilson's physical absence will lead to Monica Johnson's mental one. And because of his two parents' absence, the elder son, Ben, will have to become a parentified child in order to become a surrogate parent for both his mother and his brother. A focus on Julius' mentality and behaviour is necessary in order to analyse Ben's parentification process.

3.2 The Wilson/Johnson family pattern

Anne Garrait-Bourrier's analysis of *Crossing the River* (1993), another novel by Caryl Phillips, can also be applied to *The Lost Child*. According to her, fathers in Phillips' novels are "proven

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[201] *Idem.*

[202] Roegiers, *Les cigognes en crise*. p. 144.

[203] *Idem.*

[204] Roegiers, *Les cigognes en crise*. p. 143.

[205] *Idem.*

[206] Roegiers, *Les cigognes en crise*. p. 144.

[207] Jean-François Le Goff , "Thérapeutique de la parentification: une vue d'ensemble." In *Thérapie Familiale*, Vol. 26, March 2005, p. 289.

[208] Le Goff, "Thérapeutique de la parentiffication: une vue d'ensemble." p. 292.

[209] *Idem.*

ineffective"[210] and it is also the case of *The Lost Child*'s father figures as my previous analysis of Ronald Johnson and Patrick Brontë shows. By analysing Julius Wilson's behaviour in the following point, I intend to show that his departure is to be expected and that his egotistic sides make him unable to perform his duty as a father. It is important to focus on his behaviour to see how his selfish desire and departure will initiate his son's parentification.

a) The absent father figure

Born in an unknown Caribbean country, Julius leaves his original family to go to England[211] and his purpose is to be recognized as a British citizen, as Alessia Polatti notes.[212] Julius only acts by thinking how things can benefit him and his personal purpose. However, Svetlana Stefanova explains that, like many other of Phillips' characters, he is "expected to integrate, but not to belong."[213] Therefore, in Alessia Polatti's point of view, because he could not be recognized as a British citizen, Monica - the white English woman who "wanted" him - is a trophy to "possess."[214] The following extract shows Julius' egotistic desire, making him think of Monica as a way of belonging to the mother country:

> […] [Julius] admitted to [Monica] that something […] made him feel safe and anchored in England. […] 'This is what you have given to me.' […] He had been in the country for seven years now, but possessing Monica Johnson signaled an arrival.[215]

Even though they get married and have two sons, Polatti notes that family was never Julius' focus nor interest considering that he even abandoned his previous family, proving his "chronic inability to carry out his parenting skills."[216] In the novel, Julius is described by his previous wife as an "immature" man who only thinks of himself.[217] However, he never questions his behaviour and

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[210] Garrait-Bourrier, "The Destruction and Impossible Reconstruction of Family Links" p. 47.

[211] *The Lost Child.* p. 27.

[212] Polatti, "Racial Genealogies and Intertextuality in Contemporary Britain: Caryl Phillips's *The Lost Child.*" p. 109.

[213] Svetlana Stefanova, "Transnational Modes of Exile in Caryl Phillips's Narratives: Or, What it Feels Like to be Both Of and Not Of." *European Writers in Exile*, ed. by Robert C. Hauhart and Jeff Birkenstein, Lanham: Lexington Books, 2018, p. 255.

[214] *The Lost Child.* pp. 25-26.

[215] *Idem.*

[216] Polatti, "Racial Genealogies and Intertextuality in Contemporary Britain: Caryl Phillips's *The Lost Child.*" p. 109.

[217] *The Lost Child.* p. 27.

he implies that his first wife was the problem and not him.[218] Consequently, when he realizes that he will never really belong, his cowardly and egotistic side emerges as he once again accuses Monica of being the problem, the "burden at the center of his life"[219] as the following extract shows:

> Playing the part of a husband was something that he had taken on in order to make Monica feel more secure, but […] he was already unsure if he truly possessed the stamina, or the desire, to continue with the drama. […] [Monica] seemed to have grown to resent him […].[220]

In her piece, Polatti explains that Julius "keeps on fighting for his full assimilation into the British mother country at the expense […] of his […] wife and children […]."[221] She also argues that Julius is incapable of creating "any kind of parental relationship"[222] with his children.[223] Even when in England, Julius is not seen interacting with his sons.[224] However, when he first feels like his wish of acceptance will not be fulfilled, he is prevented from fleeing by a brief feeling of guilt:

> If it had just been he and Monica alone, […] they would have put an end to their misery a long time ago, but the presence of the sullen-looking boys seemed to elicit some unspoken guilt in them both, so they had lingered on across months and years […]. […] If she and her boys wanted to begin a new adventure with him, then he was willing to continue to make an effort […].[225]

Nevertheless, guilt slowly fades away and he does not worry about his children any longer. He just calls his sons "the boys"[226] and sometimes worse, "her boys," as if Ben and Tommy were not his responsibility but only Monica's.[227] Consequently, the children have no chance to reach their father or to receive his love, since he does not consider them.

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[218] *Idem.*

[219] *The Lost Child.* p. 29, p. 47.

[220] *Idem.*

[221] *Idem.*

[222] Polatti, "Racial Genealogies and Intertextuality in Contemporary Britain: Caryl Phillips's *The Lost Child.*" p. 109.

[223] *Idem.*

[224] *Idem.*

[225] *The Lost Child.* pp. 49-50.

[226] He never calls them by their names, and he is never seen playing or even talking or taking care of them.

[227] *The Lost Child.* pp. 49-50.

As this point shows, even when he was still physically present, Julius' desires and egotistic sides did not permit him to create links with his sons. These aspects will lead to his departure and to his physical absence. It therefore initiates Ben's parentification and a feeling of guilt within both his sons, and that is why a focus on Julius Wilson was necessary.

b) The consequences

b.1) The children's guilt

As Polatti notes, although the children are not responsible for their father's departure, they will suffer from his decision and feel guilty nonetheless.[228] She explains that Julius's hope of assimilation into the British society "has failed both in the public sphere […] and in his private life."[229] She goes further as she argues that his family "has turned into a 'problem' for him."[230] She explains:

> [Julius] cannot recognize even his own children, maybe because they are too English and they belong to the country which has never accepted him […]. […] Julius's egoism does not take into consideration either the boys' needs, or his duties as a father […].[231]

As Polatti notices, Julius' absence will affect his children and especially the younger, Tommy. The boy will always seem as if he is "starving", in need of attention and the love that his father has never given him.[232] Both Ben and Tommy will eventually believe that they are responsible for their father's departure and absence as seen in Ben's narrative:

> […] I used to imagine it was my fault that Dad had left us both. I couldn't think of anything I'd done wrong, but somehow I just got the sense that I was the problem, and this just made me even more frustrated.[233]

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[228] Polatti, "Racial Genealogies and Intertextuality in Contemporary Britain: Caryl Phillips's *The Lost Child*." p. 109.

[229] *Idem.*

[230] *Idem.*

[231] *Idem.*

[232] *Idem.*

[233] *The Lost Child.* p. 152.

> How come our dad never came to see us? Didn't he care for us anymore? […] I'd given up
> believing in him ages ago, but his disappearance really seemed to get to our Tommy.[234]

Whereas Tommy will develop a longing for his father, Ben will have to act like an adult when their mother becomes mentally absent and begins to go mad.

b.2) Ben's parentification process

As a consequence of Julius' departure and of Monica's mental state, Ben has to become parentified in order to help his mother. In order to financially support her, he finds a job as a paper boy.[235] Taking more responsibilities, he tries to help his mother fight with her depressive and indifferent attitude. However, when Ben gives Monica the money, she does not even thank him.[236] As noted by Luc Roegiers, his efforts are rewarded by indifference and it creates a decline in Ben's trust both in himself and in his mother.[237] Following Le Goff's theory, it is clear that since his efforts are not recognized by the parent figure, Ben's parentification is problematic.[238] Even when Monica was able to take care of him and Tommy, Ben had to act as if he was a bit older. With his father gone, he quickly learns that he can never really act like a child of his age should.[239] And his parentification proves to be harmful as Ben already worries for his mother shortly after his father's departure:

> 'Mam, what's the matter? […] Are you alright?' 'Your mother's just tired, that's all. You
> just go and squeeze up next to your little brother and give him a warm, there's a good lad.
> […].' […] [S]he pointed Ben in the direction of Tommy. 'Go on, give him a quick rub.'[240]

This is not the only time Ben worries about Monica, and neither is it the only time he will have to take care of Tommy. This way, he becomes a parent to both his mother and his brother. A few years later, before being fostered for the first time, Ben has to behave like an adult to reassure his younger brother:

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[234] *The Lost Child*. pp.146-147.

[235] *The Lost Child*. p. 160.

[236] *Idem.*

[237] Roegiers, *Les cigognes en crise*. p. 144.

[238] Le Goff, "Thérapeutique de la parentification: une vue d'ensemble." p. 292.

[239] *The Lost Child*. p. 70.

[240] *The Lost Child*. p. 70.

> […] I could hear Mam crying, but I didn't know what to do. I was the eldest, but I didn't have any answers for this situation. Eventually I whispered to Tommy, let's just go back to sleep. I was nearly seven and trying to be responsible. She'll be alright, I said. Try not to fret. Things will be better in the morning. […] I lay in bed with my eyes open, and I didn't sleep that night as I was really worried about Mam.[241]

Since his mother cannot provide them with safety, Ben has to take this responsibility in order to protect himself and his brother. Even after their first fostering experience, Ben keeps worrying about his mother and about his brother's well-being, as the following extract shows:

> […] Mam was always tired, and sometimes she didn't even have the energy to talk to us […]. […] I was left by myself with her as she poured a drink, then scribbled a bit at her stories, then poured another drink. It was painful to watch, and I was always happy when she gave up and just went to bed. I worried a bit about Tommy, for he didn't seem to have any time for Mam, and he even told me that he wished he was an orphan.[242]

When both Ben and Tommy are taken into foster care (they will live for a short time with Mrs. Swinson) the dynamic between the two brothers changes a little. For the first time in his life, Ben finds himself in what he first believes to be a relatively safe environment. Although the fostering experience turns out to be a failure, the children are placed in a "secure" house where an adult figure takes on the adult's role. For the first time, Ben is no longer a parentified child since there is a potential responsible adult figure who may take care of them. Thus, for a brief time, Ben begins to behave like the child he should be as he stops protecting Tommy and acting like his parent. Ben is even starting to resent both his mother and his younger brother because he could not behave as a normal child since he had to protect them. Even Tommy notices his brother's anger:

> However, whenever [Tommy] tries to talk about [their mother] with his brother, Ben changes the subject or just gets annoyed and snaps at him, for it's clear that his brother is angry that their mother has sent them away like this.[243]

> He and Ben used to talk about everything, but all that seems to have changed.[244]

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[241] *The Lost Child*. p. 141.

[242] *The Lost Child*. p. 159.

[243] *The Lost Child*. pp. 125-126.

[244] *The Lost Child*. p. 129.

Anger towards Tommy is also evident as Ben tries and hurts his brother's feelings by openly criticizing him after school, for instance:

> 'Hey, what's the matter with your trousers? […] Pull 'em up, our kid. Simon Longbottom says you look like a dick. […] You're mental, you know that, don't you? […]' Ben begins to walk faster, and Tommy scurries after him and catches up with his openly frustrated brother […]. […] '[…] [W]hen Simon Longbottom asked me if I had any brothers […], I said no.'[245]

His brother's criticism makes Tommy feel insecure and wonder why his brother is being so mean to him.[246] Another way for Ben to show his anger towards his brother is by making an alliance with Mrs. Swinson after Tommy's first day at school. She mimics the younger boy in a hurtful way, encouraging the older one to do the same, and Ben "chuckles approvingly."[247] By doing so, he seeks an adult's approval and demonstrates his growing anger towards this brother. Ben also finds another way to make an alliance with the adult figure. In the novel, Tommy finds a watch at school and decides to keep it in order to show it to his brother. And even though Tommy wanted this to be a secret between them, Ben decides to tell Mrs. Swinson about it:

> 'Tell her about the watch.' [Tommy] glares at Ben, who smiles weakly and then turns away and won't meet his eyes. […] 'Tommy was telling me about a watch, but I reckon I must have heard wrong.' […] His brother is making it worse.[248]

By talking about the watch, Ben betrays his brother's trust and tries to make the adult figure proud of him. It is a way to make Mrs. Swinson acknowledge his behaviour and a way to show that he is better than his brother. But her prejudices towards the mixed-race boys make her focus only on the fact that Ben did not tell her the whole truth immediately. By trying to make an alliance with the adult figure, the boy only severed the fragile "bond" they shared for a moment:

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[245] *The Lost Child*. pp. 122-123.

[246] *The Lost Child*. p. 126.

[247] *Idem.*

[248] *The Lost Child*. p. 127.

> […] 'Have you seen the watch, Ben?' 'Yes, Mrs. Swinson.' 'Then you've told a lie, for you know full well there's a watch. […]' His brother's world is collapsing. […] Clearly nothing matters anymore because Mrs. Swinson now thinks his brother is a liar.[249]

However, even angry and suddenly ambivalent towards his younger brother, Ben always ends up protecting him and acting like an adult, becoming a parentified child once more. He therefore decides to protect Tommy by supporting his testimony, even if he has to lie to do so.[250] After this failed attempt to get an adult's acknowledgement, Ben decides to keep on protecting his brother, his attitude contradicting his previous hurtful words[251] as the following extracts show:

> […] Tommy recognizes Simon Longbottom loping towards them […], but Ben speaks before his new friend can say anything. 'I'm talking to my brother. I'll see you inside.' […] Ben turns to face his brother. […] 'I'll see you at dinnertime. And tonight I'll meet you over by the gates.'[252]

> After we'd go through the first couple of days, I started to keep an eye on Tommy, and we began to hang out together.[253]

Ben often calls his brother "our Tommy" or "our kid"[254] in the novel, as if Tommy was more than his younger brother and as if Ben himself was an adult.[255] He even "speaks like their mother," as Tommy notices.[256] After their fostering experience, Ben's anger will mostly be directed towards their mother as shown in the novel:

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[249] *The Lost Child.* p. 127.

[250] *The Lost Child.* p. 128, 131.

[251] *The Lost Child.* pp. 122-123.

[252] *The Lost Child.* p. 132.

[253] *The Lost Child.* pp. 150-151.

[254] *The Lost Child.* pp. 122, 131.

[255] As it was noted in the previous chapter, using a possessive is rather normal in informal and colloquial English. However, in view of Ben's parentification process, I believe once more that this possessive is not innocent.

[256] *The Lost Child.* p. 123.

> […] I reminded [Tommy] that Mam wasn't well and the doctor said she needed a break. […] I had a feeling that if she lost her job, she wouldn't be able to afford to look after us anymore. We just had to be patient. I said all of this, but inside I was angry at her. […] [T]he smallest thing would set me off.[257]

In another extract, Monica asks him about Tommy's whereabouts, and we can see that Ben is tired of his situation in which the child has to know where his brother is whereas the actual parent figure does not.[258]

Even though Ben was a parentified child for a long time, he manages to find some "peace" when he becomes a young adult. He meets his girlfriend, Mandy, he becomes a university student, however one of the consequence of his parentification is that Ben "remains isolated worries as murky as fog."[259] He does not - cannot - talk about his past to his girlfriend nor to his grandfather, and he cannot help but think about his mother's behaviour.[260] He always wonders why Monica behaved this way, why she could not "try harder and put him first."[261] Therefore, even though Ben manages to escape his parentification process, he is still haunted by it.

Another consequence of this parentification is that Ben develops guilt as he believes he is responsible for his father's departure but also for his brother's death. Other symptoms are to be observed - such as depression, shame and anxiety - and all of them will be shown in the fifth chapter of this paper by focusing on the children's mourning process. For now, this chapter will focus on Heathcliff's parentification process.

3.3 <u>Heathcliff and his absent mother</u>

Heathcliff's parentification in the novel ressembles Ben's since both fathers are absent[262] and their mothers can no longer take care of their child because of their mental state. However, although very similar, their situations are slightly different as Heathcliff has to become a parent to his mentally

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[257] *The Lost Child.* p. 152.

[258] *The Lost Child.* p. 173.

[259] *The Lost Child.* p. 208.

[260] *Idem.*

[261] *The Lost Child.* p. 202.

[262] Although Mr. Earnshaw will eventually take his son back to Wuthering Heights, Heathcliff does not know that the man is his father.

absent mother only. And since the status of children was not the same in the eighteenth century than in the fifties, Heathcliff's parentification reflects a widespread process.

a) The mentally absent mother

In the novel's first chapter we are introduced to a nameless woman sitting by the docks in Liverpool. We learn that she is a former slave and we understand that, because of what she went through (uprooting, slavery, abuse), she is losing her mind.[263] Although it is clear that she wants to protect her son from the outside world, her physical and mental illnesses no longer allow her to[264]:

> She deeply resents the fact that these people look pitifully upon her son, whom she has ruined by the example of her own […] misery. […] But no, no, no. She has seen the other boys, ornately attired in silks, with silver collars and satin turbans, walking behind fair ladies so they might attend to their mistresses' trains […]. But other boys, not her child. Her son will never walk behind a fair lady.[265]

She does not want her child to be like the other slave boys who have to obey and be silent, almost like dolls or puppets. However, she also knows that she no longer has the strength to protect him because her end is near. That thought haunts her during the first chapter. Each time she realizes that death is a step closer, the thought of her child awakens her for an instant:

> She knows that soon the ghost will leave her frail body […]. But not yet. A single candle […] illuminates the obscurity allowing her to watch over her sleeping child […].[266]

> The woman opens her eyes and looks lovingly in the direction of her peaceful child. She taught the boy how to walk, and now she must walk away from him.[267]

She realizes that in a short time she will no longer be there to protect her boy. And later in the novel, death makes her a physically absent parent.

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[263] She is even known as "Crazy Woman" by the people who see her, and she knows it. (*The Lost Child*. p. 3)

[264] *The Lost Child*. pp. 6, 9, 11, 12.

[265] *The Lost Child*. p. 6.

[266] *The Lost Child*. p. 9.

[267] *The Lost Child*. p. 12.

b) <u>Heathcliff's parentification process</u>

For that reason, Heathcliff has to become more independent in order to help his mother and in order to survive in the world. He becomes another parentified child. As Giovanna Buonnano argues, Heathcliff is represented as a child who "acts as care-giver and sole comfort to his ailing mother."[268] Many extracts of the novel's first chapter support this analysis and show Heathcliff's parentification process as he takes care of his mother:

> […] [The unblinking child] bear[s] responsibility for her well-being sits surely on his young shoulders […]. […] The poor boy hovers protectively over his afflicted mother […].[269]

> She […] sees the boy trying once more to pull her upright […]. […] [S]he feels grateful that her child is helping her. […] He looks down at her, his wide eyes brimming with a concern that threatens to spill over into tears. […] The boy helps her to her feet […].[270]

Another extract shows that Heathcliff's parentification has lead to a disdainful behaviour towards the others. It is clearly shown when the landlord comes to be paid as the boy supports his mother by the arm and "looks defiantly at [him] with ill-disguised scorn lightning up his young eyes […]."[271]

Although the time - children in the eighteenth century did not have the same status as they have today - and his own background are important factors to understand Heathcliff's parentification, he takes it upon himself to help his dying mother and to survive. His mother herself notices a strong temper in him, a will to live that will help him when she is gone.[272] However, this fire in the boy's heart is caused by the anger he feels towards the others: those who abused his mother and those who laughed at her. These exacerbated feelings grew within him as he became parentified, just in the same way as Ben's anger grew towards Monica. However, Heathcliff never seems to feel angry towards his mother. One who knows Heathcliff's story in *Wuthering Heights* knows that this anger will never calm down as he will become violent and aggressive towards almost everyone in Emily Brontë's novel. Violence is here a way to cope with his forced parentification caused by his mother's state, which he believes to be the result of others'

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[268] Giovanna Buonnano, "Exploring Literary Voices in *The Lost Child.*" *Commonwealth Essays and Studies*, 40., 2017, p. 97.

[269] *The Lost Child*. p. 4.

[270] *The Lost Child*. pp. 5-6.

[271] *The Lost Child*. p. 9.

[272] *The Lost Child*. p. 6.

mistreatment and destruction. The next parentification process analysed in this chapter is also caused by the physical absence (caused by the death) of a parent figure, however, no anger is noticeable.

3.4 **The Brontë family**

In the chapter focusing on Emily Brontë and her family, Phillips focuses on another parentified character: Charlotte Brontë. *The Lost Child* presents her as a woman whose mother and two older sisters died (the mother then became an absent figure) and who goes through a parentification process in order to take care of her younger siblings, becoming then a parent to her sister.

a) Charlotte's parentification process

In the novel, Charlotte is the one who takes care of an ill and bedridden Emily. From Emily's point of view, we discover a nice mother figure. The adjectives used to describe Charlotte are soft, almost mother-like as the following extract shows:

> An arm begins gently to burrow beneath one shoulder and tunnel its way across her back. A free hand cradles her head, and in one unhurried motion her bones are levered up and forward. She can feel Charlotte calmly stuffing a dry pillow behind her […]. Charlotte's are affectionate brown eyes […]. […] Charlotte guides the spoon into her sister's mouth. […] Charlotte […] dabs prudently at the corners of her mouth. A deft expression of caring.[273]

Nevertheless, the sentence that supports Charlotte's parentification is the following: "Charlotte, who takes after the mother whom neither sister can fully recall."[274] Literally, it shows that she physically looks like their mother, but it can also mean that she acts like her as she becomes a surrogate mother for Emily. She does not seem to feel any anger towards her sister nor towards her deceased mother. However, although she acts like a mother figure, Charlotte could not be a mother to Branwell because his behaviour exasperates her.[275]

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[273] *The Lost Child*. pp. 95-97.

[274] *The Lost Child*. p. 96.

[275] *The Lost Child*. p. 107.

b) <u>Emily's parentification process</u>

Since Anne is also tired of her brother's habits, the only one who is willing to take care of Branwell is Emily herself. However, her decision only motivates Branwell to keep on behaving in a bad way for he knows that whatever he does, "a gentle and compassionate hand [will] always appear by his side to conduct him to safety."[276] It does not stop Emily from taking care of her brother, as the following extract shows:

> […] [E]ach evening she was content to escort him upstairs and in the direction of his room before easing him out of his boots and making sure that his head was properly supported by a stout cushion.[277]

Emily's maternal and parentified behaviour towards her lost brother is also demonstrated when she accompanies a "gin-soaked Branwell" back to the their home.[278] She has to "lead him by the arm" in order to help him walk, and even when he turns down her help, Emily still follows him so that she can help if he was to trip and fall.[279] And when she is not there to help him on his way back, she cannot sleep until she "hears her dear Branwell staggering up the Church Lane."[280] Just in the same way as Charlotte acts like a mother towards her, Emily becomes parentified in order to take care of Branwell as if he was a child in need of a mother, probably hoping to save him at the same time.

This chapter showed links between absent parent figures and parentified children, starting with Julius' departure and Ben's parentification. It was then followed by the analysis of Heathcliff's parentification and his mother's mental absence. Finally, the chapter focused on Charlotte's parentification and on Emily's maternal behaviour towards her brother. As the previous point illustrated (and as explained in the previous chapter) Branwell and his tendencies become so shameful for his family that both Patrick Brontë's son and his behaviour become what can be called a family secret. This theme will now be developed based on Guy Ausloos' theory in order to see how each family represented in *The Lost Child* has a secret.[281]

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[276] *The Lost Child*. pp. 107-108.

[277] *Idem.*

[278] *The Lost Child*. pp. 96-98.

[279] *Idem.*

[280] *The Lost Child*. pp. 104-105.

[281] Guy Ausloos, "Secrets de famille." In *Changements systémiques en thérapie familiale*, E.S.F, 1984, pp. 62-80.

4. <u>Family secrets</u>

This fourth chapter uses Guy Ausloos' theory to focus on the family secrets represented in the novel.[282] A theoretical focus on secrecy will serve as an opening to this chapter as it will define what a family secret is and what its effects are. I will then analyse the various family secrets presented in the novel, beginning with the Brontë family's secret and taboo (Branwell). I will then analyse the Earnshaw family's secret (Heathcliff's existence and lineage) and finally the Wilson family's secret (Julius Wilson himself). The final point of this chapter will show how the various family secrets echo the silences of history concerning some darker episodes of the past, such as the colonial past, for instance. By focusing on secrecy and on how it affects the families, Phillips shows that however dark the past may be, it should not be forgotten nor surrounded by secrets.

4.1 <u>Guy Ausloos' theory</u>

a) <u>Family secrets</u>

According to Guy Ausloos, "without secrets, there is no tragedy"[283] and as noticed now, tragedy is omnipresent in *The Lost Child*. Accordingly, family secrets "influence the family life's mode and the pathologies created by these secrets."[284] In his piece, Ausloos gives a specific definition of what a secret is:

> C'est un élément d'information non transmis, que l'on s'efforce […] volontairement […] de cacher à autrui, en évitant d'en communiquer le contenu […].[285]

In other words, secrets are elements of untransmitted information that one tries to voluntarily hide.[286] The things one wants to hide are often linked to feelings of guilt and shame. Ausloos quotes Jay Haley and explains that the creation of secrets often coincides with two important steps in a family life. It happens when someone enters (such as births, marriages) or exits (due to death,

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[282] Guy Ausloos, "Secrets de famille." In *Changements systémiques en thérapie familiale*, E.S.F, 1984, pp. 62-80. (The article is written in French and I translated the quotations used in this paper.)

[283] Ausloos, "Secrets de famille." p. 62.

[284] Ausloos, "Secrets de famille." p. 64.

[285] *Idem.*

[286] *Idem.*

divorce, departure) the familial system.[287] When they decide to hide something from their families, parents do not talk about the hidden and shameful thing. When questions are asked, they give evasive or false answers. The subject becomes a taboo and even though children can feel that there is a secret they obviously cannot know what it is.[288]

b) Family laws and family myth

Ausloos explains that people hide things behind secrets when they feel these things go against the familial laws - which are the various rules the family members implicitly or explicitly have to follow.[289] A secret is thus created when the family law is transgressed or when the thing to be hidden shows an implicit narcissistic wound such as the failure of a wedding, for instance.[290] Moreover, the hidden thing could undermine the family's image (or even the personal image) shown to the world.[291] Therefore, in order to protect this image, the shameful act becomes a taboo which develops into a "family myth."[292] Ausloos quotes Antonio J. Ferreira and describes a family myth as "beliefs shared by each members of the family as it concerns their roles in the family […]."[293] These beliefs are imposed by the members who know what the secret is and who hide it from the other members.

c) Homeostasis and entropy

Therefore, with the family myth born from the secret come the roles that the family members have to play. As Ausloos explains, the family myth's aim is to maintain homeostasis as the secret fulfills the role of a stability marker.[294] Ausloos defines homeostasis as an "ideal systemic state of stability."[295] In this way, the secret is supposed to keep balance in the family by hiding

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[287] Ausloos, "Secrets de famille." p. 75.

[288] Ausloos, "Secrets de famille." pp. 68-69.

[289] Ausloos, "Secrets de famille." pp. 65-66.

[290] *Idem.*

[291] Ausloos, "Secrets de famille." p. 66.

[292] Ausloos, "Secrets de famille." pp. 68-69.

[293] Ausloos, "Secrets de famille." p. 69.

[294] Ausloos, "Secrets de famille." p. 71.

[295] *Idem.*

uncomfortable things.[296] However, secrets are not always helpful and they can even have an aggravating role, causing in this case a rise of entropy which can be defined as "the measure of a system's disorder's growth".[297] According to Ausloos, entropy happens when the secret "creates relational stagnation with a lack and a sudden block of communication."[298] In other words, entropy occurs when the balance of the family is lost and especially when there is a lack of communication between the family members.[299] The family is poisoned by a problematic silence surrounding the secret, and this silence ends up surrounding the family as a whole.[300] The less family members communicate, the higher entropy gets.[301] The secret, set to keep the family order, is only an illusion of order running on empty.[302] Ausloos explains that it is precisely when order is serving order - and when it no longer serves the familial system's functioning - that entropy occurs.[303]

4.2 <u>The Brontës' family secret</u>

The first family secret this chapter will focus on is the Brontë family's, which is no other than Branwell Brontë himself.

a) <u>The causes of the secret's creation</u>

Branwell's behaviour becomes problematic after he goes to London to study art. Therefore, Patrick Brontë decides to stop mentioning his son, making him a taboo and even a family "secret". As shown in the novel, everyone in the family knows it is implicitly forbidden to talk about Branwell:

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[296] *Idem.*

[297] Ausloos, "Secrets de famille." pp. 71-72.

[298] *Idem.*

[299] *Idem.*

[300] *Idem.*

[301] *Idem.*

[302] *Idem.*

[303] *Idem.*

> […] [B]ut they would not speak of the brother and the son, for [it] would cause Papa pain and embarrassment […]. The son had become an object of scorn in the village […]. [He] was a drunk who appeared intent on punishing himself for having squandered his talents and abandoned any ambition […]. […] But they would not speak of the son.[304]

The sisters know the family's reputation is tainted because of Branwell's attitude. And since their brother's behaviour disappointed their father, none of the family members mentions the "son."[305] It echoes Ausloos' theory as Branwell becomes a problem threatening the family's reputation. Therefore, when Patrick Brontë clearly tells his son that "no further sympathy or help"[306] will be provided, it is a way to exclude Branwell from the family life and to make him exit the family system as Giovanna Buonnano also notes.[307]

b) A taboo to maintain balance

Even after Branwell's death, it is still taboo to mention him, and the secret keeps surrounding the family as the following extract shows:

> On the Sunday that he lost his thirty-one-year-old son, Papa managed to preach a long sermon without making any reference to his bereavement. […] And then it was time to conceal the red-haired son.[308]

The choice of language is important in this extract. When it is time to bury the "red-haired son"[309] Phillips uses the verb "to conceal", a way to show that Branwell has to be physically but also metaphorically hidden. He has to be concealed forever so that no one will ever talk about him again, and the secret will be preserved. His name is not even mentioned in the extract. Following Ausloos' theory, not talking about Branwell represents an attempt to maintain homeostasis in the family. It is a way to keep balance inside the family system and to protect it from Branwell's disruptive force.

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[304] *The Lost Child.* p. 103.

[305] *Idem.*

[306] *The Lost Child.* p. 107.

[307] Buonnano, "Exploring Literary Voices in *The Lost Child.*" p. 101.

[308] *The Lost Child.* p. 108.

[309] *Idem.*

c) Lack of communication

However, even when there was still no family secret surrounding Branwell yet, Patrick Brontë had already established a destructive silence in his house. For instance, when sharing a moment with his daughters, Patrick Brontë is said to "[take] his tea in silence."[310] Silence also ruled between father and son before Branwell's death as shown in the novel:

> […] [T]he two proud men looked upon each other and knew instantly that the time for conversation had passed them by somewhere on the road between Haworth and London.[311]

> Branwell's final illness was swift, and he lingered only a week, during which time he became a smaller, frailer version of himself […]. […] [E]ach sister took turn to sit vigil on his final journey […]. Papa turned the key in the lock on the door to his study.[312]

This silence leads to a lack of communication between the family members, leading then to homeostasis' opposite, entropy. As the chapter goes on, communication deteriorates in the Brontë family. With the secret surrounding Branwell comes a new silence that poisons family life. After his son's death, Patrick Brontë stays silent and simply isolates himself after the burial.[313] Communication deteriorates with time and even reaches a point where Patrick does not even come to see Emily on her deathbed. Alessia Polatti notes that the lack of communication is a recurring motive in the novel[314] as the following pages focusing on Mr. Earnshaw and then on the Wilson family will show.

4.3 Mr. Earnshaw's secret

In *The Lost Child*, Phillips imagines that Mr. Earnshaw, Emily Brontë's character in *Wuthering Heights*, had an extra marital relationship with a former slave and is actually Heathcliff's father. As Giovanna Buonnano notices, Mr. Earnshaw "progressively estranges himself from both mother and

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[310] *The Lost Child.* p. 104.

[311] *The Lost Child.* p. 107.

[312] *The Lost Child.* p. 108.

[313] *The Lost Child.* p. 109.

[314] Alessia Polatti, "Racial Genealogies and Intertextuality in Contemporary Britain: Caryl Phillips's *The Lost Child.*" *Commonwealth Essays and Studies*, 40.1, 2017, p. 107.

child"[315], mostly because of the "'"taint in his offspring's breeding.'"[316] Mr. Earnshaw considers that both the child and himself are "tainted" because the woman is not only a black woman, she is also a former slave. There is a racial and social dimension included in this notion of "taint", almost a concept of contamination, that shows how British citizens considered black - former - slaves. The following extract shows how Mr. Earnshaw behaves after the birth of his child and how his visits cease when the secret becomes too heavy for him to bear:

> Occasionally he still came to her with tender warmth and a charitable heart, and he appeared to look upon the child with genuine regard, but she could see […] that […] his zeal for her had been extinguished. Mother and child were now […] a burdensome secret, and although her benefactor continued to press money upon her, […] he was growing progressively detached. And then meetings […] ceased […].[317]

Phillips uses the word "burdensome" when mentioning the secret represented by Heathcliff and his mother, showing how it becomes too much for Mr. Earnshaw to bear his relationship with a former slave and his child. This is a sign of guilt, a notion that will be developed later in this paper. For now, I want to focus on the reasons why Mr. Earnshaw creates this family secrets and why he surrounds Heathcliff's origins with silence.

a) The secret and its causes

Heathcliff's existence, as well as his mother's, becomes a secret established by Mr. Earnshaw in order to protect his family's reputation and also his own.[318] In their piece, Bénédicte Ledent and Evelyn O'Callaghan explain that "many nineteenth-century British fictions [are] haunted by the guilty secret of British complicit with and profit from the history of slavery […]."[319] This is the reason why, in such a historical context, Mr. Earnshaw hides his relationship with a former slave and his son. Some rules have been transgressed: society's rules and his Christan family's tacit rules that say a husband cannot cheat on his wife and vice versa. It was not well-seen to have illegitimate

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[315] Buonnano, "Exploring Literary Voices in *The Lost Child.*" p. 98.

[316] *Idem.*

[317] *The Lost Child*. p. 11.

[318] In Emily Brontë's novel, Heathcliff's origins are mysterious and no one never really knows who he is and why did Mr. Earnshaw bring him back.

[319] Bénédicte Ledent and Evelyn O'Callaghan, "Caryl Phillips' *The Lost Child*: A Story of Loss and Connection." *Ariel: a review of international English literature*, 48.3&4, 2017, p. 232.

children, and in this case, Mr. Earnshaw could be even more criticized as the woman he had a relationship with is black and a former slave, considered as sub-human at that time.

Just as it was noted earlier on, a family secret is usually created when someone enters or leaves the family system. In that case, Mr. Earnshaw creates the secret when Heathcliff "enters" it.[320] Although he slowly distances himself from them, Mr. Earnshaw does not totally abandon them and sends them money in order to help them survive.[321]

b) <u>Guilt and responsibility</u>

Following Ausloos's theory on family secrets, we can notice that a feeling of guilt animates Mr. Earnshaw after his son's birth as he first "happily"[322] tries to help the mother and the child to leave for a "trafficking island"[323] before realizing they would be in greater danger if they were to leave Liverpool:

> [H]e soon divined [all the captains] to be […] irritable creatures who tendered him no assurances that […] they would not use her and the boy heartlessly, and so he offered the woman money in exchange for the convenience of continuing their arrangement in sparing his soul the burden of worrying that he might have dispatched them both to a sad fate.[324]

Mother and child leaving the country would have been the best scenario if he had wanted them to disappear. However, the guilt that leads to the establishment of a secret also opens his eyes when he realizes that their lives would be in danger if they left Liverpool. Therefore, guilt is one of the main reasons why he decides to provide the woman and their son with money rather than letting them leave. A feeling of responsibility also motivates Mr. Earnshaw to bring the child back with him when his mother dies for it is his "duty" to take care of him and to protect him.[325] By analysing Mr. Earnshaw's behaviour, we can see that even though he first wants Heathcliff and her mother gone so that he can live without risking his reputation, he shoulders his responsibility when he has to. When the child loses his mother, he takes responsibility for his choices and for his acts and he takes his

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[320] Except for Heathcliff who, at the end of the novel, becomes a part of the Earnshaw family.

[321] *The Lost Child*. p. 11.

[322] *The Lost Child.* p. 251.

[323] *Idem.*

[324] *Idem.*

[325] *The Lost Child.* p. 257.

son with him. Even though the child's origins will be kept secret, Mr. Earnshaw chooses to act in harmony with his conscience. Society's rules and criticisms are important - he will not reveal that he is the child's father - but they do not make him abandon his son once more.

c) <u>Entropy</u>

Establishing a secret to hide Heathcliff and his mother's existence to his family is a way for Mr. Earnshaw to protect his own reputation but also to maintain homeostasis in his family. However, as *Wuthering Heights* also shows - if one accepts Phillips' idea that Mr. Earnshaw is Heathcliff's father and applies it to Emily Brontë's novel - this taboo leads to entropy and worsen an already problematic lack of communication. It can be noticed in *The Lost Child* when Mr. Earnshaw describes his family's attitude when he leaves for Liverpool once more:

> […] [H]is acquiescent wife had accepted the notion that the distractions of Liverpool had […] captured her husband's mind, but of the late she has been unable to prevent her tolerant acceptance from curdling into peevish bitterness. And now the children are also judging him harshly; he sees it in their defiant scrutiny, and yet he can find no comforting words for them.[326]

Mr. Earnshaw cannot find the words to communicate with his family. The secrets surrounding him do not create homeostasis but rather a complicated situation leading to entropy and therefore to a greater lack of communication between the family members as shown in Emily Brontë's novel. As shown in *The Lost Child,* Mr. Earnshaw even creates new secrets and silences by not answering Heathcliff's questions concerning his mother and his fate.[327] The last family pattern analysed in this chapter is also contaminated by a lack of communication worsened by a secret initially meant to protect the family members' reputation.

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[326] *The Lost Child.* p. 244.

[327] *The Lost Child.* p. 255.

4.4 <u>Secrets in the Wilson family</u>

a) <u>Julius' departure</u>

Once again, the family secret appears when someone - Julius - exits the family system. The children quickly understand that asking questions about their father is useless: for both Ben and Tommy, "talking about family in general [is] completely off the agenda as far as their mother [is] concerned."[328] By refusing to talk about Julius, Monica does not want him to remain a part of their family and she does so in order to protect her own family and its reputation as divorcing or getting separated can be seen as a shameful thing. However, it is also a way to protect her own reputation and to hide her narcissistic wound. Her wedding has failed and when she realizes that their family situation is not better than her previous life, she realizes that she was wrong. In order to hide her mistake, she conceals Julius' existence.

b) <u>Silence and entropy</u>

Monica intends to maintain balance and homeostasis in her family system but once again the secret only leads to a situation of entropy and worsens an already problematic lack of communication between the family members. For even if Ben and Tommy understand that they have no father, they still want to know why as this extract, narrated from Ben's point of view, shows:

> […] Tommy always wanted to talk about the same thing. How come our dad never came to see us? […] Sometimes I'd get angry and ask him how the chuff was I supposed to know? […]. […] [Tommy] wrote a letter to Dad and gave it to Mam, who said she'd post it to him. […] [B]ut he never heard back from Dad, and Mam didn't say anything. […] [H]is disappearance really seemed to get to our Tommy.[329]

A feeling of sadness and guilt rises within both of them as the older boy even begins to think that maybe their father left because of him even though he does not see how his behaviour could have made his father run away:

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[328] *The Lost Child.* p. 196.

[329] *The Lost Child.* pp. 146-147.

> I don't know where I got the idea from, but I used to imagine it was my fault that Dad had left us both. I couldn't think of anything I'd done wrong, but somehow I just got the sense that I was the problem, and this just made me even more frustrated.[330]

The family secret - that one can also consider a lie in this case - established by Monica does not lead to homeostasis. On the contrary it leads to guilt and entropy as the children cannot help but wonder what really happened. Ben knows that there is no "definite end"[331] to this mystery and he even becomes jealous of one of his classmates whose father left for Australia for at least this boy knows where his father is.[332] He then decides to directly confronts his mother. And although Monica finally answers her son's questions she never does it in a clear way. Therefore, Ben knows no more than he knew before their discussion. Once again, entropy rules in the family because of a destructive family secret:

> Your dad's gone off back to where he came from. Maybe he'll turn up one day, but if he does, he's not coming in this flat. She made me promise that […] I'd not let him in the flat. […] Your father's left me to cope with the both of you by myself, and we're doing alright. We don't need him, do we?[333]

She barely gives any new information, trying to keep secret as many things as she can. This is the most Ben will ever get from Monica, and this is not much as he realizes that "she is not telling him the whole truth."[334] He mainly learns what he already knows and receives a new responsibility in return. Although they manage to talk and discuss, the communication is clearly problematic and it fails to reassure the child. Ben therefore understands that he will not know more about this secret.

Although the two children suffer from their father's absence, Tommy will be affected the most as the lack of communication caused by this secret will create a desire to be an orphan.[335] In the novel, recruiters come to see Tommy and make an offer so that he could come and play football for their team. However, Monica refuses for she had already promised that Tommy would play in her boyfriend's football team. She then tells Tommy and he never tells his mother that he does not

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[330] *The Lost Child.* p. 152.

[331] *The Lost Child.* p. 147.

[332] *Idem.*

[333] *The Lost Child.* pp. 147-148.

[334] *The Lost Child.* pp. 148.

[335] *The Lost Child.* p. 159.

agree. He nods while silently crying.[336] There is no real dialogue in that scene, simply Monica imposing things and Tommy silently accepting for he has no choice. No dialogue, no communication, a situation of entropy that will only go worse as time goes by.

c) Tommy's death

Sadly, as Polatti observes, this lack of communication between the family members will also lead to Tommy's abuse by Derek Evans (Monica's boyfriend):

> The absence of a paternal figure, along with the failure of communication between the boy and his mother […], leads [Tommy] to become attached to Monica's new boyfriend […] who will finally turn out to be a pederast.[337]

Ben knows that Derek is using his mother to get to his brother and that the man's behaviour seems suspicious.[338] However, Ben never really acts to prove it, and Tommy (surely after having been abused for years) is finally murdered by Derek when the lack of communication reaches its peak. Rather than pushing Monica to open up and communicate with Ben, this terrible situation of loss leads to a new family secret, a new taboo that the mother does not want to confront: Tommy's death (and exit from the family system) and its circumstances.

d) The realm of silence

Once again, Monica hides something to protect herself and her family, and the communication with Ben gets worse.[339] Silence and secret become too much for Ben to manage, and anger rises within him as he insists to know what happened:

> Where was [Tommy]? Why wasn't anybody telling me what was up with him? I wasn't some kid, I was fourteen, and whichever way you looked at it, I had a right to know.[340]

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[336] *The Lost Child.* p. 162.

[337] Polatti, "Racial Genealogies and Intertextuality in Contemporary Britain: Caryl Phillips's *The Lost Child*." p. 110.

[338] *The Lost Child.* p. 162.

[339] Once again, she hides the fact that she was wrong about Derek and that she was blinded.

[340] *The Lost Child.* p. 176.

> [T]here was only one thing I wanted to ask Mam and that was, What about our Tommy? But I knew Mam wouldn't want to deal with this, and so I […] decided that until Mam did want to deal with this, then there really wasn't anything to say as far as I was concerned.[341]

We can notice the echo between the last part of the quotation and the fact mentioned earlier that talking about family was out of question "as far as their mother was concerned."[342] This new secret also creates a feeling of guilt and a new situation of entropy in which Ben does not want to talk about his past with with Mr. Gilpin, his foster father. Phillips describes a "painfully uncomfortable silence"[343] between them when Ben is asked if he wants to talk about his recently deceased mother[344] - which in this case, is not a secret. Ben does not want to talk about it with Mr. Gilpin, nor does he want to talk about his past with his girlfriend, Mandy. She understands how difficult it is for him and she does not "raise the subject."[345] Ben only shows her a photograph of Tommy and him and tells her that "his brother has gone off to a place where he couldn't follow"[346] and, as shown in the novel, "that was about all that he could bring himself to say."[347]

This situation leads to new family secrets and repeats the loop of silence and the risk of entropy.

4.5 Other secrets

I decided to focus on these three family secrets since they are the most visible and because Ausloos' theory could easily be applied to them. However, the novel presents many other secrets such as, for instance, Ruth Johnson's death. We learn that she died of cancer "not that long"[348] before her daughter. However, it is the only piece of information Monica gets.[349] She only learns of her mother's cancer when she is told that Ruth died.[350] Her mother had not told Monica about it and her

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[341] *The Lost Child.* p. 186.

[342] *The Lost Child.* p. 196.

[343] *The Lost Child.* p. 202.

[344] *Idem.*

[345] *The Lost Child.* p. 196.

[346] *The Lost Child.* p. 207.

[347] *Idem.*

[348] *The Lost Child.* p. 199.

[349] *The Lost Child.* p. 217.

[350] *Idem.*

father does not give her any other information when she asks about her mother's illness.[351] Ronald simply tells her that "[Ruth] went quickly"[352] and then communication stops once more between father and daughter.[353] Silence and secrecy surround Ruth's death, and the already severed communication between Monica and Ronald reaches a peak and breaks down. This final secret, this final silence causes one last peak of entropy and definitely separates Monica from her father.

There is also a silence surrounding Ronald Johnson's attitude towards one of Monica's friends, Hester.[354] A doubt is raised about whether he is a potential sexual abuser when he thinks about how Dr. Greenwell, the father of Monica's friend, accused him of "leering" at his daughter.[355] There is only a brief extract focusing on this fact and this event is surrounded by silence and secrecy. Clues in his narrative also raise doubt whether Ronald Johnson abused his own daughter as he is once said to "[snake] his hand around her midriff"[356] as he "trie[s] to tickle her."[357] Both the accusations and the possible sexual abuse also lead to a problematic communication between the Johnson family members as Monica could never truly forgive her father, causing then entropy and the problematic relationship I analysed in this paper's second chapter.

Interestingly, although many things are hidden from the characters, readers are told many of these secrets through the narrative. For instance, Ben knows nothing about his father, but we do. Heathcliff does not know that the man uprooting him from his environment is his father, but the readers know about it. This could be regarded as a way for Phillips to make us aware of these various family secrets, a way for him to make the reader feel involved in the narrative and in the characters' stories. It could also be a way to make us complicit of these silences and to make us feel like we are invading the character's privacy by discovering the things they want to hide the most, things that make them vulnerable. By giving us access to the character's thoughts, Phillips shows us why they decide to hide things from their family, why they choose silence and secrecy over a healthy communication. I believe it is also a way for the author to remind us of all the secrets and silences history contains.

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[351] *Idem.*

[352] *Idem.*

[353] *Idem.*

[354] *The Lost Child.* p. 208.

[355] *Idem.*

[356] *The Lost Child.* p. 21.

[357] *Idem.*

4.6 <u>Family secrets and collective memory</u>

Secrets in the novel are detrimental because they interfere with memory and history. That is surely why Caryl Phillips decides to present three family patterns poisoned by secrets and silences. By writing *The Lost Child*, he shows how important it is to remember the past, even if it is not glorious, such as the colonial past. This reasoning is supported by Anne Garrait-Bourrier's argument:

> Family is the place where collective and cultural memory is usually transmitted through generation. When families are destroyed, this memory is then necessarily impaired. How can culture survive when memory is destroyed; are human links subverted when family no longer plays its structuring part and when memories are diluted?[358]

However dark the past may be, we must remember it and we should not try to hide it or we risk a situation of entropy and of silenced truth. This idea of secrecy in the various families presented in the novel also reminds me of the silence of British history surrounding people considered as "outsiders". This could be seen as a kind of amnesia concerning all that is categorized as foreign/not British such as immigrants from the former colonies, for instance. Therefore, the novel's lost children echo the British Empire's lost children such as the slaves, the people from the former colonies as well as immigrants coming from the West Indies to Britain, the mother country. This idea of mother country also echoes the relationship between the literary lost children that are postcolonial rewritings and the classics they refer to. By focusing on family secrets, I realized that British history's silences concerning both the colonial past and even the immigrants from the former colonies could be linked to an idea of literary motherhood when talking about rewritings and classics, the former trying to reach the latter and to tell the stories of those "outsiders", the lost children of the Empire. The silences of history create a feeling of loss as many events are not recorded or are not brought to light. The next chapter of this research paper will therefore focus on loss. The lack of communication in the Johnson family led to Tommy's death and it affected his brother Ben. Focusing on Ben Wilson and on Heathcliff, the following chapter will focus on loss and mourning experienced by children based on an article written by Cédric Leclercq and Jean-Yves Hayez.[359]

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[358] Garrait-Bourrier, "The Destruction and Impossible Reconstruction of Family Links." pp. 45.

[359] Cédric Leclercq and Jean-Yves Hayez. "Le deuil compliqué et pathologique chez l'enfant." *Louvain Médecine*, 117, 1998, pp. 293-307.

5. <u>Children and Loss</u>

This fifth chapter will focus on how Ben and Heathcliff deal with loss and mourning in the novel. In order to analyse their behaviour, I will use Cédric Leclercq and Jean-Yves Hayez's theory[360] about loss for children.[361] I will begin with some general notions, then with the various mourning processes children go through in order to analyse Ben's mourning for his brother and Heathcliff's mourning for his mother. This will lead me to analyse the feeling of loss experienced by people whose lives are influenced by the colonial past.

5.1 <u>Trauma in Phillips' narratives</u>

As Nick Bentley explains in his piece[362], Phillips often writes stories containing traumatizing experiences - such as racism, slavery and war - that lead to his characters' unstable psychology.[363] These traumas are mostly caused by the loss of a loved-one (death, divorce, exile) and *The Lost Child*'s characters are no exception to this.[364] This is also Giovanna Buonnano's point of view when she argues that Phillips's novel "deals with the interconnected themes of loss, abandonment and troubled childhood."[365]

As the previous chapters showed, the children in the novel bear their parents' mistakes and traumas and this idea echoes Marianne Hirsch's concept of postmemory.[366] It focuses on the relationship the "following generation"[367] has with the trauma - whether it was cultural, collective or personal - experienced by the previous generation.[368] This means that the children can "remember" this trauma through stories, pictures and behaviours that surrounded them in their

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[360] The article is written in French and I translate the quotations in this paper.

[361] Cédric Leclercq and Jean-Yves Hayez, "Le deuil compliqué et pathologique chez l'enfant." *Louvain Médecine*, 117, 1998, pp. 293-307.

[362] Nick Bentley, "Narratives of Trauma and Loss in Caryl Phillips's *Crossing the River* and *A Distant Shore*." *Commonwealth Essays and Studies*, 40.1, Autumn 2017, pp. 21-31.

[363] Bentley, "Narratives of Trauma and Loss in Caryl Phillips's *Crossing the River* and *A Distant Shore*." p. 21.

[364] Bentley, "Narratives of Trauma and Loss in Caryl Phillips's *Crossing the River* and *A Distant Shore*." p. 27.

[365] Buonnano, "Exploring Literary Voices in *The Lost Child*." p. 96.

[366] Marianne Hirsch, "Postmémoire." *Témoigner. Entre histoire et mémoire*, 118., 2014, translated by Pierre Mesnard, pp. 205-206. (I translated the extracts used in this paper)

[367] Hirsch, "Postmémoire." p. 205.

[368] *Idem.*

families.[369] According to Hirsch, the traumatic event sometimes seems to be remembered by the children as if they had experienced it themselves.[370] Even if the trauma occurred in the past, it still haunts and affects the present because the children hear stories about it.[371] The process of postmemory is therefore caused by a trauma's generational transfer, whether it is intergenerational - carried out by the children's parents - or transgenerational - carried out on multiple generations.[372] This concept can be applied to both Heathcliff and Ben. We could say that Ben illustrates both generational transfers as he bears the trauma of his black father's ancestors by facing racism and discrimination. However, this concept is even clearer when applied to Heathcliff. His mother suffered from her slave status and, when in England, she certainly faced racism and discrimination. Therefore, Heathcliff bears her multiple traumas. This is maybe what leads to his aggressive behaviour as it is presented in *Wuthering Heights*. In this case, it is a process of intergenerational postmemory. Therefore, the notion of trauma goes beyond what the children experience. Moreover, Ben and Heathcliff's traumas and dysfunctional families affect their mourning processes as the following chapter will demonstrate.

5.2 <u>Children's mourning process</u>

a) <u>General notions</u>

Cédric Leclercq and Jean-Yves Hayez define the mourning process as the mental work one does to reduce and/or accept the suffering after the death of a loved-one.[373] It is a way to keep on living without the one who died and without feeling guilty for being alive.[374] According to Leclercq and Hayez, a child can mourn after the physical death of a person who was important in his life, however, it can also occur when the child lives through a separation or an irrevocable loss, such as the departure of a parental figure.[375] This first mourning process occurs in *The Lost Child* since the first loss experienced by Ben is caused by the departure of his father. He and his brother both

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[369] *Idem.*

[370] *Idem.*

[371] *Idem.*

[372] Hirsch, "Postmémoire." p. 206.

[373] Leclercq and Hayez, "Le deuil compliqué et pathologique chez l'enfant." pp. 293-294.

[374] Leclercq and Hayez, "Le deuil compliqué et pathologique chez l'enfant." p. 294.

[375] *Idem.*

believe that the reason why their father left is their very existence: consequently, they feel responsible and even guilty.[376] In Heathcliff's case, the absence of a father can also be regarded as a loss of a parental figure. It is worth noting that we do not get access to Heathcliff's consciousness except at the very end of the novel. On the other hand, we get access to Ben's thoughts when he becomes the narrator of the "Childhood" chapter[377] and of some pages of the "Family" parts.[378]

b) The various mourning processes

The following points will develop the various morning processes children can go through based on Leclercq and Hayez's article.

b.1) Repression

Some children repress their feelings and deny the death of the loved-one.[379] As Leclercq and Hayez explain, these children often seem impassive and they behave as if nothing had happened.[380] They do not mention the deceased one, they do not talk about the death circumstances nor about the relationship they had with the loved-one.[381] Therefore, children who repress their feelings become lonely since their relationships with other children deteriorate, as well as their emotional expressivity.[382] The child will neither take the risk of communicating nor of creating new links anymore since bonding with people will only lead to suffering.[383]

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[376] *The Lost Child*. p. 152.

[377] *The Lost Child*. pp. 135-189.

[378] *The Lost Child*. pp. 195-196, pp. 200-201, p. 202, pp. 204-206, pp. 207-208.

[379] Leclercq and Hayez, "Le deuil compliqué et pathologique chez l'enfant." p.295.

[380] *Idem.*

[381] *Idem.*

[382] Leclercq and Hayez, "Le deuil compliqué et pathologique chez l'enfant." p. 295.

[383] *Idem.*

b.2) <u>Perpetual grief</u>

Children going through mourning can also be overwhelmed by painful and guilty thoughts and memories of the deceased one.[384] The child can then go through depression, anxiety, guilt and/or shame.

b.2.1 <u>Depression</u>

Leclercq and Hayez note that depression is the most common occurrence in children mourning: they thus fiercely isolate themselves and they distance those who try to approach them.[385] Depressed children sometimes imagine that they have an exclusive link with the ghost of the lost one.[386] They secretly talk to the deceased, as if they were talking to someone who is bound to return.[387] Sometimes, depressive children try to destroy themselves.[388] When they are not hurting themselves, they try to fight their suffering by repressing their thoughts and sad memories.[389] When feeling both depressed and guilty, the child will be aggressive towards himself as a punishment for not having protected the dead one, and for being the one alive.[390] This is a precarious way to mourn since it leads to antisocial acts, declines in the child's studies or, on the contrary, excessive investment in school at the expense of social relationships.[391]

b.2.2 <u>Anxiety</u>

The grieving child can also develop a feeling of anxiety, especially when the loved-one's death is considered traumatic.[392] Leclercq and Hayez consider various traumatic death's circumstances such

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[384] *Idem.*

[385] Leclercq and Hayez, "Le deuil compliqué et pathologique chez l'enfant." p. 296.

[386] *Idem.*

[387] *Idem.*

[388] It is a way to join the dead or to atone for the guilt they are feeling.

[389] Leclercq and Hayez, "Le deuil compliqué et pathologique chez l'enfant." p. 297.

[390] *Idem.*

[391] The depressed children sometimes show anger towards the parents/protector/parental substitutes and they resent them for not having protected the dead well enough. (Leclercq and Hayez, "Le deuil compliqué et pathologique chez l'enfant." p. 296)

[392] Leclercq and Hayez, "Le deuil compliqué et pathologique chez l'enfant." p. 297.

as murders, agonies and suicides.[393] Consequently, the child fears the future as he realizes that parents cannot act against death and cannot protect their children from it.[394] The grieving child can also develop the fear that death may be contagious. This irrational anxiety is often caused by a feeling of guilt possibly created by a rivalry between siblings.[395]

b.2.3 Guilt

Another feeling grieving children might develop is guilt. It overwhelms the child with painful thoughts and convinces him of his indignity.[396] The child then imagines that he is not worthy of being alive when the other is deceased.[397] In that case, guilt is often created by the child's belief in the power of his "magical thinking".[398] This concept is explained by Leclercq and Hayez with the example of a child who assigns real power to the fact that he might have desired the death of a sibling or of a parent.[399] For example, during an argument, a child might say to his brother that he wants his sibling dead. If the sibling ends up dying, even years after that argument, the child may believe that his words caused his brother's death. Leclercq and Hayez also take the example of the analysis a child makes of his bad behaviour in order to see if it might have caused the death of the loved-one. [400]

b.2.4 Shame

Shame sometimes emerges during the child's mourning process when he believes that the death of the loved-one was shameful. This may occur when the child is seen as the son of an insane mother or as the brother of a murdered child.[401]

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[393] *Idem.*

[394] The child then develops a type of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (Leclercq and Hayez, "Le deuil compliqué et pathologique chez l'enfant." p. 297.)

[395] This case is worth noticing since it will be useful during the analysis of Ben's mourning of his younger brother Tommy.

[396] Leclercq and Hayez, "Le deuil compliqué et pathologique chez l'enfant." p. 297.

[397] *Idem.*

[398] *Idem.*

[399] *Idem.*

[400] Leclercq and Hayez, "Le deuil compliqué et pathologique chez l'enfant." pp. 297-298.

[401] Leclercq and Hayez, "Le deuil compliqué et pathologique chez l'enfant." p. 298.

c) Easing the child's mourning

In order to help children mourn as naturally as possible, Leclercq and Hayez explain how to accompany the grieving child in an educative and psychotherapeutic way. A way of easing the mourning process for a child is to receive professional help through counselling. However, the parents also have their part to play. They can help the child develop his self-confidence and encourage his autonomy. If the parents are around, they have to establish healthy communication, answer their child's questions and explain what he does not understand.[402]

d) Worsening factors

In their article, Leclercq and Hayez list seven other ways of protecting a mourning child, and in their article they oppose them to seven worsening factors.[403] The first one focuses on the family's life style.[404] It must ideally be based on communication and on respect towards each members of the family.[405] However, this factor becomes worsening when silence rules the mourning family.[406] As seen in the previous chapter, silence and entropy are omnipresent in the various family patterns and this factor will therefore worsen Ben and Heathcliff's mourning processes.

The following factor is linked to the nature of the relationship the child had with the deceased person.[407] The mourning process is more complicated when the child had an ambivalent relationship - based on rivalry, rejection or even on hatred - with the deceased one.[408] If the child was invested by the deceased person and if their relationship was one based on dependence, it also worsens the mourning process.[409] In Heathcliff's case, we are not given access to his thoughts until the novel's last chapter but my previous analysis helps me notice a few things. As mentioned in the chapter on parentification, we know that Heathcliff feels anger and even hatred but never towards his mother. However, the relationship he had with her was based on dependence as he had to act

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[402] Leclercq and Hayez, "Le deuil compliqué et pathologique chez l'enfant." pp. 299-301.

[403] Leclercq and Hayez, "Le deuil compliqué et pathologique chez l'enfant." p. 300.

[404] *Idem.*

[405] *Idem.*

[406] *Idem.*

[407] *Idem.*

[408] *Idem.*

[409] *Idem.*

like an adult to support her. Heathcliff's mourning process is therefore affected by this factor and as is Ben's. His parentification also creates an ambivalent behaviour - and even anger - towards Tommy but also anger towards Monica. Ben's relationship with his brother and mother therefore worsens his mourning process.

Another factor listed by Leclercq and Hayez focuses on the death's circumstances.[410] Ideally, the death is natural, prepared and with no agony - or with a bearable amount of suffering.[411] In that case, the child is not surrounded by anxiety and does not feel responsible for the deceased one's death.[412] However, if the death is violent, unexpected, brutal and if it is caused by dramatic circumstances, the child is surrounded by anxiety and is at risk of feeling responsible.[413] In the novel, Tommy's death is violent, dramatic and surrounded by anxiety. Ben feels responsible for his brother's death and he often wonders if he might have caused it. Heathcliff's mother also dies after a long period of suffering and the stressful atmosphere her illness created worsens after her death. Both children are negatively affected by this factor.

The way children deal with mourning also depends on how death is experienced and how they talk about it.[414] A healthy communication usually allows the child to express his feelings and to ask questions that will be answered.[415] However, this factor worsens the mourning process if the death is surrounded by silence or denial.[416] As we already noticed in the previous chapter of this paper, neither Ben nor Heathcliff's questions are answered. The silence surrounding their loved ones' death does not allow a healthy mourning process and it even worsens it. Interestingly, this communication factor is linked to the following one that focuses on how adults assume children go through mourning.[417] If the child is excluded from the funeral rites - as are Ben and Heathcliff - their mourning will be more complicated.[418] Leclercq and Hayez also notice that parentified

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[410] *Idem.*

[411] *Idem.*

[412] *Idem.*

[413] *Idem.*

[414] *Idem.*

[415] *Idem.*

[416] *Idem.*

[417] *Idem.*

[418] *Idem.*

children go through complicated mourning[419], and as seen in the third chapter of this paper, this factor can be applied to both Ben and Heathcliff.

In order to go through mourning, the child has to be kept in his environment and he has to be surrounded by stable adults.[420] However, if the child is displaced - like Ben and Heathcliff are - his mourning process will be complicated.[421] In the case of Heathcliff, as *Wuthering Heights* shows, he will be surrounded by unstable people and he will have to face violence and physical abuse.

As will be shown later in this first chapter, these factors can be observed during both Ben and Heathcliff's mourning processes. I will first analyse Ben's mourning process in order to show how he reacts to his brother's death and how the worsening factors affect him.

5.3 <u>Ben's mourning process</u>

a) <u>Symptoms</u>

After Tommy's death, we can notice signs of repression in Ben's attitude. Echoing Leclercq and Hayez's article, Ben decides to focus on school only after the death of his brother.[422] Therefore, he does not create new social relationships and he inevitably isolates himself.[423] After his mother dies, Ben pushes repression further by burning her letters, her postcards and photographs of both her and his brother.[424] It can be interpreted as a way to move on but also a way to deny the death of the last two members of his family. However, as Ledent and O'Callaghan note, Ben can never "exorcise his past".[425] His mother and his brother's deaths will keep haunting him even though he never wants to talk about it.[426] Even years later, when talking with his girlfriend Mandy, Ben does not mention his brother nor the circumstances of his death and the same applies to his mother's.[427] When he does, he

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[419] *Idem.*

[420] *Idem.*

[421] *Idem.*

[422] *The Lost Child.* p. 178.

[423] *Idem.*

[424] *The Lost Child.* p. 202.

[425] Ledent and O'Callaghan, "Caryl Phillips' *The Lost Child*: A Story of Loss and Connection." p. 232.

[426] *Idem.*

[427] *The Lost Child.* p. 207.

explains as little as he can before changing subject.[428] This desire of silence around his family members and their death can be interpreted as a way of denying their definitive absence.

Coupled with the denial of Tommy's death, Ben also manifests signs of depression after the loss of his brother and mother. Years later, as he gets his driving license, he wanders in the moors where he begins to look for his missing brother. He calls for him and almost acts as if he was still alive for a moment, also showing signs of guilt since he was sometimes mean to his brother as explained in the third chapter of this paper:

> […] I shouted. Tommy! […] Tommy! Tommy! But it was no use. I should have done more for Tommy, and that's what had been keeping me awake for years now: the feeling that it was my fault. […] I'm sorry, our Tommy. Sorry for laughing at you at Silverdale when you wet the bed. Everyone laughed at you but I shouldn't have. […] I wasn't ready to abandon our Tommy again, so I made up my mind to stay put on the moors. […] [A]nd for the first time in ages I began to feel close to my brother.[429]

This extract shows that Ben still has not accepted his brother's death. For years, he has denied his disappearance and tragic fate. Therefore, he wanders for hours in the moors, looking for his lost brother, talking about him in the present tense and being haunted by memories of the past at the same time. He clearly says that he is not ready to let his brother go, to "abandon him" again.[430] Denial, depression, anxiety and guilt are all represented in this extract as we notice signs of stress caused by the circumstances of Tommy's tragic death.[431]

As Leclercq and Hayez explain, anxiety is often coupled with guilt and Ben feels both after the loss of his brother. The chapter focusing on parentification showed that Ben expressed some ambivalent attitudes towards his younger brother. A part of him even thought that "a bit of separation" could be a good thing.[432] This reasoning echoes Leclercq and Hayez's theory about the child believing in his "magical thinking". In Ben's mind, the desire of separation from his brother may have contributed to Tommy's death. Ben analyses his behaviour towards his brother and guilt starts to overwhelm him as he persuades himself that he is actually responsible for Tommy's

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[428] *Idem.*

[429] *The Lost Child.* p. 189.

[430] *Idem.*

[431] Leclercq and Hayez, "Le deuil compliqué et pathologique chez l'enfant." p. 297.

[432] *The Lost Child.* p. 146.

death.[433] Guilt and painful thoughts arise as soon as Ben stops repressing them. Therefore, silence mostly prevails when he faces a person who encourages him to talk about his feelings towards his deceased brother and mother.[434]

b) <u>Worsening factors</u>

During Ben's mourning process, none of the protective factors are applied. Preceding Tommy's death, Ben had rarely been nurtured by his parents and both children had suffered an early separation when their father left. The subsequent worsening factor is that silence becomes the family's way of life after Julius' departure and after Tommy's death. As noted in this paper's previous chapter, entropy and lack of communication dominate Ben's family pattern. The silence surrounding his father's departure and his brother's death worsens his mourning process. The secrets lead to a lack of answers that causes anxiety to the child. Ambivalence is also considered a worsening factor by Leclercq and Hayez, and Ben sometimes showed signs of this factor towards his brother. The displacement factor creates a lack of stability and a feeling of dissatisfaction.[435] One final worsening factor is also experienced by Ben during his mourning process: he first denies Tommy's death and he does not talk about it when he grows up. In the same way, he does not talk about his mother's death either.[436] This leads to a never-ending grief. However, it is important to note that, at the end of the novel, Ronald Johnson approaches his grandson, making possible an eventual healing through talking with a family member. It is not clear whether Ben will choose to accept his grandfather's proposition or not, but it is now possible for him to heal and to be reunited with his family and someone with whom he could maybe talk about his parents and his lost brother.

For Giulia Mascoli, Ben manages to overcome these losses thanks to music, especially when he has to face racism and other obstacles.[437] Music helps him keep on living after Tommy's death and after he is once more separated from his mother as it brings order and rhythm in his life.[438] In her article about *A Distant Shore*, Bénédicte Ledent argues that "loss, added to the guilt of

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[433] *The Lost Child.* p. 189.

[434] *The Lost Child.* p. 202.

[435] Not long after Tommy's death, Ben is placed in a foster family for his mother can no longer take care of him.

[436] *The Lost Child.* p. 207.

[437] Giulia Mascoli, "'The River That Does Not Know Its Own Source Will Dry Up' : Caryl Phillips's Musicalized Fiction." *Commonwealth Essays and Studies*, 40., 2017, p. 85.

[438] *Idem.*

surviving, is similar to the bereavement that affects several other Phillips characters."[439] This analysis is relevant when talking about Ben's mourning process and this is also the case of Heathcliff who suffers a loss as well.

5.4 <u>**Heathcliff's mourning process**</u>

In the novel, Heathcliff's mother dies after months of suffering. However, Phillips does not focus on his mourning process as much as he does on Ben's. Actually, we are not given access to the child's consciousness until the very end of the novel. It was maybe a way to show that Heathcliff has actually no time to mourn at all. Leclercq and Hayez's theory allows me to confirm that very little was done in order to ease Heathcliff's feeling of loss. Just like Ben, the boy is uprooted from his environment when his father comes and takes him back with him.[440] Although the environment he grew up in was hostile, he is suddenly taken away from it and from all he considered familiar. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, a child's grieving process is more difficult to go through when the loved-one's death is preceded by a long and suffering agony. Since the boy's mother was very sick for months before dying, the circumstances can be regarded as traumatic.[441] This trauma is also linked to the kind of life the child led before his mother's death. The fact that he had to beg and that his mother had to prostitute herself plays an important role in his trauma.

When Mr. Earnshaw brings Heathcliff back to the moors he never really explains what will happen to him. He barely mentions to Heathcliff - and to the man they encounter on their way back to Wuthering Heights - that the child is actually his. This decision is also a worsening factor as Heathcliff is overwhelmed with anxiety and fear because of the lack of information about his future and concerning Mr. Earnshaw, coupled with the loss of his mother and his subsequent uprooting. In the novel's final chapter, Mr. Earnshaw brings the child with him and they take shelter from a storm when a man welcomes them in his house. The man notices that the boy seems "frightened"[442],

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[439] Bénédicte Ledent, "Family and Identity in Caryl Phillips's Fiction, in particular *A Distant Shore*." *Commonwealth: Essays and Studies*, 29.2, 2007, p. 68.

[440] *The Lost Child.* p. 252.

[441] Leclercq and Hayez, "Le deuil compliqué et pathologique chez l'enfant." p. 297.

[442] *The Lost Child.* p. 255.

"distressed"[443] and even "panic-stricken."[444] The following quotation shows the fear of the child but also signs of denial:

> […] [T]he man took the boy's hand and urged him to rein in his fear, but the lad wrenched his hand away. […] [T]he man remained unaware of the full extent of the boy's consternation until the lad began to cry out for his mother.[445]

We are confronted with a frightened child who asks many questions, but never gets any answer.[446] A few lines later, Heathcliff asks Mr. Earnshaw to "take him to his mother", to "let go of [him]" but his questions and prayers are never answered.[447] The child even "feel[s] his eyes filling with tears"[448] as he begs the stranger not to hurt him.[449] Heathcliff is still calling for his mother, surely repressing her death in order to protect himself from pain. Although it could actually help the child, Mr. Earnshaw never mentions Heathcliff's mother nor does he tell the boy that he is his father. Therefore, Heathcliff's mourning is dominated by anxiety and fear as he also wonders what will happen to him now that his mother is gone. Heathcliff's grieving process is never complete, leading him to be a lifelong scarred child.

5.5 <u>Narrative techniques</u>

Interestingly, Phillips gives us access to Ben's thoughts - allowing me to analyse his mourning process more efficiently - but not to Heathcliff's consciousness until the very end of the novel. In my opinion, this may be a way to show that Heathcliff has no time to mourn his mother and that he is voiceless. He is not the only character whose thoughts are not fully developed: we are given access to his mother's mind but not for a long time and not with clear details. The narratives set in the eighteenth century are therefore very different from the ones set in the twentieth century since we are given access to Ben, Tommy and even to Monica's thoughts. Contrasting with Heathcliff and his mother, the narrative of the colonial past gives full access to Mr. Earnshaw's thoughts. This

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[443] *The Lost Child.* p. 256.

[444] *The Lost Child.* p. 259.

[445] *The Lost Child.* pp. 256-258.

[446] *The Lost Child.* p. 255.

[447] *The Lost Child.* pp. 259-260.

[448] *Idem.*

[449] *Idem.*

could be a way to show that in the eighteenth century, history only remembered and was written by - white - men, and that women and racial others were mostly silenced.

My hypothesis is that not having access to Heathcliff's mind can make his distress even more striking as it is the first time we access the child's thoughts and he only feels fear and pain, making his emotions and his trauma even more powerful to the reader.

This analysis allows me to show that Ben and Heathcliff's complicated mourning processes are caused by secrets and by the traumas their parents went through as the previous chapters demonstrated.

5.6 Colonial past and loss

Telling stories of traumas is recurrent in Phillips' works and Nick Bentley explains in his article that this is surely a consequence of the (post)colonial exploitation system.[450] By narrating these various traumatic experiences, Phillips "stress[es] the communication of voices across borders, historical periods, genres, and modes of writing."[451] As Bénédicte Ledent and Evelyn O'Callaghan explain, loss in *The Lost Child* is a "consequence of the violent meeting of the northern and southern hemispheres […], Britain and its African 'others'[…]."[452] Postcolonial rewritings often focus on loss as these novels engage with the colonial past of "world-changing contacts and clash of culture and races."[453] They develop their argument as follows:

> Such an engagement is framed by the dialogue between two literary traditions, that of the British canon and that of the tropical south. […] *The Lost Child* […] combines such historical loss with connections between the two worlds.[454]

Just as Justin D. Edwards noted in his article concerning postcolonial rewritings, I think Caryl Phillips' decision to focus on problematic families is not an innocent one. According to Edwards, dysfunctional families are a recurrent theme in postcolonial novels.[455] They are even more frequent

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[450] Bentley, "Narratives of Trauma and Loss in Caryl Phillips's *Crossing the River* and *A Distant Shore*." p. 21.

[451] Bentley, "Narratives of Trauma and Loss in Caryl Phillips's *Crossing the River* and *A Distant Shore*." p. 21, p. 30.

[452] Ledent and O'Callaghan, "Caryl Phillips' *The Lost Child*: A Story of Loss and Connection." p. 229.

[453] *Idem.*

[454] *Idem.*

[455] Edwards, *Postcolonial Literature*. p. 60.

in postcolonial rewritings since they can echo the situation of literary parentage between the "classics" and their rewritings.[456] The novel's dysfunctional families therefore echo the troubled relationship between the former colonies and the mother country, between lost children of the Empire and Britain. It is also a way to show the problematic literary relationship of motherhood between the classics and their postcolonial rewritings, as my paper demonstrates. This parallel between dysfunctional families in *The Lost Child* and the genealogical relationship between a "classic" and its postcolonial rewriting will now be developed in the following chapter.

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[456] *Idem.*

6. <u>Dysfunctional families and literary parentage</u>

The analysis chapters demonstrate that the various families in *The Lost Child* are all dysfunctional. Interestingly, all the processes previously analysed could be applied to Phillips' rewriting practice. The figure of the father - in this case, the British literary "canon" - projecting himself onto his child can be a way to show that Phillips refuses to obey the literary laws dictated by the literary "father": *The Lost Child*'s structure does not resemble what is usually expected from a novel, and Phillips creates his own content, his own rules. In this way, he "rebels" and shocks his readers by rewriting a literary "classic" representative of the "canon" and by bringing to light its colonial subtext.

Analysing the absent parent figure underlines the metaphorical absence of a literary parent, a parent who is denying and who does not recognize his Caribbean children. The title could therefore be interpreted as a way for Phillips to show that postcolonial writers born in the Caribbean and raised in England are the literary and historically lost children of the British Empire. Following the process of parentification, Phillips therefore catches the attention of the British literary "canon" by rewriting an important "classic" that happens to have a character whose mysterious origins can be linked to colonialism.

The family secrets reflect Phillips' desire to contend with collective amnesia surrounding the colonial past and its consequences. If errors are kept secret, if the oppressed are kept voiceless and silent, the past will keep on poisoning the present, and Phillips refuses that by bringing hidden facts to light in his rewriting of *Wuthering Heights*.

Finally, I believe that the notion of loss can be applied to the rewriting practice as many postcolonial writers give a voice to the voiceless figures of the past in their rewritings. Moreover, this feeling of loss can also be perceived since postcolonial Caribbean writers raised in Britain, such as Phillips, are displaced and can never truly feel like they belong to the Caribbean nor to Britain.

Seeing how these processes can all be linked to the rewriting practice, I will now show how the families echo the genealogical relationship between the "classics" of British literature and their rewritings. The theory of Justin D. Edwards in *Postcolonial Literature*[457] and John McLeod's *Life Lines: Writing Transcultural Adoption*[458] will be used in this chapter to develop my hypothesis. To support this paper's argument, I will also use an information shared by Caryl Phillips himself.

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[457] Edwards, *Postcolonial Literature*. pp. 51-61.

[458] John McLeod, *Life Lines: Writing Transcultural Adoption*. London: Bloomsbury, 2015, pp. 256.

6.1 The symbolism behind dysfunctional families: the damaged memory

In *Life Lines: Writing Transcultural Adoption*, McLeod observes that Phillips never "romanticizes" families in his novels[459] and the *The Lost Child* is no exception. According to Anne Garrait-Bourrier, Phillips uses literature to study and pay a tribute to these families shattered by slavery and colonialism.[460] She explains that, in this way, Phillips echoes the suffering "black people had to endure throughout the centuries of slavery."[461] According to her, family is normally the place where "collective and cultural memory is transmitted through generations."[462] However, since the families represented in *The Lost Child* are destroyed, memory is damaged along with the family relationships.

6.2 Memory

a) Family and memory

Besides the family theme, memory is one of the main topics explored in Caryl Phillips' novels as he tries to tell the stories of the "voiceless" and of the colonial past. Svetlana Stefanova also shares this point of view as she argues that Phillips is fascinated with the "interaction between individual and collective memory."[463] As a result, the author brings family and memory together in *The Lost Child* by telling the story of Heathcliff, Monica, Ben, Tommy, Emily and Branwell - his novel's lost children. In this way, he unveils the patriarchal and colonial past and its influence on many destroyed families.

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[459] McLeod, *Life Lines*. p. 199.

[460] Anne Garrait-Bourrier, "The Destruction and Impossible Reconstruction of Family Links in *Crossing the River* by Caryl Phillips." *Commonwealth Essays and Studies*, 40., 2017, p. 45.

[461] *Idem.*

[462] *Idem.*

[463] Svetlana Stefanova, "Transnational Modes of Exile in Caryl Phillips's Narratives: Or, What it Feels Like to be Both Of and Not Of." In *European Writers in Exile*, ed. by Robert C. Hauhart and Jeff Birkenstein, Lanham: Lexington Books, 2018, p. 254.

b) <u>Colonial past and belonging</u>

With this reasoning in mind, Polatti notes that Phillips' decision to rewrite *Wuthering Heights* is not an innocent one as, from her point of view, he "intends to open a window […] on the […] questions of slave trade"[464] - through his interpretation of Heathcliff's mysterious origins and the clues of a colonial subtext in *Wuthering Heights* - "and of the lost children as they are dressed in Brontë's novel […]."[465] This echoes the author's declaration to Linda Simon as he explains that he wanted to explore these two fundamental themes in *The Lost Child* through the story of various dysfunctional families scarred by colonialism, paternalism and racism.[466] Furthermore, the omnipresent question of parentage and belonging in *Wuthering Heights* also motivated Phillips to "rewrite" Emily Brontë's novel, as he himself explains in the same interview.[467] According to Polatti, Phillips wants to contend with the "historical nonsense" surrounding questions of belonging and parentage in order to bring the colonial past to light.[468] Polatti believes that Phillips' rewriting can be seen as a "device used to come to terms with this past."[469]

By giving Heathcliff a story directly influenced by colonialism, Phillips brings the hidden subtext of *Wuthering Heights* to light and denounces the barely mentioned colonial past from the original novel. His rewriting focuses on Heathcliff's mysterious origins and investigates his past by using the clues given in Brontë's novel to explain his violent behaviour in *Wuthering Heights*. Heathcliff is a character broken by colonialism, he is traumatized and haunted by his past. Therefore, *The Lost Child*'s last chapter shows that, because of the slave-trade and of the colonial era, Heathcliff's life can only be scarred by his past, by the things British colonizers did. Phillips uses this chapter to show how slavery and colonialism affect the child's life as well as his peers'. Rewriting *Wuthering Heights* and transposing it into the more contemporary story of Julius, Monica, Ben and Tommy is also a way to show that the colonial past is still influencing families nowadays as they have to face racism, discrimination, prejudices and other phenomena brought by colonialism. Since Heathcliff's story echoes the Wilson children, one could read the last chapter as

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[464] Polatti, "Racial Genealogies and Intertextuality in Contemporary Britain: Caryl Phillips's *The Lost Child*." p. 111.

[465] *Idem.*

[466] Caryl Phillips to Linda Simon. "In *The Lost Child*, Caryl Phillips Reweaves *Wuthering Heights* with a More Modern Dark Thread." *Kansas City Star*, 6 March 2015.

[467] *Idem.*

[468] Polatti, "Racial Genealogies and Intertextuality in Contemporary Britain: Caryl Phillips's *The Lost Child*." p. 114.

[469] *Idem.*

if the unnamed boy taken into the moors was Tommy himself just before he was abused and killed by Derek Evans.

c) To contend with collective amnesia

Seeing how important memory is for Phillips, we can easily understand his desire to contend with the collective amnesia surrounding the colonial past and its consequences still affecting many generations. Following Polatti's point of view, Françoise Král considers Phillips a novelist who "engages with Britain's past and [...] with the collective amnesia [...]"[470] by questioning the colonial era and its silences.[471] However, Král notes that Phillips is not the only one to do so: during the last decades, many novelists and historians have focused on the silences surrounding colonial history.[472] Král explains that, by showing in their work the signs and clues of the too-often-forgotten colonial era, these authors have brought to light the "erased past and silenced voices of oppression."[473] Král therefore repositions Phillips within this tradition as *The Lost Child*'s opening chapter describes the city of Liverpool "bathed in the smells of faraway lands linked to colonial oppression and slavery."[474] She explains:

> [*The Lost Child*] [...] allows Phillips to unearth from [...] the present the more brutal background of the colonial past and show its presence in the days of the Brontës. It restores a site from which the past can be interrogated and examined and thereby works in the same way that memory works in relation to history, as something that takes root in the concrete.[475]

By quoting historian Pierre Nora in her article, Král explains that memory is always evolving, "open to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting, unconscious of its successive deformation, vulnerable to manipulation and appropriation [...]."[476] On the other hand, history can be considered

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[470] Françoise Král, "Literary Filiations and textual Archeology: Caryl Phillips's *The Lost Child*." In *Prequels, Coquels and Sequels in Contemporary Anglophone Fiction*, ed. Armelle Parey, Abingdon: Routledge, 2019, p. 53.

[471] Král, "Literary Filiations and textual Archeology: Caryl Phillips's *The Lost Child*." p. 56.

[472] *Idem.*

[473] *Idem.*

[474] Král, "Literary Filiations and textual Archeology: Caryl Phillips's *The Lost Child*." p. 57.

[475] *Idem.*

[476] Král, "Literary Filiations and textual Archeology: Caryl Phillips's *The Lost Child*." pp. 57-58.

as a reconstruction of the past, a reconstruction that Nora defines as perpetually "problematic."[477] To contend with the incomplete reconstructions of the colonial era, Phillips uses the hidden clues in a British "canonical" novel to bring that past to life, and he does so with the help of intertextual references in *The Lost Child*.

d) Intertextuality and identity

According to Ledent and O'Callaghan, Phillips uses intertextual references with other novels in order to tell the "absent stories, the unvoiced accounts of orphans and lost […] children of the Empire."[478] In the case of *The Lost Child,* he puts *Wuthering Heights* in conversation with Caribbean postcolonial novels such as Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) or the short story "Let Them Call It Jazz" (1995) by the same author.[479] Interestingly, Phillips writes back to Brontë and Rhys, showing a double allegiance to both British literature and Caribbean literature. This could be an attempt to belong to both traditions, to both places. Having been displaced, Phillips tries to show that he belongs both to his birth culture - the Caribbean - and his culture of adoption - Britain. This reminds me of Rezzan Kocaoner Silku's article[480] about two other novels by Phillips - *The Final Passage* (1985) and *A Distant Shore* (2003). In this piece, Silku explains that, because he was born in the Caribbean but raised in England, Phillips "has always experienced a complex sense of belonging because of his hybrid identity."[481] Therefore, since there is no place he can really call "home" as he cannot fully belong to the Caribbean nor to Britain - and considering that he now lives in America - Phillips' novels invoke, according to Silku, "new postcolonial routes for diasporic identities and new ways of understanding those identity formations in re-routing postcolonial studies."[482] Through intertextual references in *The Lost Child*, Phillips also questions the sense of belonging for displaced Caribbean writers as they both want to belong but are not always seen as belonging to literary traditions of the Caribbean and of Britain. The title of his novel can therefore be interpreted as a way for Phillips to show that, like many other "displaced" postcolonial writers

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[477] Král, "Literary Filiations and textual Archeology: Caryl Phillips's *The Lost Child*." p. 58.

[478] Ledent and O'Callaghan, "Caryl Phillips' *The Lost Child*: A Story of Loss and Connection." p. 229.

[479] Ledent and O'Callaghan, "Caryl Phillips' *The Lost Child*: A Story of Loss and Connection." p. 230.

[480] Rezzan Kocaoner Silku, "Postcolonial routes and diasporic identities: Belonging and displacement in Caryl Phillips's *The Final Passage* and *A Distant Shore*." *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, 45:2, pp. 163-170.

[481] Silku, "Postcolonial routes and diasporic identities: Belonging and displacement in Caryl Phillips's *The Final Passage* and *A Distant Shore*." p. 164.

[482] *Idem.*

born in the Caribbean and raised in England, he can be seen as a literary and historically lost child of the British Empire who tries to show that he belongs nonetheless to the British literary tradition as well as to the Caribbean's.

According to Ledent and O'Callaghan, intertextual references are also a way to perform the "gathering of broken pieces."[483] In other words, Phillips uses intertextuality to restore histories and families "shattered" by slavery and the colonial past.[484] It is a way to heal these families by letting hear their stories, and many postcolonial authors do the same, as Ledent notes in her piece analyzing another novel by Phillips.[485]

This leads me to the final point of this chapter as I would like to show how dysfunctional families in *The Lost Child* echo the particular relationship between British literary "classics" and their postcolonial rewritings.

6.3 <u>Literary parentage</u>

a) <u>Traditional parentage in *The Lost Child*: the parent-child relationship</u>

According to Ledent and O'Callaghan, Phillips' concern in writing *The Lost Child* was to analyse the "notion of family" and especially "the broken bonds between parent and child […]."[486] In a personal communication at the University of Liège on 22nd October 2018, Phillips explained that this bond is one of the most important in life as everything begins with the relationship between a parent and a child.[487] With this statement in mind, he supported my hypothesis by saying that the problematic families represented in *The Lost Child* could echo many things such as the relationship between the literary "canon" (the parental figure) and its postcolonial rewriting (the child figure).[488] Motivated by Justin D. Edwards' theory on literary parentage and genealogy, this discussion encourages me to analyse a final point of the novel.

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[483] *Idem.*

[484] *Idem.*

[485] Bénédicte Ledent, "Family and Identity in Caryl Phillips's Fiction, in particular *A Distant Shore.*" *Commonwealth: Essays and Studies*, 29.2, 2007, pp. 67-68.

[486] Ledent and O'Callaghan, "Caryl Phillips' *The Lost Child*: A Story of Loss and Connection." p. 235.

[487] Caryl Phillips, personal communication, Liège, October 2018.

[488] *Idem.*

b) <u>Literary parentage</u>

According to Edwards, postcolonial rewritings can be seen as being in a literary and almost familial relationship with the "classics" they refer to, as he develops in *Postcolonial Literature*.[489] A postcolonial rewriting is therefore not totally independent and has to be read in relation with its "classic" inspiration so that the readers can have a better understanding of the parentage concept between the two novels.[490] As said earlier, it is therefore not coincidental that postcolonial rewritings often focus on themes such as complicated familial relationships since they echo the troubled literary situation between the "classics" and their rewritings. The familial relationship between *The Lost Child*'s characters are problematic, scarred by colonialism, paternalism and racism, and so is the literary relationship between postcolonial novels and British "classics". As was explained in this paper's first chapter - based on Edwards' *Postcolonial Literature* - the literary relationship between the "canon" and its rewritings is complicated and not very clear. A notion of hierarchy surrounds this practice but rewriting a "classic" is also a way for postcolonial authors to show that they belong to the bigger literary tradition of the mother country.[491] In Edwards' point of view, we need to think of a genealogy when talking about the relationship between literary "classics" and their rewritings.[492] The latter can be seen as a way of answering the former by representing their problematic relationship in their narrations.[493] Ledent and O'Callaghan mention this concept of literary parenthood in their analysis of *The Lost Child* as well[494] and Král also links the parent-child relationship to the genealogical relationship between the "canon" and its rewritings.[495] Concerning this concept of filiation, Král explains:

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[489] Edwards, *Postcolonial Literature*. p. 60.

[490] *Idem.*

[491] Edwards. *Postcolonial Literature*. p. 52.

[492] *Idem.*

[493] *Idem.*

[494] Ledent and O'Callaghan, "Caryl Phillips' *The Lost Child*: A Story of Loss and Connection." p. 230.

[495] Král, "Literary Filiations and textual Archeology: Caryl Phillips's *The Lost Child*." pp. 52-53.

While both prequels and sequels acknowledge, claim and sometimes vindicate a literary and cultural filiation when situating themselves explicitly in the wake of and as heir to great authors, the prequel does not only follow in the footsteps but also goes back to what has already been written and which […] has been canonized […]. It is […] a disruptive gesture that combines a tribute with a wilful act of emancipation […].[496]

Král believes that Phillips' engagement with *Wuthering Heights* goes further than "the nostalgic revisiting"[497] of places associated to his childhood.[498] As Král argues, "there is more to it than the notion of rewriting"[499]: it is a way to think about the historical and literary past. From her point of view, Phillips' decision to write *The Lost Child* as a prequel to *Wuthering Heights* is also a "critical gesture"[500] as he tests "his own understanding of the Brontëan text - and of its ambiguities - which […] has found space to thrive in the gaps […] left between the various narrative threads of Brontë's novel."[501] Král sees his novel as a "reappraisal […] of official history [and] of one's […] understanding of the canonical texts one has grown up with."[502] As she argues, there is a "power play between a canonical text and its rewriting by a postcolonial writer"[503], a power play reflected in the narration through the problematic relationships between the novel's characters oppressed by paternalism and colonialism.

This reasoning on family and on the metaphor referring to the literary parentage is also present in many other novels by Phillips and by other postcolonial authors.[504] Families allow the author to analyse questions of belonging but also of parentage, be it traditional or literary. Therefore, this is also what dysfunctional families in *The Lost Child* represent: a problematic and sometimes unclear literary and genealogical relationship between "classics" (the authority/parental figure) and postcolonial rewritings.

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[496] Král, "Literary Filiations and textual Archeology: Caryl Phillips's *The Lost Child*." p. 53.

[497] *Idem.*

[498] *Idem.*

[499] *Idem.*

[500] *Idem.*

[501] *Idem.*

[502] *Idem.*

[503] *Idem.*

[504] Král, "Literary Filiations and textual Archeology: Caryl Phillips's *The Lost Child*." p. 60.

Postcolonial authors use the family theme to talk about their displaced experience, to talk about the colonial past and to show that they belong to a literary tradition. In the case of *The Lost Child*, the dysfunctional families share the recurrent pattern of a problematic parent-child relationship. These bonds echo the troubled relationship between the literary "classics" and their rewritings and the literary/genealogical parentage that unites them. Therefore, supported by Phillips' own words, I believe that the dysfunctional families represented in *The Lost Child* reflect this literary genealogy and the problematic literary parentage between the "classics" and their rewritings.[505]

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[505] Caryl Phillips, personal communication, Liège, October 2018.

Conclusion

In this paper I have used psychoanalysts' theories to analyse the various families represented in *The Lost Child* to prove that they were all dysfunctional. As Polatti explains, Phillips wrote *The Lost Child* because he wanted to focus on "one of the most archaic human bonds, the parent-child relationship."[506] These dysfunctional relationships between family members are interesting, but I wondered if the troubled family patterns could mean something more.

Bénédicte Ledent's article on family in Phillips' novels[507] confirmed that shattered families are a recurrent theme in postcolonial fiction.[508] Another comment made by Phillips in an interview with Margaret Davidson drew my attention as he explains that "the very nature of the relationship between the master and the slave, the colonizer and the colony, Britain and the Caribbean, […] black and white historically tended to be paternalistic […] and so [he has] always been interested in […] power relationships."[509] Convinced that the hierarchical relationships described in the novel represent something more than scarred families, I analysed the novel to see if the dysfunctional families could echo the problematic relationship between the "classics" of British literature and their postcolonial rewritings.

On 22nd October 2018, I decided to share my hypothesis with the author and ask for Phillips' opinion. His answer encouraged my analysis as he explained that the dysfunctional relationships between the different family members were the starting point of all phenomena such as the hierarchical link between England and its colonies, between white British citizens and British citizens from the former colonies, or even the genealogical relationship between the "classics" of literature and their postcolonial rewritings.[510]

As I explained in the first chapter of this paper, the relationship between the "classics" and their rewritings is problematic. Helped by McLeod's reasoning, I first argued that every reader could have a different interpretation and even a different definition of what literary "classics " are.[511] Since they were used in order to "educate" the people of the colonies, the literary "classics"

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[506] Polatti, "Racial Genealogies and Intertextuality in Contemporary Britain: Caryl Phillips's *The Lost Child.*" p. 106.

[507] Bénédicte Ledent, "Family and Identity in Caryl Phillips's Fiction, in particular *A Distant Shore.*" *Commonwealth: Essays and Studies*, 29.2, 2007, pp. 67-73.

[508] Bénédicte Ledent, "Family and Identity in Caryl Phillips's Fiction, in particular *A Distant Shore.*" pp. 67-68.

[509] Carol Margaret Davidson, "Crisscrossing the River: An Interview with Caryl Phillips." *Ariel: a review of international English literature*, 25.4, 1994, p. 95.

[510] Caryl Phillips, personal communication, Liège, October 2018.

[511] *Idem.*

still have an important impact on many authors whose life was influenced by the colonial past.[512] Thanks to Justin D. Edwards' *Postcolonial Literature*, I underlined the fact that the rewriting practice is more nuanced than it seems since postcolonial authors can have various reasons to write back to the literary centre.[513] For example, to bring some facts from the original "classic" to light, to give a voice to the voiceless characters, to raise new questions or to create a dialogue between the "classics" and their rewritings.[514] Another reason to rewrite a "classic" is that postcolonial authors want to show that they belong to a literary tradition[515] by rewriting the "classics" that were read to them when they were younger.[516]

Through this paper, we can see that *The Lost Child* contains all the aforementioned themes. The idea of bringing new facts to light can be found in the character of Mr. Earnshaw being involved in the slave trade and in the character of Heathcliff being a mixed-race child, expanding on the clues in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*. As was shown earlier, Phillips also gives a voice to the voiceless in his novel by telling the story of a former woman slave among other women. Phillips also raises questions of belonging, race and gender through his characters, creating a dialogue between his novel and *Wuthering Heights* by focusing on Heathcliff. Finally, by rewriting a literary "classic" Phillips tries to show his belonging to the British literary tradition[517], and this echoes the relationship between the "canon" and its postcolonial rewritings. Similarly, talking about family and belonging, Phillips tries to show the genealogical and literary relationship between postcolonial rewritings and the British literary "classics" they refer to.

Through my analysis, I also noticed that *The Lost Child* was also a way to challenge collective amnesia surrounding the colonial past and even racism. As Polatti explains, by telling the story of the voiceless but also the story of lost children in the past and in the present, Phillips investigates the colonial past many would rather forget.[518] Through his novels' dysfunctional families and their secrets, Phillips shows how the lack of communication interferes with memory and in consequence with history. In this way, he shows the importance of memory and especially of

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[512] McLeod, *Beginning Postcolonialism*. p.140.

[513] Edwards, *Postcolonial Literature*. pp. 53-54.

[514] *Idem.*

[515] Interestingly, Phillips write back to both Brontë and Rhys, showing a double allegiance to both British literature and Caribbean literature.

[516] Edwards, *Postcolonial Literature*. p. 52.

[517] As well as his belonging to Caribbean literature by writing back to Rhys.

[518] Polatti, "Racial Genealogies and Intertextuality in Contemporary Britain: Caryl Phillips's *The Lost Child*." p. 112.

not forgetting about the past even when it is shameful. This is also a common message in many postcolonial novels: although the past may be dark, our duty is to remember it and not hide it. In *The Lost Child*, Phillips unveils the silences of history, which we should all be aware of in order not to repeat the same mistakes. Interestingly, I also noted that intertextuality was used in the novel to show that Phillips belongs to the British literary tradition as he rewrites *Wuthering Heights* but also a way to show his belonging to the Caribbean literary tradition by echoing Jean Rhys' writings.

I noticed that the various family patterns shared one final phenomenon: the lack of self-differentiation caused by colonialism and/or paternalism. As Murray Bowen explains, people suffering from a lack of self-differentiation cannot tell apart their thoughts from their emotions and they cannot distinguish their own experiences from the other family members'.[519] They cannot think for themselves and always end up thinking for/about the other family members.[520] Because this process is often caused by anxiety, people suffering from a lack of self-differentiation live to receive love, happiness and safety.[521] Paternalism and colonialism generate the same consequences since they both consist in thinking for the other and knowing best what is good for the "child-like" other. Nowadays, therapists treat families with a lack of self-differentiation by making the various members talk one by one. It is a way to "re-appropriate" themselves, to focus on their own feelings in order to show their individuality. This is actually what Phillips does in *The Lost Child* by giving a voice to the voiceless. Phillips shows the characters' emotions even when they do not express them. With his novel, Phillips plays the part of a therapist "healing" British history from the trauma and horrors caused by the colonial past. He does not only enrich *Wuthering Heights* with this rewriting but also British culture as he shows the problematic link between family members, between the mother country and its lost children, between the literary classics and their rewritings. However, he does not take revenge, does not show anger nor does he judge his characters' behaviours. The wounded and displaced one ends up healing the "Family" and those who suffered the consequence of colonialism and paternalism - through the character of Ben who has the chance to be reunited with a member of his family at the end of the novel. And in this epoch full of vengeance, violence and wars, Phillips' approach deserves all our praise.

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[519] Bowen, "A propos de la différenciation de soi à l'intérieur de sa propre famille." p. 105.

[520] *Idem.*

[521] *Idem.*

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